



Complementary Comments

on transversal issues discussions¹

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General aspects:

Planned and carried out as a pilot, the Policy Learning Forum (PLF) offered an excellent occasion for stakeholders and practitioners to exchange information and experiences on the major aspects of generating VET learning outcomes via focusing on defining learning outcomes in selected occupations and exploring transversal issues and challenges in defining and writing learning outcomes. This contributes to the CEDEFOP current project on definition and writing of learning outcomes in terms of the ET Agenda 2020 and to prepare a European community of practice as well.

It is recommended to avoid focusing on one or two qualification framework levels in order to safeguard the horizontal and vertical connectivity and permeability of learning outcomes in the concept of prospective PLFs and of the forthcoming handbook on learning outcomes. This will help to overcome traditional mindsets among practitioners and stakeholders in VET as one major challenge is to develop sustainable concepts of learning outcomes and practices to define and write them. In addition, with this approach win-win potentials and options between education and training sectors in terms of the prevailing labour market and societal needs will be identified.

The technical dimension:

- *How are learning outcomes conceptualised?*

1. Concepts and Approaches

All presented learning outcomes approaches are competence related with the purpose to describe the performance or conduct expected at the end of a learning process.

In most of the presented examples on concepts of learning outcomes, the term 'competence' is predominantly regarded as the performance domain in terms of autonomy and responsibility complementing the knowledge and skills domains (e.g. BE-Flanders). Others start from an overarching comprehension of competence and classify all sub domains as competences (e.g. Spain/Plumbing) or differentiate in the sub domains knowledge, skills and attitudes (e.g. Hungary/Plumbing).

All concepts and approaches describe learning outcomes predominantly or exclusively for the application in professional activities and in the work environments.

2. Operationalisations

The majority of countries developed detailed criteria to define and describe learning outcomes related to the situation, context and purpose of a professional activity (e.g. Spain/Plumbing, Estonia, Slovakia, BE Flanders and Hungary). They recommend designing statements of learning outcomes as observable and measurable (i.e. assessable) as well as accessible. They should be functional to be used in different situations (professional, personal or social) and they should draw students' attention, motivation, attitudes and expectations on learning. These statements should have a logical coherent structure and they should be realistic, manageable and address minimum requirements.

Learning outcomes verification criteria, which explain the relevant requirement context, were presented by Poland (CNC Machine operator). In order to define cognitive, psycho-motoric and affective competences in a level compatible manner, Belgium (Flanders) developed a conceptual guideline to use

¹ Incl. references to guiding PLF questions and to selected country and occupation examples.



relevant taxonomies coherently (Bloom et al.).

Concerning the question whether all competence domains should be addressed in each learning unit Poland (CNC Machine Operator) developed units related to knowledge and skills whereas learning outcomes related to social and personal competences were described in specific learning units. Most of the presented examples address transversal competences both embedded and in specific learning units.

Poland (CNC Machine Operator) and other countries recommended a compatible development of the profile, the curriculum and the examination requirements based on learning outcomes so as to safeguard the qualification's coherence.

3. Challenges and R&D Demand

Technique dimensional challenges in the further learning outcomes implementation might occur concerning the following aspects and will possibly require specific research and development measures to be taken.

Competence - comprehension and application

- The contradictory definition of competence in the EQF both in a holistic, overarching sense and in a domain oriented sense (i.e. different to knowledge and skills) might create different national understandings and applications when generating learning outcomes etc. This might have negative effects on transnational qualification comparisons via the EQF but also on trans-sectoral comparisons (industry sectors and education/training sectors) within one EU member state. It might also result in a different understanding of the relationship between disposition and performance dimension of competence, i.e. it is the question whether especially knowledge but also skills are regarded as prerequisites or as an integral part of competence to solve tasks, problems etc.
- Relationship between competence and competences (some EU member states do not differentiate; see e.g. Spain/Plumbing)
- Interchangeable use of competence and skills (UK/Tourism) or attitude and skills (HU)
- Relationship between competence(s) and learning outcomes (e.g. HU demand)

Further Challenges and R&D Demand on generating learning outcomes (LO)

- Compatible LO definition and writing concerning the relevant level, the learning and assessment units in terms of all competence domains (Knowledge, skills, attitudes etc.; see e.g. Estonia / Plumbing)
- A compatible LO writing facilitates a horizontal and vertical connectivity of qualifications (concerning higher complexity of requirements, recognition of prior learning (RPL) from Initial VET to academic HE etc.)
- An appropriate LO definition to address transversal competences in embedded or specific learning units.
- Degree of LO details
- An LO definition that addresses different requirements in a 'balanced' way
- Clarification on different types of knowledge
- Distinction between cognitive and problem-solving skills

The framing dimensions:

- *How do learning outcomes express the content and profile of a qualification?*
- *How are learning outcomes reviewed and renewed?*

1. Approach

All presenting countries confirm that the qualification requirements expressed in the learning outcomes described in terms of a contextualized competence have to correspond to the professional work demand. As it is already mentioned above, they differ as to which extent all competence domains (incl. key competences) contribute to the performance respectively - to the mastering of work processes. Finland developed a LO structure guideline that specifies the skills requirements, the assessment targets and criteria as well as the methods for demonstrating competence. The learning outcomes units are designed based on operational entities of working life (functional task analysis). The occupational specific and transversal skills are 'balanced' e.g. via common integrated units.

Finland like other EU member states (e.g. the "dual" VET countries) define and write in three-partite working groups with representatives from the employers, the employees and the VET providers in order to address the work requirements.

2. Challenges and R&D Demand

Frame dimensional challenges in the further learning outcome implementation might occur concerning the following aspects and possibly require specific research and development measures:

- Theory-Practice compatible LO writing in full-time school based and in dual VET systems in initial and advanced VET (example: the dual occupations in Germany are not developed based on integrated LO curriculum up to now)
- Horizontal and vertical compatible LO writing
 - Analogous writing of core curriculum, the examination requirements (assessment) and the professional/the occupational profile
 - VET/HE connectivity taking into account the academic discipline and research requirements
- Cross sector connectivity
- Sector specifics: e.g. assumption that transversal competences are more important in service occupations (UK/Tourism)
- Level specifics: e.g. assumption that transversal competences are more relevant on higher levels (increased requirement degree of complexity)
- 'Political competence holism': Taking into account that e.g. all 'dual VET' EU member states and many others by law emphasize both the professional and the personal enablement of learners when passing successfully the final VET examinations. In these countries the VET and HE acts are fully compatible with this respect!
- Writing of connectivity LO - requires structural and procedural adjustments between education and training systems (e.g. many national HE and VET systems are not yet designed in a compatible way).
- Requirements as a consequently common reference of VET and HE: Research related subject and discipline requirements as well as 'direct' workplace requirements might have a common reference core or intersection to write learning outcomes. The traditional empirical focus on 'labour market demand and requirements' has to be extended in terms of the prospective mid and long term needs and the ongoing convergencies of education and training practices and sectors as well (e.g. VET/HE including labour market relevant science based competences).

This is not only an issue of complex requirements on higher levels but this is already relevant for the LO design of 'sophisticated' knowledge based IT qualifications on EQF level 4 and 5!