

Question 1 – in what ways, if any, has the development of outcome-orientated approaches brought about changes in assessment design and practice?

- Employers and other stakeholders are involved in the process of assessment
 - Evidence: employers involved in design, practice and validation of assessment in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Rumania and Netherlands and in England, e.g. in teacher training
 - Commissions of teachers and employers
 - Workplace assessors need training
 - Workplace assessors being paid to conduct assessment, e.g. teacher education
- Increased guidance and instruction for teachers how to assess, e.g. handbooks
- Resource implications – assessment of outcomes is more work, takes longer, more complex: this may lead to resistance from teachers and labour organisations (e.g. Malta and Ireland)
- Use of individualised Development Plans – teachers and students have had to learn to use
- Greater need for quality assurance – different countries are finding different ways of doing this, in Romania are allocated inspectors (govt or social partner) and Ireland schools hire inspectors.
- Shift from normative to criterion based assessment
- Shift from criterion based to standards based assessment
- Teachers working with other teachers and teachers from other schools and employers to assess jointly (Rumanian, Slovenia and Netherlands)

- Development of specialist tools to assess soft skills – some initiatives in Slovenia and Spain
 - Concerns expressed about methodology of assessing soft skills
 - Recognition that employers have been doing this routinely in their own training and that established non-formal methods exist for doing this
 - PIAC project should provide evidence when published
- Teachers working together and sharing practice in order to learn how to do new assessment represents a strategy for overcoming weaknesses (Slava)
- Curriculum and assessment more likely to be designed closely together – as in Scotland – rather than separately with outcomes approaches (or if not then should be)
- Assessment has been changed to capture application – whether in work or out of work, e.g. in new situations (Spain) – new assessment not always successful in practice
- Work place assessment not sufficient – have to understand merits of different environments for different kinds of outcome assessment
- Self-assessment – at first thought to be impossible but has now been established (Finland)
 - Students know what they are going to be assessed on
- Teacher-student relationship has changed – learning outcome is distinguished from teacher input
 - so teacher and student can tackle outcome together
- Has boosted the confidence of students

- Example of German students involved in authentic software development project which was negotiated with students in Higher IT Diploma – assessment considered documentation for development rather than final outcome or oral.
- English problem: rise in performance in outcomes approach assessments associated with public perception that ‘standard’ has fallen. This threatens the credential and performance value of qualification
 - Not evidenced elsewhere – tho have been quality issues in Ireland
 - In HE in Greece, persistence of written rather than practical assessment because of high perceived reliability and status and independence of HEIs.
 - Perception that schools in England have too much influence in assessment decision
- Dutch problem: complicated high stakes authentic summative assessment includes inspectors, teachers and independent monitors – high stakes is leading to standard assessment packages being bought as off the peg assessment tasks. Tasks written and supplied by commercial sector organisations – tasks constrain curriculum and flexibility of assessment.
 - Reform – attempt to introduce intermediate summative assessment to reduce high stakes and support local design of assessment tasks
- Ireland: National certification combined with locally controlled assessment and strong systems for quality assurance – so far so good!

Question 2 – In what ways, if any, have the requirements or opportunities of assessment affected the development of outcome orientated written curricula and their implementation?

- It was a rationale for outcomes based approaches that it would produce more valid assessment,
 - Spain in 90s, believed that changes in curriculum and teaching would correct problems with assessment and failure to provide right kind of professionals
 - In Greece high stakes, summative assessment is perceived to impede inclusion and also creates resistance to reform
- In HE there has been development of professional learning programmes where students have set up own assessment criteria which has then shaped curriculum
- However, where teachers teach to test this can lead to instrumental approach which limits learning

- On other hand, outcomes assessment may extend learning by compelling teachers to address all learning outcomes
- Emphasis of assessment was on knowledge – outcomes assessment has shifted to emphasis on other skills – forces assessment of other activities and other modes of assessment – 40% now oral on languages –

Question 3

Advantages of assessment methods?

- Belief that students are more motivated because they understand outcomes, evidence that this is case in Lithuania
- Evidence from inclusive education that outcomes based assessment do raise achievement and access
- Assessment of outcomes is signalling to teachers in a valuable way – supporting formative learning rather than just tracking that material is being covered
- Evidence from PISA that teacher assessment correlates less well with HE progression than outcome based assessment through PISA and is linked to socio-economic characteristics.
- Gerald – difficult to assess key competencies – developed general guide lines – ministry is researching schools and researchers to come up with guidelines how to assess.
- Good teacher assessment can support inclusion
- Outcomes approaches can facilitate creation of new qualifications that fit better with learner needs, e.g. Irish Common Awards at Levels 1 & 2 – achievement is very good.

Disadvantages

- Focus learning by focusing on outcomes and but a centralised assessment regime may generate assessment that does not correspond well to the learning activities
- Issues about comparability – may be a trade off between reliability and validity.
- Appropriate assessment regimes may be burdensome and costly
- We need resources for teachers – and competent teachers to prepare students for assessment.
- Formative assessment – raises major implications for burden of work and organisation of school
- If funding and assessment are linked, this can lead to inappropriate provision

Other:

- However, assessment methods must be accessible
- Formative assessment may fit better with ‘competence’ rather than learning outcomes concept – because of emphasis on process.
- How to write learning outcomes remains a problem –
- Problem of how you design assessment instrument to capture the learning outcome.
- Motivation comes from culture not pedagogy, e.g. China
- Positive failure: Intention of outcomes method to separate outcomes from institution has failed – but this is good thing because that was a mistaken goal, e.g. HE.