



QUESTIONS FOR WORLD CAFÉ SESSIONS

20 January 2011, Afternoon session: 14:30-18:00

IMPLICATIONS OF LEARNING OUTCOME APPROACHES



WORKING TABLE 1:

IMPLICATIONS FOR WRITTEN CURRICULA

The way curriculum knowledge is selected, organized and sequenced in curricula might change when these are based on competences and learning outcomes. Outcome-oriented curricula do not reflect solely the body of knowledge to be transmitted, but provide a framework for the teaching and learning process. They also tend to be more flexible. This flexibility may be expressed in a number of ways: greater modularisation of curricula; increased autonomy granted to teachers when it comes to methods and teaching materials; or in the opening up of different individual pathways leading to the same qualification.



Questions

1. What are the characteristics and features of written curricula that are intended to reflect an outcome-approach?
2. What are the strengths of a competence-based/outcome-oriented curriculum?
3. What are the weaknesses of a competence-based/outcome-oriented curriculum?

WORKING TABLE 2:

IMPLICATIONS FOR TAUGHT CURRICULA

A learner-centred system must give teachers, trainers and learners plenty of leeway in adapting and interpreting learning outcomes. Defining learning outcomes too narrowly or restrictively may create yet another barrier to creativity and innovation in the classroom. Actually, the relationship between outcome-based curricula and learner-centredness depends on many factors including how holistic and flexible learning outcomes are meant to be and on how curricula are being delivered and in which learning environments.



Questions for discussion

1. What are the teaching methods and styles of learning that are used to deliver outcome-oriented curricula? Have these changed due to curriculum reform?
2. To what degree do new curricula encourage pedagogies and practices that promote learner-centeredness and inclusiveness?
3. Which features or characteristics of the existing education and training systems can facilitate or hamper learner-centredness and inclusiveness in the learning process?

WORKING TABLE 3:

IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNER'S ASSESSMENT

Assessment forms an important part of education, training and qualification systems. The redesign of curricula and standards in order to achieve a focus on learning outcomes has, in many cases, affected the design and practice of assessment. Assessment, in turn, will have an influence upon the design of learning programmes and pedagogy and learner activity – not always positively. In VET, assessment methods must capture not only theoretical knowledge, but also practical skills and key competences and the ability to apply them at work. A further challenge is raised by questions about assessment 'standards' and the comparability of these standards across VET and general education systems.



In some cases, new outcome-oriented assessment regimes have been associated with other changes in assessment, for example, changes in assessment methods, reforms designed to improve assessment reliability and validity and the use of formative assessment.

Questions for discussion

1. In what ways, if any, has the development of outcome-oriented approaches brought about changes in assessment design and practice?
2. In what ways, if any, have the requirements or opportunities of assessment affected the development of outcome-oriented written curricula and their implementation?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the assessment methods that have been employed in different countries to assess outcome-oriented curricula?

TABLE 4:

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LEARNER

A learner-centred approach to curriculum development may change the traditional relationship between teacher and learner. An outcome-based curriculum potentially empowers learners, allowing them to know the expected learning outcomes they should acquire at the end of their learning process and giving them the opportunity to shape learning processes and build their individual learning paths. However, one may not assume that curricula based on learning outcomes are automatically learner-centred and inclusive, and that they will necessarily benefit learners. In fact, they may have the opposite effect.

An outcome-based approach may be understood as a progressive opportunity to address learners' diversities and achieve an inclusive curriculum.



Outcome-oriented curricula should move away from rigid disciplinary and decontextualised content and go towards multiplicity of contextualized, interdisciplinary and significant resources for the learner. This may be an effective way to achieve inclusive teaching and learning as well as to develop autonomous, critical and assertive citizens.

Questions for discussion

1. Are the reformed curricula leading to any objective changes in learners' performance? What evidence exists? (Changes in participation or drop-out rates or qualification achievement, employment rates, etc.)
2. Are the developments in pedagogy and the changes in learning environment and learning programmes leading to changes in learners' experiences?
3. What remains to be done to enable learners to benefit from the introduction of outcome-orientated approaches?