



Outcome-oriented approach in Slovenian VET

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Curriculum reforms in Slovenian VET

1996: the beginning of outcome orientation

VET system – two phases:

- **1996:** social partners included in the process of associating education and labour market
 - Introduction of **occupational standards** as a basis for educational programmes.
 - Designed for entire sectors simultaneously.
 - Include: key tasks, knowledge, skills
- Late 1990's: evaluations show weak links between theoretical and practical learning.
- **2001:** partial abandonment of the traditional subject-based structure of VET programmes and introduction of the **modularly structured programmes** with the concept of **competence** as the basis for structuring modules.

Motivation behind the reforms

- Reaction to the traditional content-based curricula which are considered inadequate:
 - could not provide an adequate basis for the selection of knowledge in knowledge-intensive societies;
 - could not provide a good basis for addressing the needs and career interests of individual learners and assessment of their achievements;
 - in relation to the idea of lifelong learning, one should follow the principle: it is the results that counts, not the path that leads to them.
- VET was not responsive to market needs (school-based system).

Modularly structured and competence-based curriculum

- **Competence:** “developing and demonstrated abilities of individuals which enable them to act creatively, efficiently and ethically in complex, unforeseeable circumstances in professional, social and private life.”
- Synergy of three elements:
 - acquisition of **knowledge**;
 - developing **skills**, expertise;
 - developing an **autonomous and ethical stance** towards other people, community and the environment.
- Competences combine into modules.

Modules

- “A module represents a comprehensive unit of objectives and contents **combining professional, theoretical, practical and general knowledge.**”
These include three types of modules:
 - **Basic modules** comprising basic professional knowledge and generic competences in a certain sector (eg. sector: food technology).
 - **Mandatory modules** providing for the meeting of minimum requirements for particular vocational qualification within a sector (eg. qualification: cook).
 - **Elective modules**, offered by schools in the open curriculum, providing qualifications from other programmes or even sector (eg. fast food cook, brewer module).

Three types of competences

- **Generic competences:** abilities enabling an individual to obtain a comprehensive insight into a specific vocational field. They form the basis for the basic modules.
- **Vocational competences:** combine vocational theory and skills with those key competences that contribute to the quality of vocational competence (IT literacy, communication skills etc.).
- **Key competences:** integrated into different aspects of the educational programme.
(communication in Slovene and foreign languages, mathematical competences, learning to learn, intercultural, aesthetic, social competences, IT literacy, health protection, entrepreneurship, social science and natural science competence)

Assessment and certification

- **Criterion-referenced assessment** is gradually gaining ground.
- So far it is limited to internal assessment.
- There are no national knowledge standards, but teachers' teams are obliged to develop minimal knowledge standards. These are part of the school curricula.
- Technical programmes finish with vocational maturity examination (partly external), vocational programmes finish with final examination (internal).
- External national examinations still follow the concept of normative assessment (general and vocational maturity examinations).

Learning objectives, knowledge standards, attainments in Slovenian curricula

- Syllabus is prepared for each subject/ module.
- Syllabi are output oriented, but very prescriptive, detailed.
- Each syllabus contains: general aims that are broken down into many learning objectives.
- In elementary school, syllabi learning objectives are categorised into one or more groups:
 - Minimum knowledge standards
 - (Basic knowledge standards)
 - (Optimal knowledge standards)
- In gymnasium, syllabi knowledge standards have recently been replaced by *learning attainments* (targets) – level descriptions for year 2 and 4.
- In VET, syllabi contain: general aims and learning objectives. The teachers develop standards autonomously.

Strengths of the new curriculum (2001)

- Evaluations show:
 - That links between theoretical and practical learning are much stronger than before;
 - Teachers, students, and other stakeholders are generally satisfied with it;
 - Although time consuming and demanding, the new culture of assessment is becoming more widespread – there are teachers' teams working hard to change the old practice (supported by experts and handbooks that some co-author);
 - Project-based learning is being employed.
- The curriculum introduction is accompanied by the development of the system of quality assurance – with self-evaluation as a fundamental element increasing the teachers' sense of responsibility for their students' success.

Weaknesses of the new curriculum

Evaluations show:

- Some syllabi include outcomes that exceed the qualification level; some still include obsolete knowledge.
- Many reformed VET programmes are still not open to students' career interests.
- Teachers and schools have not yet mastered how to effectively respond to the heterogeneity of student population.

Social prejudice against vocational knowledge and unequal power relations between the decision-makers cause that VET programmes have still a large and “untouchable” general education part, although general knowledge (key and generic competences) is increasingly integrated into vocational modules – curricula are therefore very cramped and often too demanding.

Teachers' role and training

- Outcome-based VET curriculum is part of the decentralisation process of the Slovenian VET (school and open curriculum)
- The process has increased schools' and teachers' autonomy and accountability.
- The teachers' are supported by:
 - Their participation in curriculum development and evaluation.
 - In-service teacher training (school curriculum, didactic approaches, assessment, self-evaluation, the issues of discipline and upbringing...).
 - Participation in (international) projects.
 - (Co-)authorship of teachers' resource materials.
- Shortcomings: teachers do not always understand the meaning of all the novelties, and some tasks seem to be there for their own sake: considerable risk of bureaucratisation of the teacher's profession!