



Background note on Cedefop's Workshop Curriculum innovation and reform: policies and practices¹

Thessaloniki, 9 and 10 November 2009

This is intended to be a brainstorming workshop that brings in participants' expertise and facilitates dialogue to share experience, knowledge and ideas. The aim of the workshop is to generate new knowledge and understanding about curriculum policies and practices in Europe and beyond and define new lines for future research. The focus of the workshop is on outcome-oriented (or competence-based) approaches to curriculum development, particularly (but not only) for vocational education and training.

Some preliminary information about the organisation of the workshop follows.

The morning session of the first day will be dedicated to presenting and discussing the findings of the study: *Exploring the relationship between learning outcomes and VET curricula*. Cedefop project manager Irene Psifidou responsible for this study and Léna Krichewsky and Dietmar Frommberger external contractors² will introduce the main scope of the study and some preliminary conclusions (see working paper enclosed as background information). After the presentations, time will be available for participants' reactions, comments and input.

In the afternoon session we will explore four aspects in some depth. To do this we will form working tables; each table will deal with a specific topic (area of discussion) with some predefined questions to structure the discussion.

The four topics to our workshop are the following:

1. **Competence-based approaches to curricula: conceptualisation and operationalisation of learning-outcomes approaches** (How do countries understand learning outcomes, competences, or skills? What is their effective role in curricula and are there some drawbacks? Are there similarities and differences between VET, general education and higher education curricula?).

¹ This is a note prepared by Irene Psifidou, Cedefop project manager to serve as background information to participants in the above mentioned workshop.

² External contractors for this study are BRIDGES Politik- und Organisationsberatung GmbH and the Department of Vocational Education and Human Resource Development at the Magdeburg University. Cedefop contract: AO/ECVL/LZAH/Learning outcomes/012/08.

2. **Developing the curriculum and involving stakeholders** (How does the development of national curricula take place in different countries? Has an outcomes orientation had an impact on the curriculum development process, alongside more traditional input orientations? Which methods, if any, are being applied to develop outcome-oriented curricula? Which stakeholders are involved and how?).
3. **Implementing the curriculum: changing approaches at the institutional level** (What arrangements are needed to support curriculum change for schools, colleges and companies? What changes may concern teacher education and training, learning pathways and learning environments?).
4. **The curriculum in practice: innovative approaches to pedagogy** (What are the implications for teaching methods and assessment procedures? What approaches to pedagogies are called for? What are the opportunities, costs and drawbacks? What are the implications for learners?).

To make sure that you have the opportunity to meet the other participants and openly discuss the different aspects, we will ask you to circulate between the working tables (see the annex in this document for more information on the organisation and functioning of the tables).

On the second morning, the main ideas from your working tables will be summarised and presented by the rapporteurs in a plenary session, followed by discussion leading to conclusions and recommendations for next steps.

As you understand, we are asking participants to engage actively throughout the seminar, but we are not expecting a formal presentation. However, **we would like you, if possible, to:**

1. **prepare a short note outlining one innovative example of an outcomes-oriented curriculum initiative;**
2. **identify an associated area that calls for more research;**
3. **send us any related articles, papers, projects that you have contributed to as background material that will be published on our seminar's website.**

If you can do this, please send us your contributions by the end of October, so we can have enough time to publish them online.

Annex

Organisation and functioning of working tables

Participants will be either “table facilitators” or “travellers experts”. Table facilitators are one “host” and one “rapporteur” per table. **You will be contacted by the organiser of this workshop beforehand to agree on your role.**

“Travellers experts” will be moving every 30 minutes to a different table as ambassadors of ideas and discuss around the topics and questions. At the end of the afternoon, they should have passed from all four tables. The table host and the rapporteur remain always in the same table and summarise the previous conversation to the new table guests. Thus the proceeding conversations are cross-fertilised with the ideas generated in former conversations with other participants. At the end of the session, all participants should have been seated in all tables.

Below the main functions of the different roles are described.

I’m a table host, what do I do?

- Welcome the participants as they enter.
- Explain the purpose of the gathering.
- Pose the question or themes for rounds of conversation and make sure that the question is visible to everyone on an overhead flipchart.
- Encourage everyone to participate.
- Remind people to note key ideas, doodle and draw. Encourage them to use the markers and paper on the table to create a ‘shared visual space’.
- Let people know in a gentle way when it is time to move and begin a new round of conversation.
- Make sure that members of each table during the first round each go to different tables as the conversational rounds progress.
- Remain at the table when others leave and welcome travellers from other tables.
- Briefly share key insights from the prior conversation so others can link and build using ideas from their respective tables.

I am a table rapporteur, what do I do?

- When new participants come to the table help the host to briefly share key insights from the prior conversation so others can link and build using ideas from their respective tables.
- Write down in a personal notebook the key points of the conversations.
- Remind people at your table to note down in the flipchart key connections, ideas, discoveries and deeper questions as they emerge.
- Present the summary and main messages based on the topic and predefined questions of the table in plenary session of the second morning.

I am a traveller expert, what do I do?

- The travellers move every thirty minutes from table to table carrying key ideas, themes and questions into their new conversations.
- Bring in each table their expertise and experience on each topic and become engaged in open dialogue and sharing ideas.
- Note key ideas, doodle and draw using the markers and paper on the table to create a 'shared visual space'.
- Each time travellers move to a new table, they are bringing with them the threads of the last round and discuss them with those brought by other travellers. As the rounds progress the conversation moves to deeper levels.
- On the second morning, travellers complement and comment the reporting of the main messages drawn from each table and presented by rapporteurs.