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EUNEC conference
Consejo Escolar del Estado (CEE)
C/San Bernardo 49
28015 Madrid
LEARNING OUTCOMES
a gadget or a new paradigm?

I. Introduction

EUNEC is the European Network of Education Councils. Its members advise the governments of their countries on education and training. EUNEC aims to discuss the findings and recommendations of all European projects in education and training, to determine standpoints and to formulate statements on these issues. EUNEC wants to disseminate these statements pro-actively towards the European Commission, relevant DGs and other actors at European level, and to promote action by EUNEC's members and participants at national level. EUNEC also has the objective that the councils should put internationalisation, mobility and Europeanization high on the national agenda, that they should recommend and support a European policy in education and training towards all relevant stakeholders: ministry of education (and employment), sectoral and branch organisations, providers and other actors.

In 2008 EUNEC is subsidized as European Association acting at European level in the field of education (Jean Monet programme). This conference is organised with the support of this grant.

II. Theme of the conference

European countries are increasingly referring to learning outcomes when setting overall objectives for their education and training systems and when defining and describing qualifications. Instead of focusing on input factors like the duration, location and particular pedagogical method underpinning a qualification, attention is directed towards what a learner knows and is able to do at the end of a learning process.

Learning outcomes can have diverse functions:

- as reference level descriptors;
- as a vehicle for quality assurance;
- as a tool for relating theoretical and practical learning;
- to link learners' cognitive, skill and affective learning;
- in the formulation of lifelong learning policies;
- as a lever for reform or modernisation;
- for legibility or transparency of learning.

Considerable experiences have been made in European countries in this field. An increasing number of countries are furthermore setting up National Qualifications Frameworks based on learning outcomes, other countries are considering moving in this direction. The launching of a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and a European Credit system for Vocational Education

and Training (ECVET) – both based on learning outcomes - have increased the attention to learning outcomes and may be seen as catalysts for national reforms in this field.

The expectations to the learning outcomes approach are thus higher than ever before. Many see this shift as an opportunity to tailor education and training to individual needs, to improve the links to the labour market, to improve the way non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes are recognized and to guarantee the quality of education and training. Others, however, see this these expectations as unrealistic and exaggerated. The shift from input in the education process to learning outcomes can also be seen in the broader perspective of more autonomy and the capacity of policymaking of schools.

To examine the issues that arise from this shift, Cedefop has commissioned a 32-country comparative report, entitled Rhetoric or reality: The shift towards learning outcomes in European education and training policies and practices. The preliminary findings of this report were discussed at a Cedefop conference held on 15-16 October 2007 in Thessaloniki. The conference examined policy reform in light of the learning outcomes approach and how the approach affects teaching and assessment. The comparative report (QCA – Tom Leney, Jean Gordon and Stephen Adam) is expected to be completed by December 2007.

What does EUNEC want to know with this conference?

EUNEC wants to deal with the following questions during this conference:

- (1) What are learning outcomes?
- (2) What is the benefit of the shift towards learning outcomes? What are the pitfalls? What are the consequences of this shift?
- (3) Learning outcomes in primary education, vocational education and training, general education and training, higher education?
- (4) What are the links with other main issues in education:
 - quality assurance and autonomy of schools and institutions;
 - qualification systems (EQF/NQF/NQS)
 - new learning paradigms (modularisation, ECVET, competence based learning, active learning...)

EUNEC also wants to exchange impressions and experiences out of the member councils.

Therefore, EUNEC foresees a lot of time in the programme for workshops.

III. PROGRAMME

Monday 16 June 2008

9.30 h Opening session

Mercedes Cabrera, Minister of Education, Social Policy and Sports

Simone Barthel, President of EUNEC

Carmen Maestro-Martin, President of the CEE

Learning outcomes: history and concept

10.00 h The evolution of the concept 'Learning outcomes' in Europe

Jean-Pierre Malarne, Conseil de l' Education et de la Formation (French Community Belgium)

10.30 h Learning outcomes in the heart of the 'Education and Training 2010' process

Tom Leney, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (United Kingdom)

11.15 h Coffee break

Learning outcomes: a gadget or a new paradigm?

11.45 h Learning outcomes in compulsory education. XVIIIth meeting of the Spanish Education Councils (State and Autonomous Communities): final statements

Konrado Mugertza, president of Euskadi Education Council and member of the Consejo Escolar del Estado (Spain)

12.30 h The results of the Cedefop study on learning outcomes

Tom Leney, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (United Kingdom)

13.15 h Debate

13.45 h Lunch

15.15 h Round table: the concept of learning outcomes on three levels of education and training

Chair: Simone Barthel, EUNEC president

Learning outcomes in compulsory and lifelong education

Juan Iglesias, president of the Extramadura Education Council and member of the Consejo Escolar del Estado (Spain)

Creation of the EHEA, 'Learning outcomes' and transformation of educational categories in higher education"

António M. Magalhães, University of Porto – senior researcher at the Centre for research in Higher Education Policies (CIPES)

An example of learning outcomes in VET: the advice of the CEF on the definition of learning outcomes.

Alain Bultot, Conseil de l' Education et de la Formation (French Community – Belgium)

16.30 h Workshops on the results of the first day

Must we consider learning outcomes as a gadget or a change of paradigm?

Utility? Fears? Questions?

17.30 h End of the first day

18.00 h Cultural activity: concert

21.00 h Conference dinner

Tuesday 17 June 2008

9.30 h **Synthesis of yesterday**
Roos Herpelinck, member of the EUNEC Executive Committee

9.50h **Introduction on today's theme**
Mia Douterlungne, EUNEC general secretary

Implementation of a learning outcomes approach in education and training: implications, conditions and pitfalls

10.00 h **The role of learning outcomes in developing and reforming the Norwegian education and training system**

Kari Berg, Ministry of Education - Norway

10.40 h **New challenges for education in Spain and in the EU**

Alejandro Tiana, National University of Distance Education (Spain)

11.30 h **Coffee break**

12.00 h **Objectives, qualifications, competencies and learning outcomes:
some experiences from the Netherlands**

Catherina Drenthe, Onderwijsraad (The Netherlands)

12.45 h **Debate**

13.30 h **Lunch**

The role of stakeholders and education councils

15.15 h **The role of stakeholders and education councils in a learning outcomes approach**

Tom Leney, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (United Kingdom)

16.00 h **Debate on the role of the councils**

16.30 h **Workshops**

Implementation of learning outcomes in compulsory education, VET and higher education

Impact on the design and the organisation of qualifications;

Impact on general education: citizenship, living together... how can we transcribe this in learning outcomes?

Consequences for users, schools, professional training?

How can we assure implementation?

18.30 h **Cultural activity: guided visit of Madrid (by bus)**

Wednesday 18 June

EUNEC statements on learning outcomes

9.30 h **Proposal of statements**

Roos Herpelinck and **Alain Bultot**, members of the EUNEC Executive Committee

10.00 h **Debate and formal adoption of the statements**

IV. Monday 16 June

Opening Session

CARMEN MAESTRO, President of the Consejo Escolar del Estado (Spain)

Welcome at the Spanish National Education Council. We are very pleased that EUNEC, the European Network of Education Councils, is organising this conference in Madrid.

I would like to express a special word of thank to Simone Barthel, the EUNEC president for her special attention for the Spanish education system, her quick response to all our demands and for her generosity. Her last presentation at the meeting of the councils of the Autonomous Regions in Bilbao was an example of sensitivity and capacity to communicate.

I also want to thank our minister who has accepted to open this conference. This way, she shows once again how important education councils are for her and how much she values the participation of the educational community.

Education councils are organised on the base of participation. This participation derives from the very framework of the Spanish constitution. We have an advisory role and we take our thoughts up to the administration. When councils reach agreements, it gives a fundamental added value to proposals. These proposals are backed with the strength of consensus. The value of participation is shared by most of European countries. The presence of all of you in this conference is a proof of this principle. The existence of the European Network of Education Councils is of vital importance in order to achieve knowledge and coordination between advisory and coordination bodies in different countries in Europe. From the very upset and during various conferences it has acted as an interlocutor with supranational organisations, always with the aim of presenting proposals that can contribute to improving cultural and economic cohesion in our societies.

In this conference we will focus on the concept of learning outcomes, this is what a learners knows and is able to do at the end of a learning process. We will see how different European countries are creating national frameworks for qualifications. Hopefully when we have finished this joint reflection, we will be able to answer some crucial questions that arise from this matter. Is there an advantage in orienting education systems towards the results of learning? What are the difficulties that this change could entail? What are the possible consequences? The subject of this conference is one of the biggest concerns of all education councils in Spain. Basic competences are an aspect that is closely related to learning outcomes. The Spanish Education Councils have worked on this subject throughout the whole school year 2007-2008. The conclusions of that work will be presented on this conference by the president of the Euskadi education council. The professional qualifications of the speakers, your active participation and the content of the conference as such make me believe that the conclusions we will reach at the end of the seminar will be deep, rich and fruitful. Hopefully we will be able to work intensely and productively but also in a relaxed way. I hope that you all feel at home, I thank you for your presence and I hope you will enjoy the conference.

SIMONE BARTHEL, EUNEC president

It is a big honour for me to meet you all here in Madrid. I welcome the active participation of Spain in EUNEC. I would specially thank you, Madam Minister, for your interest and for the support you give to our network of councils. I would also thank our friends in the Spanish council who have organised this conference. I would also want to express my thanks to the speakers who will take the floor. We hope that we can learn a lot from them. In this context, I have to do a regrettable announcement. Mr Jens Bjornavold from Cedefop has cancelled his participation for personal reasons. So unfortunately we will have to improvise a little bit and proceed without a representative of Cedefop. However, Tom Leney who is member of the EUNEC Executive Committee and who cooperates with Jens on the Cedefop study on learning outcomes has accepted to take the floor and to give a summary of the presentation of Mr. Bjornavold's presentation.

