



# Working Group Session

## Summary of discussions





## Working group 1

### Presentation of two country approaches

- Brigitte Bouquet, CNCP, France
- Rosin Sweeney, Quality and Qualifications, Ireland



## a) What is the conceptual point of departure in national contexts, strengths and weaknesses?

- IE: Difference in LO along EQF levels and between general vs. professional education. Particularly universities have more freedom in defining and assessing LO.
- FR: LO more relevant for VET than for GE. LO started out with validation of prior learning, e.g. from work. Also today, LO considered less relevant within academic disciplines --> Overall, LO are characterised by negotiations.
- Point of departure: LO build on active verbs and the Bloom taxonomy.
- Too detailed LO tend to spoil Teaching and Education. Not obvious that LO change teaching methods.
- LO should serve as capacity building for practitioners. Teachers, and possibly also students, should be involved in defining LO.



## b) How is the tension between ‘learning outcomes as result-orientated and process-orientated open to negotiation and only partly measurable?’

- IE: Perhaps play down this tension because both approaches may be needed and they could be considered a continuum
- The process should focus on learner profiles and the programme context, incl. how the learner is present in the definition of LO
- LO as result-oriented, while creating a culture of *dialogue* ->
- LO as a continuum between processes and results, between bottom-up and top-down.



## b) How is the tension between ‘learning outcomes as result-orientated and process-orientated open to negotiation and only partly measurable?’

- To look at this tension as a continuum also relevant in FR, for example the coherence between *expected LO* and *assessed LO*.
- Avoid black or white comprehension of LO. Open LO: Everything does not need to be assessed.
- How introduction of LO intervenes in different contexts, e.g. how they may be aligned with national reform programmes: at one point of time, Westminster pushed LO as a kind of marketization; by 2002 in FR LO were promoted as opening-up towards more stakeholders, a perspective very strongly present in SA.



## **(c) What factors positively/negatively influence the use of learning outcomes in governance and policy-making?**

- IE: Implementation takes time, (the VET sector has already gone through many changes).
- How to keep a balance between the quality of the qualifications and the labour-market demand for their (immediate) relevance?
- FR: More private consultants offer assistance in the writing of learning outcomes: are they necessary go-between agents (“facilitators”) or an unnecessary filter?
- Good governance should be supported by peer learning between the same stakeholder groups at different levels
- Governance for parity of esteem between general and vocational education, and between initial and HE.
- “Buy in” LO at a local and regional level -->cascading governance, instead of concentrating the process of negotiating LO at national level.



## d) What factors positively/negatively influence the use of learning outcomes in teaching and learning?

- IE: Common interpretations needed: awarding bodies, developers, evaluators, validation panels
- Important to have updated subject-matter expertise when defining and assessing LO
- IE: LO in programmes and in modules, a development that is somewhat not sufficiently understood yet: Minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) and Minimum intended module learning outcomes (MIMLOs). Should employers expect immediate work-readiness?
- FR: Difficult to work on learning outcomes because the (academic) discipline is no longer at the centre



## d) What factors positively/negatively influence the use of learning outcomes in teaching and learning?

- Perhaps a need to inspire teachers and trainers to leave the habit of knowledge and discuss a new model based on contextualised learning outcomes
- Learner-centred LO means that learners are part of the process: Can learners be engaged in writing LO? The teacher is a moderator and should be given a corresponding role.
- Assessing LO: we have to identify the core that has to be assessed!





## e) How can the international cooperation on the definition and use of learning outcomes be strengthened?

- Share knowledge about how learning outcomes are defined and assessed
- Make use of the EU programme Erasmus+ for this purpose
- Develop a common understanding and language on LO can be difficult in one single country; even harder across countries
- Cooperate on peer learning activities, more than sharing theoretical positions



## Five main issues, challenges, opportunities

1. Defining, writing and using learning outcomes is characterised by negotiations
2. Learning outcomes as result-oriented vs. process-oriented could be conciliated: they form a kind of continuum.
3. Produce two handbooks on LO: one for practitioners, another for policy makers (need to follow up with national guidelines for both target groups in order to communicate with all national stakeholders?)
4. Stronger involvement of teachers and learners, but *how* varies along labour market sectors and sectors of education.
5. Strengthen international cooperation on the definition and use of learning outcomes among policy makers and practitioners (MPL, peer learning, Erasmus+ projects...)



## Working group 2

### Presentation of two country approaches

- Søren Kristensen, Techne, Denmark
- Tony Mizzi, Ministry for Education and Employment, Malta



## Denmark



- Balancing the Philosophical with the Functional
- PISA shock – General education (2012)
- Role of the teacher transformed from responsibility to one of accountability
- More challenging in general education, not so much in HE or VET
- IVET involvement of social partners, occupational profiles, stakeholders were used to outcomes
- Writing learning outcomes huge technical challenge for many stakeholders and practitioners, seen as a barrier
- “policy makers acting like poets, spreading confusion”



## Malta

- LO approach based on IRELAND's FETAC (2005) guidelines
- Programme learning outcomes, knowledge, skills and competences (KSC) - broad, not specific
- Accreditation pathways – formal, LO's to KSC, non-formal, LO's organised according to UNESCO's 4 pillars of Learning
- Expert teams write LO's, consultation with teachers on LO's
- **Way forward** - Training diploma supplement for teachers
- Programme external review process, within the first year
- Awareness of learning outcomes, employers, stakeholders, meaning
- Training sessions for future programme writers and educators, manual for writing LO's provided to support teachers



## Questions

### (a) What is the conceptual point of departure in national contexts, strengths and weaknesses

- Use of Bloom: universal. Some use of Dreyfus. Combination of approaches and theories, these are evolving in national contexts
- Strengths comparability/transparency.
- Weaker aspects: can be used superficially to become too reductionist in teaching and learning, misuse can lead to narrowing of learning



## **(b) How is the tension between ‘learning outcomes as result-orientated and process-orientated open to negotiation and only partly measurable?’**

- Examinations in VET and general education, QA processes, inspection, teacher training, programme accreditation; but in HE, more difficult to ensure;
- Accreditor wants outcomes more open; sector can be narrower;
- Can reduce tension – balance between the two approaches. Blended system of two approaches
- No tension, both co-exist, LO’s serve as directions
- Teachers are autonomous, learner centred approach, they are free to use methodologies



## **(c) What factors positively/negatively influence the use of learning outcomes in governance and policy-making?**

- WG of stakeholders early in NQF development and so outcomes; input to law; opposite is also the case – where law making actors absent, this diminishes relevance and so credibility of LOs.
- EU, EQF, LdV projects and money. Research and testing, development.
- Can implement national strategies.





## **(d) What factors positively/negatively influence the use of learning outcomes in teaching and learning?**

- Positive - focus on learner – journey. Making learning more explicit. One benefit of which is less dependence on teacher. Teachers can be more creative. Also task-based, employers appreciate this. E.g. via link to occupational standards.
- If misused, can be too prescriptive. Some Teachers feel curtailed
- Reality in the classroom, resistance to change.
- Teachers reproducing their own experiences, student numbers
- CPD for teachers, lack of support, resources



## **(e) How can the international cooperation on the definition and use of learning outcomes be strengthened?**

- Peer-learning with other countries; teachers, experts; study visits, seminars; projects.
- For sectors, international qualifications, via NQFs, EQF;
- International skills competitions.
- Main issue: subjectively communicated and so (mis) interpreted.
- Systematic reporting, sharing and disseminating experiences and establishing communities of practice
- Benchmarking not appropriate