

3rd International Workshop on Curriculum
Innovation and Reform: "Changing Assessment
to improve learning outcomes"

Assessing Learning Outcomes in VET in Europe: Policies, Practices, and Prospects

(interim stage)

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Starting Point

The study shall deliver answers on the following questions:

- How and up to what extent the current emphasis on **learning outcome-oriented approaches have influenced assessment methodologies** in initial vocational education and training in 32 countries under examination?
- What are the implications of learning outcome-oriented approaches to the **design of assessment methodologies**?
- What are the **main similarities and differences** between countries and examined sectors?
- How are the current **assessment methodologies applied in practice**?
- What are the **implications** of applied assessment methodologies to **individuals and the labour market**?

Evidence base

- Preliminary results of reports on assessment in 32 countries, based on desk research and interviews with stakeholders
- Preliminary results of case studies carried out for the electronics and the tourism sectors

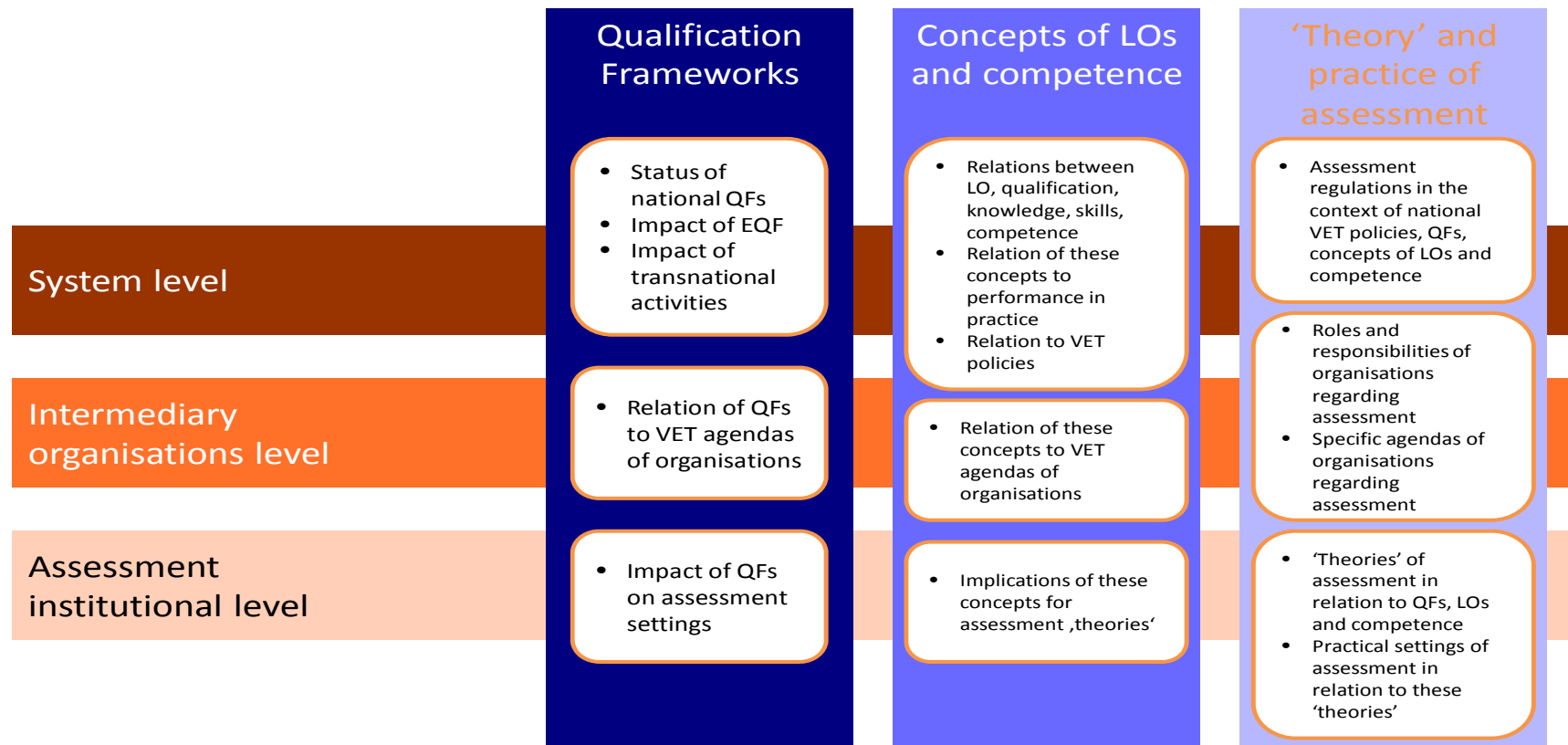
Conceptual Framework

- A grid for the **description of VET systems and stakeholders** was used to get a preliminary description of the conditions under which assessment takes place.
- A **reform grid** was used to describe the understanding and formulation of learning outcomes linked in the assessment reforms and understanding the rationale.
- An **assessment approach grid** was used to identify the relationship between understanding/formulation of learning outcomes and how they impact assessment, assessment instruments, quality criteria, reference to key competences, reference to standards.
 - Country reports were based on a research template with a comprehensive list of questions, referring to the above mentioned grids.