I would like to say something about EUNEC. EUNEC is a European network; that means that a whole set of councils are working together in order to inform each other and produce interesting material. At the moment there are twenty countries or regions working within the network, with eight full members that constitute the Executive Committee. In our conferences we also welcome the participation of associate members and network members. Not all countries have an education council. Some countries come as an observer to understand what an education council is and how it works. EUNEC has the ambition to show to Europe how councils function. Therefore we will launch in the near future an important study on advisory and consultative bodies in the European Union. The objective of this study is to identify models of councils and to prove how they can be useful for governments and decision makers. This is an important moment on European level because the European Commission is trying to integrate the stakeholders in education and training by constituting a Stakeholders Forum. EUNEC should be able to represent the various stakeholders in education and training in this Forum. The role of EUNEC is to unite the councils so they can inform each other on their working and they can learn from each other. EUNEC also wants to have a close look on the evolution of the Education and Training 2010 programme. We closely follow the European agenda in education and training and we want to be a critical observer of this process. We realised that things advanced very fast since the European Council of Economy and Finances said that education was an important driver for Europe's knowledge economy. This has given an important boost for reforms in almost all countries of the Union. All this is developing very quickly. The learning outcomes, the theme of this conference, are an important part of this big European project. You are well aware that Europe has no competencies in the field of Education and that is why Europe is using the open method of coordination. This means that ministers of education agree to work together to achieve certain aims, that they take decisions together in which they commit their country. Therefore it is important to emphasise that the decisions are not made by Europe. It is the ministers that accept the proposals in the Council. It is important that we don't hide behind the bogeyman Europe. If we want to make progress, we have to make decision together and try to achieve the objectives we have put in place. EUNEC wants to express its opinion on these European developments. In previous meetings, we had the opportunity of having important European representatives amongst us. This has allowed us to start discussions, to modify texts. EUNEC wants to represent the opinions of the different councils, so that everything can progress with the involvement of stakeholders and with attention for implementation at local level.

On this conference, we will focus on learning outcomes. How can we define this concept? How can we adopt this concept in our national or regional systems? What are the questions that we need to ask ourselves in each of our countries? In the programme, there will be presentations but there will also be some time for reflection and active participation in debates and in workshops. The

objective of this whole process is to produce an opinion that will be sent to the national, regional and European decision makers.

Thank you for your attention and I hope that this conference will be fruitful for all of you.

MERCEDES CABRERA, Minister of Education, Social Policy and Sports

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you in Madrid. I want to welcome all the members of the Spanish National Education Council, the presidents of the councils of the autonomous regions and especially all the representatives of the member councils of the European Network of Education Councils. You will deal with one of the most important themes in the current education policy and in the agendas of those who are responsible for education in all our respective countries: the learning outcomes. We are all aware that this theme has large implications for the whole educational field, for the whole society and for our educational systems. We will need the participation of all actors involved: professors, alumni, families, all sectors that are directly linked to education and also the whole society. We are all aware that it is the future of our countries and the future of Europe that is at stake. That is why we need to listen to the educational community and to the society. This is why it is so important and so essential to work with these educational councils. I don't think that it is necessary for me to say that the ministry of education is always paying attention to the actions of the State Education Council, which is the highest advisory and participation body with regard to education in our country. The reports on educational laws and development decrees produced by this council all contributed to improving laws. On the other hand the annual description on the state and the situation of the educational system has allowed us very often to discover problems that were affecting education in Spain and to search for solutions for these problems. This Education Council works in very close cooperation with the councils of the autonomous governments. This provides a fertile relationship, there are national meetings and there are other cooperation channels that are used and that have proved to be essential in a decentralised state with autonomous communities. Educational competences are in Spain distributed between the general state administration and autonomous communities. This cooperation enriches educational policies. Just as this cooperation between central and regional councils is essential, so is the cooperation between school councils in Europe. The president of EUNEC has referred to the European policy in education. I subscribe everything she has said with regards of the Lisbon strategy and the objectives for education in 2010. Education has an important place in our society and is crucial for the future of our societies. It is true that the European Union has no direct competences in education, but it is also true that it is essential that we should be able to count on the cooperation of all European countries in the council of European ministers if we want to achieve the objectives on social cohesion and wellbeing. The work of EUNEC is important is that context. As our president has said, councils act as advisory bodies for governments, channelling the participation of society in education policies. This is why this network is a qualified interlocutor offering a way for education decision makers to listen to the educational heartbeat of the European Union. I want to make it very clear that within this important task of communication between society and the educational system the support of the Ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sport will always be there.

The theme of this conference, learning outcomes, is a priority for all those of us who have responsibility with regards to educational policies. The learning outcomes should be a concern for all of us: teachers, headmasters, parents, technical and political decision makers and educational theoreticians. We all want to establish a connection between what is learned at school and what we need in order to materialise our personal, professional and social aspirations. For this reason, the ministry of Education, Social Policy and Sports, will be paying great attention to analyse the

conclusions you reach at the end of this conference. I want to congratulate you and thank you for your cooperation and I want to encourage all workshops and discussions will be essential for the results of this conference.

Thank you very much.

Learning outcomes: evolution of the concept

JEAN PIERRE MALARME, Conseil de l'Éducation et de la Formation (Belgium – French Community)

It is a real challenge to be the first speaker on this conference. I will try to describe the evolution of the term learning outcomes in the documents of the Bologna and the Copenhagen process. I will not deal with the history of the concept because the term learning outcomes is much older than the two processes I have mentioned. This concept is not totally new. In the labour market it is used frequently. Management of competences in the relation between the employer and the employee is rather usual. In former days, a qualification was enough to have a job. What you need now, is speaking of flexibility, lifelong learning and competences. The concept is also present in the pedagogical world, where there is a focus on active learning with an emphasis on competences in stead of on transmitting knowledge. Within this broad context of the labour market and a new pedagogical approach we will explore the use of the term learning outcomes has evolved in the Bologna and the Copenhagen process. It seems that the concept is easier applicable in a vocational education and training context than in the context of higher education. At least there is some resistance at university level, although the term is frequently used in the Bologna documents.

In the Trends report of the EUA in 1999 one speaks about: 'Ideally comparison of qualifications should therefore not be done according to years of study but according to learning outcomes, predefined standards of learning and acquired competencies.' We see that the concept of learning outcomes is directly associated with the idea of comparing qualifications. It is linked with the concept of transparency of qualifications. You also see that they don't only speak about learning outcomes, but also about standards of learning and acquired competences.

Within the Lisbon strategy which includes both strategies we also can observe the term learning outcomes. In the Lifelong Learning Memorandum (2000), we read 'Investing in human resources is therefore also question of enabling people to manage their own 'time-life portfolios' and making a wider range of learning outcomes more visible for all concerned.' The concept of learning outcomes is associated to lifelong learning.

In the Copenhagen declaration the term does not appear but in the Berlin Communiqué of the Bologna process (2003) we read: 'Ministers encourage the member States to elaborate a framework of comparable and compatible qualifications for their higher education systems, which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile.' Here, the concept of learning outcomes is linked with the idea of a qualifications framework for higher education. We can also observe that in the definition the term does not simply arise on its own. It is amongst others associated with competences and workload. This concept of workload was essential for the creation of the European Credit Transfer System in Higher Education.

Another document, in which the term appears, is the Common European Principles for Validation of non-formal and informal Learning (2004) within the Copenhagen process. 'Validation is based on the assessment of the individual's learning outcomes and may result in a certificate or diploma.' This is a very important idea. The concept of learning outcomes was linked with the concept of validation, especially with the validation of non-formal and informal learning. In the Maastricht

communiqué (2004) the term was linked on the credit concept (ECVET) and the creation of a European Qualifications Framework: 'ECVET will be based on competences and learning outcomes.' 'The framework (EQF) will provide a common reference to facilitate the recognition and transferability of qualifications covering both VET and general (secondary and higher) education, based mainly on competences and learning outcomes.'

In the Bergen communiqué (Bologna process 2004), we discover a link with a new function: the idea of formulating generic descriptors. 'We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles.' This is an important stage in the Bologna process. The term learning outcomes is linked with the general descriptors and with the credits (for the two first cycles).

The Helsinki communiqué (Copenhagen process 2006) states that 'developing and testing a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) based on learning outcomes, providing greater parity and better links between the VET and HE sectors and taking account of international sectoral qualifications...' We can find here again the link with the qualifications framework and the idea that learning outcomes can be a bridge between vocational education and training, higher education and sectoral training. In the beginning of June 2008 there was a conference in Brussels on the implementation of the EQF and this idea was the central theme of several workshops. You may also have noticed that the term 'competences' has disappeared in this text. Learning has become an autonomous concept. From now on, it seems that competences are considered as one of the elements which allow to describe the learning outcomes.

In the London Communiqué (Bologna 2007) the concept Learning Outcomes appears four times. 'With a view to the development of more student-centred, outcome-based learning, the next exercise should also address in an integrated way national qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes and credits, lifelong learning, and the recognition of prior learning.' '...develop partnerships and cooperation with employers in the ongoing process of curriculum innovation based on learning outcomes.' '...develop modules and study programmes based on learning outcomes and credits, and improve the recognition of qualifications as well as all forms of prior learning.' '...ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload...' The analysis of these four texts show a link with three new issues : the emphasis on student-centred outcome based learning, a tool for curriculum innovation and the legibility for employers.

We can conclude that learning outcomes are a central issue in both processes. The concept is linked with lifelong learning, transparency, qualifications framework, validation, credits, generic descriptors, student centred and outcome based learning, curriculum innovation and legibility for employers.

Two other important features of the shift to learning outcomes are the influence on assessment methods and the link with quality assurance. In the declaration on quality assurance of 2005, we read 'The quality assurance of programmes and awards are expected to include development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes...' and 'Student assessment procedures are expected to be designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives.'

