

3rd international workshop on

Curriculum Innovation and Reform

CHANGING ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

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Discussion of Anne-Marie Charraud from France on *Broadening competencies whilst enabling consistent outcomes in Australia* presented by Sharon Robertson, NATESE, Australia.

A common goal towards learning outcomes but identified through assessment standards

A comparison with the Australian system just reformed shows a common goal when we speak about the aim of assessment in terms of “consistent outcomes”. It is the reason why our “standards” are focused on the certification part. In the French approach, the same assessment can be available whatever is the training or learning mode. Such focus on certification permits the development of training flexibility. This does not mean that there is no relationship at all between curriculum and assessment. The same learning outcomes could be observed through different modalities according to the learners’ situations. But the judgement related to the learning outcomes expected could be done according to the same criteria. This approach permits to develop LLL and RPL (in French Validation des acquis d’expérience) giving to all applicants the opportunity to obtain an award with an official value and a societal currency.

In France, standards for VET can be developed by many different authorities. But there is a common principle with the same idea with a shift from curricula to skills outcomes. The shift is progressive and already done except for HE where it is in progress. Regulation is made through French Qualifications Framework (FQF) and is visible within the National Repertory of Vocational Qualifications (in French Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles –RNP) including the academic degrees (it is admitted that HE provide academic knowledge but also competencies necessary to the learners and the labour market). As in Australia, standards are designed with the advice of the industry stakeholders. Qualifications set up by ministries are drafted in specific committees with representatives of the State and representatives of employers and employees. Those consultations are generally completed by sectoral studies and enquiries made experts.

The FQF is not based on “volume of learning”. It is based on learning outcomes levels we define as combination of competencies proven which permit to do some professional activities at a specific level of autonomy and responsibility. Registration on the FQF supposes that assessed learning outcomes are described and inclusion in the labour market at this level of responsibility and autonomy is demonstrated.

Units system based on competences units and not related to duration of training

Exists also in France systems based on units but those units are not related to training packages. They correspond to units of competencies assessed. Quality insurance related to training is driven by ministries in charge of the training centres they cover. More or less the same kind of quality is expected for training but it is not related to FQF. In FQF, quality is focused on assessment what seems to be the main innovation goal mentioned for Australia. The assessment standard is national and so the organization of assessment is organized under a national responsibility with delegation to regional and local levels.

Quality insurance criteria based on principles and currency for labour market

The challenge for France is to ensure that quality criteria expected (in terms of competencies really useful for the labour market) are applied. It is the reason why are developed regular enquiries and regular revision of standards and the impact of the qualifications systems. Qualifications providers may be ministries, branches, chambers of commerce, private training centres. Registration in FQF is not related to training quality insurance but to the n quality insurance of the certification process from the design to the assessment. Responsibility of qualifications providers is at a national level.

Responsibility of training is at a local level under national principles and rules

Certification standard is on line and a sum up is published on the RNCP web site (RNCP is the FQF) (www.cncp.gouv.fr). All qualifications are described under the certificate supplement Europass, even HE qualifications. Learning outcomes assessed are consistent because related to professional activities. The design of any qualification respects the same scheme beginning by the definition of the level which will be attached (in accordance with a hierarchy of responsibilities as observed in the firms organizations); the definition of the domain and the perimeter of activities dealing which may be done by the owners of the qualification, then the competencies necessary to do those activities, then the learning outcomes assessed and the methods and criteria related to the assessment and finally training programmes.

Observations made on different contents of frameworks and information describing qualifications shows that in many cases what is called competencies or learning outcomes could be referred to what is called in France activities or tasks which could be the main information useful to have a concrete representation of the potential professional provided by its learning experience.