Case Studies: Criteria for the Selection of Countries

- ◉ **Relevance** of the sector in the country to be selected
 - ◉ Profile of the **VET system**, geographical balance, old, new MS
 - ◉ **Scope** of on-going reforms and their link to assessment
 - ◉ Identified **innovative approaches** in terms of assessment methodologies
 - ◉ **Problem zones** and **challenges**
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- ◉ **Electronics**: Finland, France, England, Germany, Lithuania
 - ◉ **Tourism**: Austria, Czech Republic, Greece, Ireland, Sweden

Case Studies: Levels of Analysis and Core Issues



10 Case Studies: Operational Model

1. *Starting hypotheses via collection of primary data assigned to key dimensions:*
 - The **concept of learning outcome** to which assessment refers
 - The **relationship** of identified assessment approaches **to** the concept of **learning outcomes** - Reasons for using them
 - The **stakeholders** and their specific importance for the identified ways of assessment
 - The **specific conditions** for using these assessment approaches
 - The **acceptance** of applied/planned assessment approaches
 - The **impact** of assessment procedures on other elements of the “educational chain”
 - Perspectives of **further development**
 - **Transferability** of identified approaches to other environments
 - Derivable **recommendations**
2. Report on the results of investigations (assigned to the above described levels of analysis)
3. Derive recommendations for further procedure

Findings: Dimensions to be considered

Investigation up to now carried out turned out that a difference has to be made between *three* levels of developments:

1. The level of **scientific debates** which consider the best ways of assessment first and utmost *independently* from the specific conditions under which assessment can currently take place.
2. The level of **policy reforms** initiating changes in the way how assessment is carried out.
3. The level of actual assessment **practice**.

There are overlaps between these levels, and in ideal case debates on Level 1 should determine developments at Level 2, and these reforms should determine practice at Level 3. As a matter of fact, specific national conditions (resources, traditions, balance of power between stakeholders) are important for the actual practice of assessment.

Findings: Assessment methods (1)

A lot of various assessment approaches are discussed within the **scientific** debate, but mostly not (yet?) applied in practice:

- ◉ **Psychometric methods** to measure competence
- ◉ **Computer-based simulations**

Predominantly applied in practise:

- (standardised) knowledge tests,
- **Performance**-based assessment:
 - via observation of the fulfilment of (small) tasks on the job and demonstrations
 - via assessment of professional projects, oral presentations

An upcoming method is assessment via **portfolios**, mainly related to key competences

Findings: Assessment Methods (2)

- It cannot be claimed that the *shift* to learning outcomes has recently influenced the **design of new assessment methods as such**. If they are devoted to this approach, this has long ago already influenced the design
- But the learning outcome approach has influenced the implementation of already used assessment methods into contexts where they are still new (as portfolios, skills demonstrations, projects)

Findings: Assessors (1)

The identified groups of assessors are:

- Teachers
- Company trainers
- Professionals
- Chamber representatives
- Representatives of social partners
- Verifiers and witnesses
- Representatives of local bodies

Having a look at the **actual expertise of individuals representing these groups**, it has turned out that they mainly can be assigned to two groups: **Teachers** and **people with professional work experience in the relevant field**.

Findings: Assessors (2)

It could appear that a stronger representation of the external side already delivers a guarantee for a better orientation to the needs of professional practice, but this is not necessarily the case: It is important **not only** to consider **who** assesses, but **how** and **what** she/he assesses and in which **context**. Thus, **balance between external and internal assessment** is not a quantitative, but a conceptual requirement.

Findings: The scope of assessment (1)

Relationship to quality criteria

- ◉ Most important quality criteria seem to be *reliability* and *validity*.
- ◉ The more assessment is related to a *holistic concept* of professional work, it has to deal with the fulfillment of tasks that include the ability to deal with *unforeseeable and therefore not reproducible situations*; this contradicts the principle of *reliability*, which is certainly better achieved by providing standardized tasks for assessment: The *smaller* the tasks are, the better they can be *standardised* and assessed, but beyond a wider professional context their authenticity is reduced, and this is against the principle of *validity*. Countries take/consider measures to address this.

Findings: Innovation

- Innovation can be observed with regard to the establishment of **assessment cultures**, combining elements of assessment (responsible assessors, assessment in authentic contexts etc.), including approaches developed beyond the national context at hand as new assessment methods; balancing teachers' assessment and external assessment, organising assessment in progressive and more flexible ways, strengthening importance of formative assessment within broader assessment frameworks in the national context.

Thank you!