One can also see that the concept 'learning outcomes' is the subject of several conferences and studies:

- The shift to learning outcomes. Policies and practices in Europe. Draft report March 2008. Cedefop
- EQF Implementing Conference. Brussels June 2008

- Virtual communities Cedefop: Credit Transfer In VET - European Qualifications Framework - Non-formal and Informal Learning
- Cluster: recognition of learning outcomes
- Bologna Seminars 2007-2009

LOs based HE: the Scottish experience February 2008 Edinburgh

ECTS based on learning outcomes and student workload April 2008 Moscow

Development of a common understanding of Los an ECTS June 2008 Porto

- Bologna process Ministerial Conference Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve 2009

The EUNEC conference on the shift to learning outcomes is thus a very topical subject.

To conclude it is important to notice that in the two processes the concept of learning outcomes has been undone from the concept of competences. It has become an independent concept. In the Copenhagen process we can also see that they never mention the workload of the student. They only focus on the outcomes. In the Bologna process both concepts (learning outcomes and workload) are associated with each other.

We can also analyse two official definitions. In the Copenhagen process I have taken the definition of the EQF recommendation: 'Learning outcomes' means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process and are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.' This is a very simple, pragmatic definition. It is also important to see that competences in EQF are described as the assumption of responsibilities and depending on the level of autonomy. These were the two concepts on which the countries could reach an agreement. This doesn't mean that countries cannot add other elements when they establish their national qualification frameworks. The other definition comes from the ECTS User guide: 'Learning outcomes are sets of competences, expressing what the student will know, understand or be able to do after completion of a process of learning, long or short.' This concept is rather new in higher education and it is not always easy to use this concept in that context because it is originally arisen from vocational education and training.

It is clear that we will need some additional clarification of the concept and the consequences for implementation. I think that the Cedefop study is a first approach to do this necessary work. How will we translate and implement this concept into practice? It is clear that the shift to learning outcomes will involve changes at all level of education, for the teaching profession because we are passing from an input oriented towards an output oriented system. This is a major change (a new paradigm?), mainly because it is based on a student centred approach.

Learning outcomes at the heart of the European process

TOM LENEY, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (United Kingdom)

I am very pleased to take part in this conference in which so many people from across Europe from different councils are taking part, but also in which colleagues from the different regions in Spain are participating so actively.

The first thing I want to say is that Jens Bjornavold is extremely sorry that he is unable to be here today. He has asked me to say a few words on his behalf to summarize briefly the theme which he would have covered.

The theme of his contribution is really the question why did the European Commission (through Cedefop) want to put learning outcomes onto the centre of the stage and particularly to direct an entire study to learning outcomes at this point. In the historical introduction of Jean-Pierre Malarme, we could quite clearly understand that whilst a number of processes are involving increasingly the use of the term learning outcomes right at their centre, what learning outcomes were and how they can be used and developed was very much implied rather than clear.

The first motivation of Cedefop and the European Commission was in a sense to bring together a number of the key elements in the developments at the European level all of which assumed a great deal about learning outcomes but without very much specificity. And again Jean-Pierre has really outlined most of those areas. Let me just highlight six areas for you. And in thinking about this, it seems to me that learning outcomes at the European level of development and discussion and debate (with countries, councils, stakeholders...) is a little bit like that Pirandello play which is called 'Six characters in search of an author'. There are a large number of European programmes in which learning outcomes are featuring prominently. Let me just remind you of six:

- the recognition of non-formal and informal learning;
- the developments of systems of credit accumulation and transfer (in higher education and in vocational education and training);
- the question of transparency in our education and training systems (bringing together the different subsystems of education);
- the question of quality assurance. Does the quality assurance of a university depend entirely on the number of degrees that it produces or does it depend very much on the kind of input conditions (curriculum, contents, number of subjects, numbers of teachers, kind of facilities...)?
- the question of opening learning up to all people (lifelong learning), not just those who might have found their way into a formal qualification.
- All of those five domains rely quite heavily on ideas of learning outcomes if the shift is going to take place from the way that we thought 10 or 15 years ago to the way that we are all beginning to think now. Perhaps that is the key underlying shift: it is the shift from traditional modes of teaching and learning to what we are supposed to call a much more active approach to teaching and learning (the active learning paradigm).

To follow up on Jean-Pierre's very interesting introduction, Jens would have wanted to put before you the way in which learning outcomes have become an important part of the discussions which are taking place at the European level. They are an important part at the European level but in some ways they are a kind of implicit or blind path. Because until Cedefop commissioned the study, which engaged most of our attention for most of last year and the beginning of this year, there still had been no clear study of how and what different countries for example were meaning by learning outcomes. We used to have a kind of refreshing mint, a sweet that we call the polar mint. It is a white coloured mint and in the centre of the mint, there is a vacuum, there is a hole. In many ways, at the European level, looking at the areas of innovation and collaborating that we all are exploring together, learning outcomes were a little bit like that space in the centre of the polar mint. Everything was assumed but nobody quite knew what was there. A study looking more carefully at learning outcomes was a way of making explicit what up until then had been implicit.

Perhaps the main reason wherefore the European Commission and Cedefop wanted a clear study and a clear development of debate on the questions of learning outcomes was not so much what was happening on the European level but what was happening at the national and the sectoral levels across Europe. In particular many European countries have developed or are developing sectors and levels of their qualifications in a way that is innovative for them. They are no longer looking at describing a qualification in terms of the number of years spent in a certain kind of institution or combination of institutions but they are trying to look at their qualifications in terms

of whatever their own visions on learning outcomes are (knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences). In particular it is the development of learning outcomes in one form or another as part of establishing qualification frameworks (whether it is in vocational education and training or across whole systems, that countries have really pointed up how important it is that we have a clear idea about learning outcomes. Jens has asked me to report to you that in particular Germany has now published its paper in which it tells the rest of us in Europe how it is intending to develop its qualifications into a framework for the first time and on how it is intending to use levels and outcomes in its way of defining qualifications.

These were the main points that Jens wanted to express to you. I also want to remember that one of the main networks that is working on this theme is called the learning outcomes cluster. In your documentation you will find the Cedefop summary of our study, drawn for three of the main chapters. The study that we have conducted has now been accepted by Cedefop and is going to the final editing process and should hopefully be published later in the summer.

Questions and remarks

Mia Douterlungne: Are there links between the concept of learning outcomes and the item of equity education? How can low achievers, minority groups, pupils with a poor economic background benefit from this concept?

Jaromir Coufalik: It is very important to point at the tension between the learning outcomes on paper (curricula, documents etc.) and the real learning outcomes that are the results of a learning process at school. Teachers are key actors in this process. They have to minimize the difference between documents and practice. The main problems in education are caused by the difference between the intended goals and outcomes on the one hand and the real outcomes on the other hand.

Francisca Arbizu: This is an absolutely necessary conference. It is important to start thinking about the definition and the translation of the term learning outcomes. For instance, we talk about formal and non formal education and there is a difference between outcomes of education and outcomes of learning. It is essential to point at the context of the learning outcomes. If learning outcomes are realised in a school context, we are talking about results of education. But if they take place in a work context, we are talking about the results of experience. How can we express these two different kinds of learning outcomes? How can we define learning outcomes so we can use them at all levels of education and training?

Jean Pierre Malarme: Learning outcomes are linked with the European key competences. There are many European countries that want to realise these competences with all their pupils and that is a real challenge for the future. The second question is also a real challenge. The difference between what is said and what is done is probably one of the most important concerns of the whole concept. We have to achieve the objectives in practice. We need to look at results of the learning process. Therefore we need to ask ourselves questions and to look at quality control systems.

Tom Leney: These three questions are really key questions for the conference. It is not questions on which we can give a quick and easy answer. They really are at the heart of what we are going to deal with today and tomorrow.

Despida Forcier: For all countries in Europe, this is a very interesting topic, especially for countries that try to develop a national qualifications framework. It is very difficult to define learning outcomes. But I think that not only defining is difficult, the most difficult thing to do is the assessment of learning outcomes. In the future, Cedefop or other organisation can probably do some work on developing ways of assessment of competences.

Tom Leney: In the Cedefop study we also looked at the question of assessment. I'll try to report on that a little bit later this morning.

Learning outcomes in compulsory education

KONRADO MUGERTZA, president of the Euskadi Education Council and member of the Consejo Escolar del Estado (Spain)

I want to start by thanking Carmen Maestro, president of the Spanish National Council, and all the other people who were participating in this project.

The conference in Bilbao (May 2008) was really the culmination of everybody's effort and excellent cooperation between all the regional education councils. In my presentation I will be referring to the conclusions we reached throughout the whole school year and to the meeting of all autonomous communities' and State Education councils in Bilbao on key competences in education. Probably I will say things that are not completely new to you, but we have considered this topic as a very important step.

I will also be referring to the way we work in our council meetings. I think this can be useful for education councils or advisory bodies in this forum. It may be interesting to know how we worked, given the great heterogeneity of our councils, the differences in configuration, the differences in functions. The Autonomous Communities and State Education Councils are the top bodies of advice in the different communities. They are advisory bodies for their administration; they prepare reports on the state of education and they produce reports on the main legal regulations and the educational programmes. In each school year we work together on a relevant education subject. For the school year 2007-2008 we chose basic educational competences. It was the Euskadi Education Council that I am representing here that was chosen to direct the planning, the coordination, the drafting of documents and the organisation of the final event. The 18th encounter of the Autonomous Communities and State Education Council (7-9 May in Bilbao) was the final event for the work carried out throughout the school year. The event brought together a total of 180 people. Throughout the three days, we got discussions, presentations of experiences in different education centres and centres for the training of teachers, a round table discussion on assessment and finally a presentation on the development of key competences at European level by Simone Barthel, the EUNEC president and Tapio Saavala of the European Commission.

