

PANEL DISCUSSION

PUTTING THE VIEWS TOGETHER – A CURRICULUM FOR ALL LEARNERS

Contribution from Alejandro Tiana-Ferrer (outline)

1. Some brief notes about the Spanish experience

- The concept of competence was introduced as a reference for curriculum design in the Spanish VET reform during the 90s. New vocational diplomas designed and launched from then on included an identification of the main competences to be developed by trainees in every professional field or module.
- According to the guidelines adopted for the current university reform, competences to be developed by graduates constitute a central element of proposals presented by universities for new degrees.
- Key competences have been incorporated to the curriculum of basic education in the 2006 Education Act. Consequently, a new scheme for assessment has been developed.

This diversity of origins and contexts has produced a wide heterogeneity of uses of the term 'competence'. In current public debates on education the term is frequently used in very different, sometimes confusing ways.

2. Criticisms and debates

As a result of this situation some debates have started, raising some criticisms on the new concept.

- One main discussion relates to the novelty of the underlying concept. Some contradictory positions have been adopted:
 - o Competences are just more of the same; they represent an update of ancient taxonomies.
 - o Competences are just a new vocabulary without a real impact for changing school curricula; teachers have always addressed these kinds of skills.
 - o Competences do focus teaching and learning on application and contextualization (as situated learning), which poses the challenge of translating them into teaching methodology and assessment.
- A common criticism rests on its alleged attachment to a labour market perspective.

- Some arguments can be opposed to that idea:
 - o It is due to the impact of its use in VET and partially in higher education.
 - o A distinction between specific and general competences should be made.
 - o Some competences related to citizenship should be considered.

3. Influences on Latin America

- There are echoes of this situation, as it happens for instance with the Bologna process.
- Some steps forward have been taken in some countries – like Mexico – but less coherent than in the European Union.
- Education in LA was characterised by intense curricular reforms in the 90s, but much less emphasis is currently put on them.