

## Highlights on outcome-oriented curriculum reforms: Country examples

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### **Discussant of this session**

Been asked to reflect on the country inputs from the perspective of a VET outsider – my background is SNE/inclusive education, I would like to consider a number of issues – particularly the key challenges and innovations raised in the inputs here and background papers - as well as some key issues for later consideration.

It is very important to reflect some points made in the first panel as well here.

The Finland report refers to the 'need for deep thinking' to bring about reforms:

- Inclusive education (IE) and inclusive approaches require deep thinking.
- As Renato Opertti stated - Inclusive education is a systematic approach. All elements in the education system need to be considered.
- It is very important we move away from the idea that IE is an approach for minority groups. It is an approach for all.

The first key issue to consider is learner centered inclusive approaches for all or a few?

It is obvious from previous comments – my reply:

- Learner centered approaches – personalised learning – whatever we call them benefit all learners.
- The inputs from the Netherlands and Italy reinforce this. To meet current demands we need flexible approaches to address diverse needs of learners...increasing diversity calls for increasingly diverse approaches!

There is a lot of expertise in the traditional special needs education (SNE) sector in using Learner centered approaches – differentiation, target settings, outcomes lead approaches.

I was struck by the Greek report which suggests there are not so many examples of this approach – perhaps there are in some specialist sectors? I should refer listeners to Agency VET project: <http://www.european-agency.org/news/vocational-education-and-training-vet-policy-and-practice-in-the-field-of-special-needs-education>

There is a need now more than ever for sharing expertise across sectors.

The Netherlands raises a key issue in relation to Learner centered approaches – the shift to self directed learning.

The Greek input also highlights the importance of this and decision-making/ critical thinking as a core competence for all learners.

A very important element of learner-centered approaches and inclusive approach is learners setting, assessing and evaluating their own learning targets, but has clear implications for teachers.

The Slovenian and Dutch reports/inputs both raise the issue of what teaching processes need to be used?

The Netherlands report highlights effective strategies as collaborative learning, authentic tasks, teachers as facilitators.

Work in the Agency suggests that we need to add:

- Co-operative/team teaching
- Peer tutoring
- Heterogeneous grouping
- Differentiated teaching strategies
- Assessment for learning
- Assessment is a key as Tapio Saavala suggested

It is useful to reflect point from Slovenia – how you get there is as important as what is achieved!

I'd like to consider some main challenges that were highlighted in the inputs:

The first messages focus upon competences:

- Do we need to be clear on the differences between standards and competences?
- Should we always consider competences as having an attitudinal/motivational component as well as the components of knowledge and skills – as the Slovenian, Italian and Greek reports suggest.
- Work in the Agency on teachers' competences suggest attitudinal components to competences is vital.

Second is teacher education and training – raised in a number of the inputs – Slovenia:

- Are all teachers given the knowledge and skills and crucially attitudes to take inclusive approaches in their work?
- What in-service as well as initial support is available to them?

Slovenia clearly raises the issue of whether teachers are able to take competence-based approaches?

- Do they receive it in their education?
- Are they trained in a competence-based approach?

Agency work shows many countries are introducing learner-centered approaches in inclusive teacher education but competences in IE for all teachers are limited and a very difficult area.

Third challenge raised by Italy:

- Inflexibility in systems for introducing new initiatives.
- Brings us back to issue of IE as a systematic approach.

- Greece and Italy highlights the differences in co-ordinating between different stakeholder groups as well as systems.
- Slovenia and to a degree Italy, indicates differences in perpetuating the perceived value of some courses over others.
- All contribute to tension in all countries – meeting individual needs versus the push for raised academic outputs.

There are possible innovations and very clear messages from across inputs to highlight. The first is raised by Finland:

- Ensuring clear limits between learning goals and assessment and clarifying expectations for learning.
- In particular the use of Assessment for learning (A4L) involving learners in feedback on their learning.
- Crucial also is the issue of access in assessment.
- Access to assessment and qualifications
- Accessibility with assessment methods.
- Concept or universal design in assessment should be considered in considering an IE approach.

The second innovation is highlighted by Italy – flexible pathways in learning approaches. Echoed by the Netherlands and Finland when they describe how educational institutions have the possibility to determine the ‘how’ of programme delivery.

Differentiation combined with possibilities, requirements and even responsibilities for teachers who know learners best to determine programmes is essential in taking an inclusive approach.

This very much links to Tapio Saavala’s point here.

Third innovation is raised by Slovenia – focus on evaluation of issues relating to meeting inclusive needs and also quality. This is echoed by Finland’s need to address quality issues - a point made by Renato Opertti. Issues of quantity and quality cannot be separated.

- Meeting diverse needs in all sectors of education is a quality issue.
- Need to involve range of stakeholders in this.
- Issue raised in all presentations.
- In an IE approach ‘new’ stakeholders need to be considered.

What messages should we keep in mind from the country information as well as work in the field of inclusive education? There are a lot, but I’d like to finish with just a few:

- The Italian report talks of the need to ‘foster transparency’. A phrase that is crucial for IE thinking and doing.
- The Finnish report stresses ‘common approaches’.
- There is a need to move away from ‘specialist/expert’ thinking to ‘shared knowledge’ in teaching and learning approaches.
- Part of this will focus on a ‘shared learning’ another point raised in the Italian report. It is critical that policy makers and practitioners at national levels as well as

international levels share an understanding of key concepts – ‘shared language’ and shared approaches based on shared thinking. Both the Netherlands and Finnish reports highlight the need for leadership in taking and directing educational initiatives – at both policy and organisational levels.

- Research in IE shows the need for visions and leadership that creates the ethos and culture for IE (I need to remind you of the point made regarding attitudes for IE here).

I want to stress a message coming from across the country inputs – inclusive approaches/ learner-centered approaches benefit all learners, not just a few! Good IE teaching and learning is good teaching and learning!

Final message is one of reflection:

- What do we really want IE for? Is it just the newest educational innovation/fashion fad or is it something more?

I'd say it is more; it is about what society we want and seeing education as a way of getting there: A society that values diversity and aims to meet the needs of the most and least able.

Thank you.