The objectives of the project were to elaborate our reflections on the theme and to take the conclusions and recommendations up to the educational administrations. We wanted to make our conclusions clear and simple, so they could reach the educational community and the society in general. We tried to search for consensus, taking into account the diversity of opinions. We transmitted the idea that education is facing important changes and we need to produce a better response to the new times and a better and progressive training of all citizens with the cooperation and implication of the different social agents. Globalisations, human flows, the new forms of relationships, the development of ICT, the modern conception of lifelong learning and training are all factors that play an important role in our lives and also in our education systems. Education systems are complex systems that slowly adapt themselves to the new scenario. The new education curricula that are promoted by the European Commission are aiming to develop competences. International assessments, such as PISA, are also based on this idea. Basic educational competences are at present a subject of greatest priority for us in Spain. We are looking for the possibility of a new curriculum proposal. We thought that Education councils should have the possibility to make their reflections, recommendations and proposals on this subject.

I will talk on how we have carried out this task. Throughout the whole school year the presidents of the councils met and worked in Donostia, Tenerife, Santiago de Compostella, Zaragoza, Madrid and Bilbao. In different meetings and sessions draft versions of the documents were presented and discussed. We took them back at home to discuss them within our different councils. This was a very tedious methodology, but it allowed us to include all the contributions of the different social sectors represented by the councils. By means of dialogue we brought together conflicting opinions. This method of working brought councils together developing new competences in terms of relationship and respect.

The development of a curricular approach based on competences is a very important innovation in education. It request changes in the ways we approach and understand education and the processes of teaching and learning. It affects pedagogical methodology, the relationship between teachers and students and families, the initial training of teachers, educational materials, assessment methods etc. It is always healthy to rethink education but right now it is absolutely essential. What is really important, is a change in mentality of all those who are, directly or indirectly, working in the educational sector. Education councils can play a key role and they must do so in order to make this transformation happen. The different stakeholders in education have to understand and assume the fact that adapting to modern times is something that affects us all.

Which are the key educational competences? What are the characteristics of an educational model based on basic competences? I will not going to delve deeper into this, I just want to give an overview of the eight competences that are formulated in Spain. They are not so different from the list of other countries or the European Commission: linguistic communication and competence, mathematical competence; knowledge and interaction with the physical world; treatment of information and digital competence; social and citizen competence; cultural and artistic competence; the learning to learn competence and autonomy and personal initiative.

Within this new approach we are going from knowledge to knowing how to do. Knowledge is necessary but we need to go beyond that knowledge. We have to know how to apply it in specific and real situations. Therefore the priority is given to training for life (personal, professional and social). The subjects have to be integrated in the real life. This new approach also entails deep changes in education.

I will also give some reference to the document that was produced after the encounter. We produced a document with three parts. The first part deals with the conceptual framework. The second part refers to the application of basic competences in autonomous communities. This is a descriptive section including the plans, programmes and actions undertaken in the different autonomous communities with regards to teacher training, educational innovation, organisation of assessment, production of materials etc. The third part focuses on proposals for the development of basic educational competences.

What are the conclusions of this process? It is the proposals for the development of basic educational competences. The explicit formulation of basic educational competences involves that they should be achieved by all students in compulsory education. Its application could and should be a new element for the reform of basic education. We present recommendations that should be taken into account with regards to curriculum and learning development, to teachers, to schools and educational centres and to social agents involved in education.

With regards to curriculum and learning and teaching processes, we highlight the importance of emotional education. The integration of thought, emotion and action is the basis of personal, social and learning development. On the other hand, competences related to physical development are also crucial for the integral training of pupils. We request that the administrations develop their approach based on competences so that they can be integrated in an interdisciplinary way. They

also should establish the levels that should be acquired in the different levels. The administrations are requested to provide plans, programmes and methodologies that should help educational centres, teachers and the educational communities to reconduct compulsory education according to the new approach based on competences. Finally we include a reflection on the importance of international assessment and diagnosis assessment. We can make appropriate use of these assessments when we understand them as instruments to improve education to quality and equity.

Secondly, we talk about teachers. It is necessary to include theoretical and practical qualifications in the initial and permanent training of teachers, appropriate to develop their personal and social skills and competences given special importance to practical work in the educational centres and schools. Access to teaching should be revised and assessment of teaching practice should be developed as a way to improve the professional competences of teachers.

We also formulated recommendations for education centres. It is necessary to make progress in developing pedagogical, organisational and management autonomy of teaching centres. It is also necessary to promote communication between teachers and students and the participation of all agents in the educational communication. It is essential to stimulate the participation of families in the school life of their children. The participation of students in managing and improving the process of learning and teaching should be improved too. Finally some recommendations are made on improving the organisational and management structures of educational centres by strengthening the coordination between teachers and by participation in educational centre networks.

With regards to social agents involved in education it is necessary to assimilate the idea that in the acquisition and the development of some basic competences the involvement of various stakeholders (families, media, social partners...) is required. We highlight how important it is to promote the reconciliation of family and professional life and to promote care and family policies. In this whole process, the role of education councils is to stimulate the gradual application of these new measures so that we can guarantee that they are incorporated in the educational practice of schools and educational centres. Therefore the educational councils ask the administrations to include the necessary indicators which will allow assessment and evaluation.

Questions and remarks

Barthel

I don't want to ask a question but I want to make a remark. You have described the role of the councils very clearly. In your way of working it has been proved that each council can play its own role to make progress towards the idea of working on these basic competences. This way of cooperation can give us inspiration for future actions.

Douterlungne

I want to ask a practical question. You have involved a lot of stakeholders to define the basic educational competences. How did you manage to find an agreement? What were the difficult points? What were the points of discussion or was it a very easy process?

Mugertza

There were aspects in which we agreed without big discussions...other themes asked more discussion. To be honest, we worked at different levels. On the one hand, we needed an agreement within our different autonomous community councils and the state council. The different participating sectors all have their own preoccupations and legitimate interests. You all know how it works in an education council. But we also worked together with the other councils. And there, once again, we came across our different views on education, our different approaches and our particular sensitivities and ideologies. This is hard work. A good relationship between the presidents has allowed us to reach agreements. In all these meetings that we have held within this

whole process, we slowly were finding a meeting point, a consensus...not on every single point but at least on a central access. This is what appears in the document. I have to admit that there are some aspects in which we can never agree but we assume that finding a consensus is of great value. The discussion and the dialogue on the issues on which we disagree help us all in our thinking process and enrich our training to find a consensus. We always have to try and understand the other person's and the other council's views.

Arbizu

The change of paradigm, by focusing on competences in education and learning, really entails a change in the practices in education and training programmes. Looking at the PISA results and what Finland is saying, the teaching staff is a key element. If teachers do not take part in this new paradigm, if they don't start working with their students focusing on competences, we will not be able to do much. Taking into account that our country is decentralised, is there a specific strategy for cooperation or is there a form of open coordination between councils?

Mugertza

In the second part of our report, we have included the practices that are already applied in the different autonomous communities. There are a lot of initiatives on teacher training, on in service training, the organisation of education centres, the production of materials, educational innovation in general... We are slowly adapting our education systems on the new challenges. We need to change mentalities; it is not just a surface change. The new initial teacher training is for instance very important. As education councils we need to pass these new ideas towards the education communities and administrations. We will carry on working on this with all education councils in Spain. I agree with you that the teaching staff is the most important element in this process. It is a sector that needs more support. The sector should be leading this educational change.

Maestro-Martin

I agree with everything that has been said. All education councils had to report on the new law on education and the idea of competences is the new key element of the reform. In Bilbao it became very clear that a high percentage of teacher centres were worried about what their pupils know and are able to do after finishing their basic education. In that sense, we have learned a lot and education councils are the ideal bodies to exchange interesting experiences and good practices. Education councils allow reflecting on what has been done. The 19th encounter (2008-2009) will continue these efforts. The president of the education council of Extramadura will explain this afternoon.

The shift to learning outcomes. - Policies and practices in Europe

TOM LENEY, JEAN GORDON, STEPHEN ADAM

I will introduce not only the outcomes of the study that we have conducted, but also talk about the process and what we have learnt on the way.

We more or less have finished the study by the end of 2007 but Cedefop took a little time to formulate some comments to us and so the final draft was accepted by Cedefop round about the end of March. The study will hopefully be published by the autumn. Cedefop already made a summary study.

This conference is for us the first opportunity to discuss, to air the results of the research in a public domain. This conference is very much reflective, is looking at ongoing processes. What I would like to do in presenting the study to you, is try to do it in a reflective way. Maybe, when we present this study in a few months, we will have firmed up one or two of the conclusions but my purpose this morning is to try to contribute to reflection rather than to stand on a podium and declare some results. I will say what we have learnt as a result of doing the study: some of the difficulties and some of the unanswered questions that we encountered on the way through. I hope that that will help you in the work you are doing on this important theme.

The title of the study is 'The shift to learning outcomes. Policies and practices in Europe'. It is a Cedefop study and the theme that conducted the study was lead from QCA. We have a small international unit with five people and we have some experience in the past of leading studies like this. A co-writer and a co-researcher was Jean Gordon, the editor of the European journal of education. The third person was Stephen Adam. He had a strong involvement in the whole of the Bologna process for higher education since its early days.

As we were writing our first draft for Cedefop, one thing became very clear for us as the authors of the report: the part of the report that was weakest was the part that dealt with higher education. Therefore Stephen came in the team and that helped us to achieve a well balanced report which covers higher education as well as other parts of the education and training sectors. It was a super team to work with and this is very important to conduct such a comparative study with 32 countries.

I want to cover three particular themes. First I want to give you an overview on what we were asked to do in the study. Secondly I will concentrate on the conceptual aspect of learning outcomes. Thirdly I will present the results of the study in a reflective way. I want to give you some of the main conclusions as a starting point for the reflection process that is one of the objectives of this conference.

Theme 1: Overview of the study: aims, methods, coverage

The first complication is the terms. I want to give you three clear ideas all of which have a rather different point of reference, but all of which are important. We have already come across this notion of competence and learning outcomes several times this morning. They are not totally separate but it is a mistake to think that they are completely interchangeable. Competence is generally used as the knowledge and know-how needed to perform at work (or in your personal, family or social life) to a good standard. The difficulty for me when we are using the term competence is that the word is used with different definitions in different places. The problem with

competences is that it has multiple meanings. And since there is no single meaning, people tend to fall back on their own tradition, on their own usage and they use competence as if it couldn't mean anything anywhere else. But in fact it is used in multiple different ways.

Learning outcomes is a less problematic idea. In a way it is a sort of neutral term. The definition that we decided to stay with was even simpler than the one from the Copenhagen and Bologna process. We decided to stick with the concept that learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of learning. I hope that this is a clear difference between competence, a rather shimmering concept and learning outcomes which can be used in a variety of contexts because of its neutrality.

I think that the third idea is probably the most important and the most fundamental one. It is used by the Noble prize winning economist Sen. He talks about capability. This is the full range of knowledge and know-how that a person has acquired through experience and can freely use. Your capability is part of your make up which you have the power to use. It puts the emphasis back on the individual as a free agent. Your range of capability is wider than a particular job or a particular life context will demand.

Cedefop asked us to focus comprehensively on learning outcomes, looking at concepts, at linkages and use across subsystems and phases of education and training. We were asked to include reference to informal and non-formal as well as formal learning and we were asked to look at all this from a lifelong learning perspective. And since qualification frameworks are such a hot topic, we were asked to include qualifications, curriculum and assessment questions in the study. This led to three themes for investigation: conceptual clarification, learning outcomes as an aspect of policy reform and learning outcomes impacting on practical reform at the levels of institutions and learners. We started with a literature review on definitions and conceptualisations. We had to cover 32 countries and we did it with the 'fiche methodology' using a clearly defined set of questions. Because we wanted to avoid merely Anglo-Saxon definitions of learning outcomes, we also set up an enquiry through the Eurydice network to encourage them to let us know what their own conceptualisation in their own language and with their own intellectual and educational traditions were in terms of something that looked like learning outcomes. We also asked the ReferNet network to provide us with information as well. At the same time, we had access to research and development work which has been done by the European Commission (NQFs, the updated inventory of non-formal and informal validation, ECOTEC's draft country reports, and national reports for E&T2010). We were also able to get a validation of the fiches (28 of the 32) by country experts (through the cluster on learning outcomes). Finally we held a conference at Cedefop headquarters in October 2007 and there we were helped to round the study off.

Outline of the report:

Part 1: Introduction and background

Overview, methods used, concepts of learning outcomes

Part 2: Descriptive analysis

Learning outcomes at systemic level

Learning outcomes and qualifications

Learning outcomes and curriculum and assessment

Learning outcomes and recognition/validation

Part 3: The analytical part

LEARNING OUTCOMES - A GADGET OR A NEW PARADIGM?

Fulfilling different purposes

Analysis and conclusions

Theme 2: Talking about learning outcomes...

As we were conducting the study, we were finding out more and more about the ways in which countries were trying to use learning outcomes, like we have learned in the very good example of Spain. But there was a sort of gap. We were hearing much more about the kind of process of trying to develop a qualifications framework for example, than about the process of developing learning outcomes. We went right back to the beginning and we asked ourselves what was the basis of the internal dialogues in the different countries. The fiches that we collected gave us very few hints and clues. So we had to do some more work to try to find out what the basis was. One of the sources that we have found was the old Blooms taxonomy (out of the cognitive psychology) with its progressive, hierarchical skills.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synthesis • Analysis • Application • Comprehension • Recall | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internalising values • Organising & prioritising • Valuing • Active participation • Awareness and attention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptation • Complex overt response • Mechanism • Guided response • Set response • Perception |
| COGNITIVE SKILLS | EMOTIVE SKILLS | PSYCHOMOTOR SKILLS |

Nowadays there is a rich variety of sources. There is no simple right answer for the formulation and the development of learning outcomes. This activity is so context-rich. There is no one single framework or set. Two countries (Slovenia and Finland) have used the OECD DeSeCO key competency framework as their basis for developing learning outcomes in the school curriculum.

| Competency 1 Using tools interactively | |
|---|---|
| 1A | The ability to use language, symbols and text interactively |
| 1B | The ability to use knowledge and information interactively |
| 1C | The ability to use technology interactively |
| Competency 2 Interacting in heterogeneous groups | |
| 2A | The ability to relate well to others |
| 2B | The ability to cooperate |
| 2C | The ability to manage and resolve conflicts |
| Competence 3 Acting autonomously | |

LEARNING OUTCOMES - A GADGET OR A NEW PARADIGM?

| | |
|----|--|
| 3A | The ability to act within the big picture |
| 3B | The ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects |
| 3C | The ability to assert rights, interests, limits and needs |

Everybody in the room knows the European Qualifications Framework, with its 8 levels, each described as a series of learning outcomes, based on concepts as knowledge, skills and competences. The EQF is intended to bring together VET, general and higher education, in an overall way. It is intended as a kind of meta-framework that can be used as a point of reference so that European countries can compare their qualifications with others. Its conception is similar with the ideas of Blooms taxonomy. Perhaps it is true to say that in the EQF, complexity and degrees of autonomy and responsibility are the main factors which define the levels.

Exemplified level 2 and 3

| L | Knowledge | Skills | Competence |
|----------|--|---|--|
| 2 | Basic factual knowledge of a field of work or study | Basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools | Work or study under supervision with some autonomy |
| 3 | Knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study. | A range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information | Take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study Adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems |

The Tuning project in the Bologna process (higher education) has identified generic and specialist outcomes with instrumental, interpersonal and systemic competences.

| Instrumental competences | Interpersonal competences | Systemic competences |
|--|---|--|
| Includes: Capacity for analysis and synthesis Capacity for organisation and planning Basic general knowledge Grounding in professional knowledge | Includes: Critical and self-critical abilities Teamwork Interpersonal skills Ethical commitment | Includes: Capacity to apply knowledge in practice Research skills Capacity to learn Creativity Leadership |

So you can see that there are a lot of models around. There are numerous ways of defining learning outcomes and core competences. We tried to work out how skills sets are identified in practice. We think we can see three mechanisms:

| Type 1 Research | Type 2 Negotiation | Type 3 Adopt-adapt |
|--|---|--|
| Learning outcomes developed using a theoretical and / or research formulation or process | Learning outcomes based on negotiation between stakeholders | Learning outcomes borrowed or adapted from elsewhere |

In reality, people use a mixture of these three mechanisms to develop a systemic representation of learning outcomes at different levels. I will give two examples of such a process in VET:

- VET 1: Functional analysis

National Occupational Standards (NOS) are the building blocks for VET qualifications. Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) develop the standards through involving industries and employers. Standards are identified through functional analysis and then, used to help develop units and qualifications. Usually, the qualification structure includes a combination of mandatory and optional units. Units comprise sets of learning outcomes or competences that learners must achieve to successfully complete the unit, and for assessment

- VET 2: Designing a curriculum (DACUM)

This is also a method of occupational analysis, to help develop training curricula. The features of this method are: quick and low cost; face-to-face, round table approach (with experts in the working field); team work: teams include workers who have experience in the occupation; guided by a facilitator: to describe in a clear, precise way the knowledge and the know-how involved in a job. The result is the DACUM map of competencies and sub-competencies. These competency approach is concerned with 'big tasks'.

Source: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/temas/complab/xxxx/17.htm>

Theme 3: Some conclusions from the study

Learning outcomes across general/higher education/VET

- There is a strong association of learning outcomes with active learning approaches and the development of lifelong learning. A new paradigm?
- VET is the sector of education systems in which the use of learning outcomes is most prominent. Upper secondary general education is most impervious.
- Learning outcomes have a surprisingly limited impact on assessment.

- Higher education (Bologna) is more concerned with structural change (bachelors, masters, doctorates). Learning outcomes a 'slow burning fuse'.

Learning outcomes in the school curriculum

We identify three different approaches in which countries are trying to introduce learning outcomes into their mainstream curricula.

Type 1: Narrow targets circumscribed by the subjects in the curriculum.

Type 2: A core curriculum with cross-curricular learning outcomes as a prominent feature (examples: France, Finland).

Type 3: A curriculum led by holistic concepts of learning outcomes (Examples: Norway, Northern Ireland).

The two last types are really output driven and it is key to search for achieving the balance between aims, learning outcomes, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, evaluation.

Validating informal and non formal learning.

We were able to analyse the draft country evidence from the EC/CEDEFOP study (ECOTEC).

In terms of learning outcomes, we observed 2 approaches:

Approach 1: Identified learning outcomes (e.g. in national or sector qualifications framework) combine with an enabling process for recognition (example: Ireland). Learning outcomes are the guiding principle in this approach.

Approach 2: A national procedure for validation and the learning outcomes are more implicit (example: France)

Bold change and getting the balance right

- Learning outcomes are prominent in the development of National Qualifications Frameworks across Europe.
- The debate and the concentration on learning outcomes is new, not the fact in itself.
- Overarching statements of learning outcomes and levels must respect and give room for the specificity of sectors and subsectors in education. There is a danger of rigidity and a new kind of orthodoxy.
- Learning outcomes as a focal point in the complex task of sustainable reform. It is a matter of getting the balance right. Learning outcomes used in somewhat different ways in different aspects of reform (evaluation, efficiency, quality assurance...)
- There is a lot of new research about the brain/learning. The OECD has published a great deal of work on different kinds of learning and on the functioning of the brain of different individuals. This can give useful and challenging conclusions for our focus on learning outcomes.

This business of learning outcomes is a bit like the Russian dolls. You open up the Russian doll and inside there is another one, slightly different. They are not the same. They are not identical. The concept of learning outcomes is useful and usable in different circumstances, but don't mistake these Russian dolls as one single thing that are contained in one single space. It is multiple, there is a multiple and diverse usage.

I hope that I have said some useful things about our study and that this helps for the work that we will do for the next couple of days. Finally you can find some useful information on the following references:

EC DG Employment - http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/employment_social/index_en.htm

EC DGEAC - http://ec.europa.eu/education/index_en.html

OECD - <http://www.oecd.org>

ETF - <http://etf.europa.eu>

CEDEFOP - <http://cedefop.europa.eu>

REFERNET UK - <http://www.refernet.org.uk>

INCA - www.inca.org.uk

QCA - <http://www.qca.org.uk>

Questions and remarks

Tas (Hungary):

I would like to highlight one element of this research. In my country I see that we often try to borrow ideas from other countries, mainly from the United Kingdom or Finland. But I think that it is very important to negotiate between stakeholders. The problem is that there are many stakeholders and it takes a lot of time and money to involve them in such a complex issue as learning outcomes. In our country we borrow a lot of very good ideas but they often are limited to some 'priests' of the Ministry of Education. They never reach schools. I think that we need more resources to involve the stakeholders in the process of educational change. Otherwise, the reforms will not be sustainable.

Barthel:

I think that you are talking about subsidiarity. The European principles are very important but at the end of the way it is each state that has to take actions. I think that it is very important that the member states bring their stakeholders together to reflect, to discuss and to search for implementation. EUNEC has already stated that in the statements on educational change on its conference in Malta some years ago.

Leney:

Our Hungarian colleague puts its finger on a very important point. Let us look at national qualification frameworks in this context. The development of a qualification framework in one or another ministry of Education does not have much practical use although the link with other (international) frameworks is important. But it is not the purpose of developing a qualifications framework. The real purpose is to help solve challenges and blockages in a system. They have to help to obtain more equity, access and transparency in our systems. The learning outcomes are not going to change systems but they can be a powerful mechanism for change. Importing a borrowed qualification system seems to me particularly pointless because it will not solve the local problems. The Scottish Qualification Authority is not the property of the Ministry of Education. It is an independent organisation which the stakeholders support. It has its house outside the ministry. The process of developing a framework is just as important as having a framework at all.

Sakadolskiene:

You mentioned that some countries have over relied on learning outcomes. What is the reason for this?

Leney

The main country that we reported on in this context was South Africa. It is a country that has to make major reforms. It decided that learning outcomes in its qualifications framework should be the driver of all reforms. Each time the learning outcomes were not fulfilling a purpose, the specifications were drawn out in further details. They also specified very highly the learning outcomes orientation of assessment procedures. This attempt collapsed and they got to move on from that. Learning outcomes are important but they are not the only factor that is important. Knowledge and the tradition of good teaching are even important. The message of our report is that the learning outcomes have an important role to play but alongside other things as well (curricula, assessment, good pedagogical methods, teaching styles, different learning styles). We have to get the balance right. We really have to give a nuanced message.

Velasco (inspectorate Madrid)

I would like to emphasise the limited competence of Europe in education. With regards to everything that we have discussed here I should say that learning outcomes and school results are very important. We are not satisfied of the results and we need improvement policies. As inspector, I often see a lack of a sufficient didactic teaching level. We have to insist on the three important elements of the learning process: the teacher, the learner and the subject. We have to invest more in learning processes. We have to measure the added value. Public publication of school results without context is rather useless.

Learning outcomes in compulsory and lifelong education

JUAN IGLESIAS MARCELO

President of the Extramadura Education Council and member of the Consejo Escolar del Estado (Spain)

I would like to thank the European Network of Education Councils for their invitation to attend this round table. It is rather difficult for me to make this presentation, because I have to elaborate an issue which is only a project. At the moment it is just an idea. We are starting the project now and it will last a whole year and will be concluded with a conference of the State and Autonomous Communities Councils in the city of Caceres in the month of May 2009. So, my presentation has obvious limitations. We are at the very, very beginning of this project. At this stage, we only designed the formal path of this initiative under the heading 'Education in the knowledge society'. We really don't know where we will get. We only established the formal procedure of our work. So, we have chosen an issue, we have pointed out a leading council (Extramadura) and a date for the final conference. This conference will be prepared in different meetings all over the country. The objective is to produce a final document at the conference in Caceres. The final result is at the moment unpredictable. We really don't know what will be the outcomes of this whole process. But we will use the same principles as in the past: hard work, consensus and maximal participation and contribution of all education councils.

What will be the content of our work? What is our trajectory? As I said, I can only offer you the initial ideas. We start from some evidence. The evidence allows us to establish some hypotheses. Those hypotheses allow us to obtain 13 implications and consequences for the educational system. What is our starting point? We have heard it already this morning: learning outcomes don't stop by the conclusion of formal education. The learning process continues after any form of formal education. The learning process is never closed; it is a lifelong open process. At this very moment

every one of us is engaged in learning. We are here with various experts from different backgrounds and we are trying to progress, to advance in our thinking and in our reflection on learning outcomes. This is ongoing education. This is lifelong learning.

The society where we are living in produces an endless amount of new ideas of novelties. These new scientific or social ideas have to be incorporated in the knowledge of people in order to be able to face the demands of modern life. Therefore we need to continue learning. We must respond to this need to learn by saying that we are capable to learn during our whole life. The capacity of learning of human beings is never over. There are definitely different stages in life where we have greater capacities to learn but we can go on learning till the end of our life. This is the sense of lifelong or permanent education. This has serious consequences for the organisation of our education systems. Inevitably our answers on this new paradigm are going to change the traditional discourse on educational thinking. Lifelong learning is learning for the future, learning in order to give an answer to the demands of our world. This is a new educational paradigm that possibly will oblige us to reconsider many issues of the traditional discourse on education. We have to reconsider the role of educational centres, networks, teachers, families, assessments, basic competences in compulsory education... As you see, we have many questions but few answers at this stage. This will be our work for the coming year. It would be a great pleasure to meeting you next year in Caceres in order to attend the presentation of our conclusions. We are also open for all suggestions because we are convinced that we will have to open a hundred new paths in the sky of ideas in order to open a single new pathway in the real world.

Creation of the EHEA, 'Learning outcomes' and transformation of educational categories in higher education

ANTÓNIO M. MAGALHÃES, senior researcher at the Centre for research in Higher Education Policies (CIPES) - University of Porto

My presentation objective is to analyse the educational dimension of 'learning outcomes' in higher education and their impact as an instrument for the implementation of the EHEA. I will try to do that in three parts:

- The creation of the EHEA and its implementation stages
- The educational content and impact of the redesigning of higher education using learning outcomes as its main organizer
- Risks and opportunities brought by the implementation of outcome based approach in higher education.

1. The creation of the EHEA

1st stage: setting out the EHEA

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) can be traced back in political perspectives taken during the 1980s: students' mobility, Magna Charta (1988), etc. The EHEA was voiced out for first time in 1997, the European Ministers Conference (Warsaw). In 1997, the Lisbon Convention on Recognition of Qualifications emphasised the need to develop further efforts in the processes of qualifications recognition. In 1998 four countries made a commitment to progressive harmonisation

of degrees and cycles of studies towards a common frame (Sorbonne Declaration). The EU institutions were not, as such, involved in the process.

2nd stage: The Bologna Declaration, a purely political document (Grilo, 2003)

In 1999, the Bologna Declaration emphasised convergence (rather than harmonisation) of European HE systems.

3rd stage: Shift from political declaration to the emphasis on implementation.

2001, Prague communiqué: lifelong learning, the participation of students and the promotion of attractiveness of EHEA.

2003, Berlin communiqué: priority of implementation of the two-tier degree structure, the recognition mechanisms based on the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement.

2005, Bergen communiqué: implementation of the NQF (the European Commission became a voting member)

2007, London communiqué: focus on the political action on mobility, the social dimension, data collection, employability, and the implementation strategy in the global context.

The stocktaking exercises, usually funded by EC, are meant to follow the implementation of the Bologna process. It is clear that the European Union is appropriating the Bologna process since 2000. This emphasis on the implementation must also be understood in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy designed by the 2000 European Council and by the need to coordinate the EU agenda on employment and economic development.

In 2003, the Bologna Follow-up Group underlined the growing impact of the European Council decisions: 'Although the Bologna process was initiated as mainly an intergovernmental process, there is an evident and growing convergence with EU processes aimed at strengthening European co-operation in higher education. [...] At least from this point on, the Process was no longer merely a voluntary action for the EU Member States, or for the candidate Member States either' (Bologna Follow-up Group, 2003).

This shift in governance brought to the fore new policy instruments: the use of benchmarks of performance and progress in member states. Performance indicators became central devices for political monitoring of the process. The implementation took place on the basis of 'soft law', using 'soft' instruments (EQF, NQF, Tuning I and II projects, etc., using the Open Method of Coordination). Soft law and soft instruments are enforcing quite efficiently the European Commission objectives and mottos: 46 countries are moulding their higher education systems to improve the compatibility of their courses and diplomas.

2. Learning outcomes and higher education

From the analysis of the documents of the European Commission and its diverse agencies and bodies, a central educational role is attributed to the concept of 'learning outcomes'.

The EQF is a central political instrument to disseminate the envisaged educational change. The European Parliament recommendation (Oct. 2007), on the establishment of the EQF for LLL, clarifies the meaning of competence-based education: "competence" means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy".

We can thus notice the shift from knowledge content as the organizer of learning to competence(s) as the capacity to mobilize knowledge(s) to know and to act technically, socially and morally. Ph. Perrenoud, the Swiss sociologist, states that 'Competency is surplus value added on to knowledges: the capacity to use knowledge to resolve problems, develop strategies, take decisions, act in the widest sense of the work' (2001).

Aiming at this capacity reassigns the role of knowledge from formative process in itself (based on traditional approaches to subjects and mastery of content) to refocus the learning process on what the learner achieves as outcomes of the learning process. The role of knowledge is mediated by competences and translated into learning outcomes, linking 'understanding', 'skills' and 'abilities'. 'Knowledge', 'understanding' and 'skills' are the units that compose of competence-based and outcome-driven approach driven by the EHEA policy documents. In the documents the issue of knowledge content is passed over and left aside as if the educational goal of competence building may be assigned without discussion.

- It does not seem necessary to discuss about the need to develop procedural competencies based more on content than on 'learning styles'.
- It might occur that the knowledge content carried out in the process of competence building is somehow neutralized in its educational role.

In higher education "where learning outcomes are considered as essential elements of ongoing reforms" (Commission of the European Communities, 2005), there are not many data available on the educational impact of the implementation of competence-based perspectives in higher education institutions. The changes introduced in the educational concepts are so coherent that they suggest an emerging educational paradigm.

Learning outcomes and the emerging educational categories

The founding educational idea of Western higher education was based on the transforming potential of knowledge both at individual and social level. The educational categories (teaching, learning, students, professors, classes, etc.) were grounded in the formative role attributed to knowledge, and the curriculum and the teaching and learning processes were designed to fulfil this goal. Reviewing educational concepts in the setting of the EHEA reveals an important reconfiguration of the educational role of knowledge: its formative role is reconfigured by the potential of mobilizing it to act socially, in particular in the world of work.

The student appears simultaneously as an internal stakeholder, a client of educational services, a person moving from education to labour market (and vice-versa in a path without clear tracks), and a 'learner' of competences.

The professor rather than vanishing as an educational category (Nuyen, 1992) is being reinvented as a provider of learning opportunities and as a 'learning designer'. Illuminated by the educational paradigm and pushed by the diktat efficiency in a context of mass higher education, the professor is no more the 'centre' of knowledge flux and delivery, responsible nevertheless for creating learning opportunities for 'learners'. As an academic he/she is giving up his/her ultimate responsibility to exercise quality judgments on teaching-learning processes in favour of managerial expertise.

Classes are de-localized to the ether of www, face-to-face teaching-learning being a minor proportion of the 'learner' activities. The rise of virtual campuses introduces a new kind of academic life whose educational consequences are still to be identified.

3. The implementation: risks and opportunities

These transformations hint at a new educational paradigm to deal with the needs of post-industrial societies:

- the empowerment of the student,
- the enhancement of his/her capacity and responsibility to express his/her difference
- the enhancement of team work, mutual help, learning by doing, etc.

The risk is that knowledge by evolving away from a central 'formative' input to a series of competencies may pass – like money (Bernstein, 1996) – through the individuals apparently without transforming them.

A survey on the implementation of the Bologna process in Portugal, has identified that leaders of faculties and schools evaluated positively the process of definition of competencies associated with the study programmes and with each course units. We see the same optimism in the Ministry's progress report on the reforms and in the judgment of the Bologna Follow-up Group which scored Portugal 'very good' on the implementation of the EQF.

Despite the fact that there are signs that some universities have

- difficulty to develop vocationally-driven study program
- difficulties when using the ECTS, the Diploma Supplement
- the oblivious attitude of Portuguese higher education towards the development of the NQF

The general idea is that national and European institutions tend to show a favourable picture of the policy implementation of the process in Portugal.

Although, some problems emerge. In higher education, the assumption that all qualifications can be described and assessed in terms of learning outcomes that are independent of the site, the form of provision and the type of pedagogy and curriculum through which they are achieved (Young, 2003) is far from being a common ground of discussion.

In Portugal, concerns have been raised about a system based on common standards built across different educational levels, subjects, curricula, contexts, etc.

- 1 The 'traditional' elitism of Portuguese higher education (particularly in the university sector).
- 2 By easing the frontiers between the academic competencies and work competencies, higher education runs the risk of sacrificing to the gods of relevance, to (short term) labour market needs.
- 3 The educational risk is the risk of reducing the formation of the 'critical self' of the student to the 'corporate self' of the learner.
- 4 Common standards traced upon the design of transparent and comparable learning outcomes are perceived as inducing a considerable bureaucratic burden upon institutions, actors and procedures.

Higher education transformation:

Barnett: the university is dissolving as an institutional unity and as the knowledge centre par excellence (Barnett, 2000).

Cowen: attenuation of the university at space, financial level, pedagogical level, quality assessment levels (1996)

Rothblatt: 'disappearing university' frontiers disappear as university functions are held increasingly to be simulated by other organizations (1995).

Conclusions

The Bologna process is being appropriated by the European Commission

'Students' are changing from an educational category to an in aggregate category to be dealt with by appropriate organizational subsystems; and 'professors' are rendered into 'academic staff', whose performance can and must be seized by measurable indicators.

In the move from Mode 1 to Mode 2 and 3 focused research as an educational instrument and as a structural function which shaped institutional identity of universities is being transformed.

It is against this background that the reconfiguration of the teaching-learning process focused on learning outcomes is taking place. The risks are also opportunities. Educational optimism must/should be sobered by sociological scepticism...

Learning outcomes: the advice of the CEF and two examples of learning outcomes in VET

ALAIN BULTOT, Conseil de l'Éducation et de la Formation (French Community, Belgium)

On 22 February 2008, the CEF adopted a definition of the concept of learning outcomes. This concept is necessary to implement many tools developed at European level (EQF, ECVET, ECTS, validation of non-formal and informal learning...) and the use of this concept will facilitate the implementation of desired policies in the French speaking part of Belgium. The CEF adopted the following definition: learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on the completion of a learning process. This is not totally the same definition as the one used at European level. Because of the importance of the concept, the CEF proposes to initiate a reflection on learning outcomes. The CEF will study the implications of their implementation in order to develop better quality and to increase the transparency in lifelong learning.

A first concrete use of learning outcomes in Belgium (French Community).

Probably in January 2009 a new decree will create the French Service of Trades and Qualifications. With this decree, all VET operators will have to build their learning pathways referring to a training requirement defined in learning outcomes. These learning outcomes will be organised in units, following the model of the future ECVET system. In this system, the social partners define the job profile (key activities, knowledge, skills and competences). These profiles have to be translated in learning outcomes. Each VET provider has the opportunity to organise specific training pathways in order to achieve the learning outcomes. The VET providers use a training requirement in which the learning outcomes are organised in units.

An example of the use of a learning outcomes-approach by a VET provider

'Bruxelles Formation' decided to implement a new pedagogical project for secretary training.

The main objectives of this pilot project were:

- to organise a training pathway in relationship with a job profile
- to define the learning outcomes of a learning pathway
- to individualize training pathways
- to enhance the quality of the training and the centre

The challenges of the pilot project were:

- to improve the link between training and the labour market
- to implement the learning outcomes of non-formal and informal learning
- to develop a system of accumulation of units (ECVET, Europass, portfolio)
- to develop mobility of learners within the Belgian VET system
- to contribute to lifelong learning.

The management wanted an increase of the employability of the learners (high level of learning outcomes) and a growing number of learners but without an increase of entry requirements and of study duration.

In the old system, learning was a technical process with courses based on knowledge, office management and secretariat techniques. The new model aims to be a dynamic integrated process. The modules are aiming at the acquisition of learning outcomes in relationship with the job profile of secretary. This calls for an integration of knowledge, skills and competences. The courses in the former programme were: basic data processing initiation, keyboard training, keying speed, Word Basis, Advanced Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint and seminars of secretariat. The new learning pathway is organised in modules (basic data-processing initiation, internet-intranet initiation, keying speed, company) with the objective to record data, to lay-out professional documents, to use and to store mails, to realise administrative and logistic tasks, to organise meetings... There is also an exercise to integrate all learning outcomes.

One of the most difficult things to do was the change of the perspective of the assessment. With each assessment of a module, the centre risked to lose a part of their learners in failure. This caused serious human, ethical and financial problems because the centre is not financed according to the number of inscriptions but to the hours of delivered courses. This means that if a learner leaves the course, the centre receives less money. Therefore the centre had to implement specific tools for assessment. In each module a global exercise is followed by a collective correcting and a first assessment. This assessment is combined with an individual interview and collective feedback. This leads to a second and final assessment. During this whole process the focus is on the learning outcomes. Therefore the centre developed general instructions for learners and trainings and specific tools (teaching cards, assessment grids). With this organisation, the training centre was able to award the learning outcomes, to develop a better quality assurance, to increase the access to the training and to reduce the drop out of learners.

Workshop: Must we consider learning outcomes as a gadget or a change of paradigm? Utility? Fears? Questions?

GROUP 1

Chair: Despina Martidou Forcier

Mark Orrow-Whiting

Reporter: W.Vansteenkiste

Bjorn Sandström

Simone Barthel

Angela Jardine

Rudi Schollaert

Jarmilla Modra

Teresa Gaspar

Tas Szebedy

Kęstutis Kaminskas

Olav Aarna

GROUP 2

Chair: Natalia Cuddy

Sharon Cousins

Reporter: Roos Herpelinck

Annikki Hakkila

Jean-Pierre Malarme

Carmel Borg

P.B. Feenstra

Reet Laya

Julio Pedrosa

Siv Hilde Lindstrom

Giedre Vesulaite

Ioannis Savvides

Anita Hacklin

GROUP 3

Chair: Manuel Miguens

Mal Davies

Reporter: Alain Bultot

Hanna Autere

Mia Douterlungne

Jaromir Coufalik

Jean-Albert Pieroux

Angela Souffli

Tom Leney

Laila Fossum

CJ Drenthe

Eleni Hadjidakou

Emilija Sakadolskienė

GROUP 4

Spanish participants

V. Tuesday 17 june 2008

Synthesis of the first day and the workshops

Roos Herpelinck, member of the EUNEC Executive Committee

It is a very difficult task to present this synthesis this morning. During the workshops yesterday afternoon, we discovered that education councils are in different stages of reflection and work on learning outcomes. For some countries, for some education councils, the concept is already a kind of a reality; they are in a phase of implementation. For other countries learning outcomes is a completely new concept and they have a lot of questions on the core of the process and on the whole process of change. The title we chose for the conference seems to be a good title because for a lot of councils and countries it is not clear if learning outcomes are really a new paradigm and what are the implications of this possible new paradigm. The preliminary questions and conclusions that I will present can be a basis for further discussion during today's sessions.

The first question that we asked is 'What are learning outcomes?' Can we give a definition? Is there a basis for common understanding? Tom Leney and Alain Bultot gave merely the same definition: 'Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do after completion of learning'. There were no hard discussions on this definition but in the working groups a lot of people stated that the concept remains vague, it is a very broad definition to which a lot of other elements can be linked. At the moment it is not clear what the link between all these concepts (competences, credits, capabilities, standards, skills...) is. My first question is thus: 'Do we need a very precise definition?' Is that necessary? Is a common understanding at European level of what we want and of what our aims are not enough? If we use a broad definition every country, sector or education level can put some nuances and accents within the concept that fit to the needs of that specific country, level or sector. The concept of learning outcomes is underpinning many changes at different levels: VET, HE, compulsory education, and training. At least we can say that this is a new element in the educational discussions: at all those levels we use one concept. Jean Pierre Malarme explained us yesterday that it is a concept in evolution. The concept is not same as it was five years ago. The application also varies depending on context and focus.

A second question is 'What are learning outcomes really about?' What is the main focus of the concept on which we are discussing? I think the main element is the change from an input towards an output centred education system, in VET, in higher education and in compulsory education. Input systems are based on duration of courses, on the description of teaching methods, on ways of formal learning. Output systems are learner centred; they use more active pedagogical methods; they are concerned about the results of learning pathways in formal, informal or non-formal settings.

What are the merits of this shift to learning outcomes? One of the most important ones is the whole debate on raising qualification levels. The concept offers new perspectives on qualification for early school leavers and it can avoid 'dead ends' in an educational trajectory. This is a very important element concerning the question on the link between equity and learning outcomes. It is important to offer youngsters the opportunity to obtain a full qualification and to prepare them on an insertion in the labour market and the professional life. Another important element is that an outcome based concept is a real asset for lifelong learning. It offers interconnectivity between learning pathways and it enhances the transparency. Another element is connected with both

previous elements: the concept of learning outcomes increases the visibility and validation of learning results in formal and as well in non-formal learning. The concept is also strengthening the social relevance of learning. It is a kind of dialogue between the expectations of society, the labour market on the one hand and the education system on the other hand. What is education really about? What are the objectives? This is a discussion where the labour market has an important position but we may not forget the broader functions of education in society too. At least we can say that the shift towards learning outcomes has launched a broad and intense discussion on the core mission, task and aims of education in the society.

There are also hesitations and questions on the concept. What are the conditions we should carefully monitor? One of the most important challenges is the focus on equity and the access to learning pathways. Using learning outcomes should be part of a global approach, a more development oriented approach. A second element is valorising not only societal demands but also the critical insertion of the youngster in society. It implies the necessity of a broad insertion of youngsters in society (e.g. learn to live together, citizenship education...) Therefore we have to strengthen the links between learning outcomes, qualifications, basic curriculum, life skills, key competences... The exercise of the Spanish education councils is an excellent example of such an integrated approach. Another critical question is if it is possible or advisable to translate every aspect of an education project into learning outcomes. We think on cross curricular activities, the hidden curriculum. Another reflection involves the global aspect of school policy. Results of a learning process are not the only element of school concern. There is also the wellbeing of the students, the school climate and the struggle against bullying. There was also a reflection on the context. If we choose to have different accents for the various education levels within the concept of learning outcomes, is it possible to realise this interconnectivity between learning pathways. Some people also mentioned the gap between the policy level and the school level. Learning outcomes should be the real outcomes of a learning process at school and not only a bureaucratic concept or a reform on paper.

Others expressed their concern about a careful implementation of this reform, with the involvement of different stakeholders. Therefore we should consider learning outcomes as an element in a wider reform. This reform is based on active learning, on constructivist approaches. It should be a core element in the setting up of an encompassing qualification policy; with other elements such as a qualifications framework, credits, and a certification policy. We need that global reform to avoid the pitfalls and to deal with the challenges we formulated above.

Such a wide reform has large implications on different levels. We have to change the whole teaching process, not only the design, but certainly also the assessment, the evaluation. We have to rethink the whole educational process from design, over process (with differentiating pathways) to assessment. There are also implications for the school as an organisation. We need a stronger policy making capacity of schools. Schools have to make their own choices and they have to learn to develop an own policy, based on learning outcomes. This has also implications on quality assurance and accountability (towards the government and towards the society). Finally we should not forget the teachers as the most important players on the field. They are the core element of this change. They need for a higher level of professionalisation to be able to deal with learning outcomes. Therefore, but that is the theme of the next EUNEC conference, it is really necessary to make lifelong learning a reality for teachers.

Today we will discuss about the implementation and about the role of education councils. Is the concept of learning outcomes a new paradigm? We don't know it yet. Certainly it is a new concept, certainly there is a process of clarification in a lot of countries, certainly there are ongoing changes...but the future will learn if there is a real change of paradigm.

The role of learning outcomes in developing and reforming the Norwegian education and training system

KARI BERG, Ministry of Education – Norway

Thank you for inviting me to present the Norwegian approach to learning outcomes. We are very honoured to have the opportunity to share our experience with you. In 2006 Norway introduced a reform for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training. I will try to show you the challenges and problems of this reform and what measures we have taken with curriculum and assessment to meet these challenges. The reform (the Knowledge Promotion) is considered as a curriculum and assessment reform based on Learning Outcomes. I will also explain that the new Norwegian curriculum corresponds with EU- tools (EQF/NQF - validation of informal and non-formal learning).

Why did Norway start such a reform? One out of four 15 year-olds left compulsory school with inadequate basic skills. One out of four pupils (mostly boys in VET) discontinues upper secondary education/training and leaves without formal qualifications. More than 400,000 adults have poor skills in reading and numeracy (with exclusion of the labour market as consequence). Norway got poor PISA results and that resulted in a lot of media coverage and big political debates. There were also low expectations of pupils' achievements in subjects and low motivation for efforts in school subjects, although Norway is spending a lot of resources on education and training. Thus, spending much is not sufficient to reach good results.

To meet these challenges, two white papers - The Knowledge promotion (2003-2004) and '...and no-one was left behind' Early Measures for Lifelong Learning (2006-2007) – have been debated in the Norwegian Parliament. It is two important milestones for the development of the reform in education and training. They cover the entire schooling and introduce many changes to deal with the challenges mentioned above. The basic principles of these white papers are: more and improved learning for all; new subject curricula –competence objectives expressed as learning outcomes for basic skills and expected outcome in subjects or qualifications; the establishment of a quality framework for the schools and work-places responsibility for development of pupils' and apprentices' personal development; nobody should complete compulsory education without having acquired basic skills; everyone should have documented qualifications from upper secondary education and training; those who need it must be allowed a new chance to acquire basic skills as adults and early intervention (a principle we borrowed from Finland).

After the debate in the Parliament, the ministry decided on new national guidelines to develop subject curricula. It is not the ministry that develops the curricula but the Directorate for Education. These guidelines introduce a common shared language for the development and use of new curricula. The objectives should express clear and binding national learning outcomes for basic skills and the expected learning outcomes for the different levels and qualifications. The criteria for developing new subject curricula with learning outcomes are: competence objectives (learning outcomes) should be decided at national level after 2nd, 4th, and 10th grade (stage) and after every stage in upper secondary education and training; continuity, coherence and progression in learning outcomes; learning outcomes should be clear and express what the pupil/apprentice is to be able to do or master after completing education and training at the different levels; the competence objectives should be expressed in a way that makes it possible to undergo a test or exam in all subjects and courses without being a pupil or apprentice; the new curricula are not to include rules about working methods, apart from those cases where method is a part of the very qualifications. There is an ongoing discussion on generic or specific learning outcomes. The learning outcomes should be formulated in a way that they allow several methods of assessment (e.g.

validation of prior learning). There should also be local freedom to organise and adapt teaching and learning (freedom of content and methods).

Basic skills (cf. Key competences in Education and Training 2010) were integrated into all subjects from grade one. Basic skills are cross curricular skills/subject, curricula independent:

the ability to express oneself orally; the ability to read; the ability to develop numeracy; the ability to express oneself in writing and the ability to use digital tools.

To meet these needs of developing basic skills, these skills are now defined in the curriculum as learning outcomes with coherence and progression for all subjects, from grade 1 to the last year in upper secondary. When these basic skills are integrated in all subject curricula, they become consequently subject curricula dependent.

Examples:

Typical verbs used in learning outcomes in new Norwegian subject curricula: give (examples of...); produce; understand and use; identify; compare; describe; assess quality; compose; calculate; store; design; develop; work independently; use information; prepare; demonstrate; explain; select; guide; analyse (and discuss...); cooperate; take initiative to; extract (information from....); present (and discuss...); prepare and assess....

Basic Skills in Social Sciences: Being able to express oneself orally and in writing and to develop numeracy (text extract):

- means telling other about events in the past and the present, explaining about places and facts and applying definitions, concepts and terms to explain causes and effects in connection with society and culture. It also means being able to present one's own work clearly and comprehensibly to others, and being able to discuss one's own presentations as well as those of others...
- processing and comparing figures and using, processing and preparing graphic presentations...involves undertaking quantitative surveys, using map scales and time calculations.'

The Parliament also decided on a Quality Framework. The Quality Framework states the responsibility for schools and training establishments to organize and adapt the teaching and learning processes for the purpose of developing the key competencies for pupils and apprentices (soft skills). There are no learning outcomes for the learners' personal attitudes but they are the responsibility of schools and workplaces. They have to put learners in situations so that they are able to develop these competences. The following key Competences (Lisbon strategy) are integrated into the Quality Framework: learning Strategies (learning to learn); social competences; cultural competences; motivation for learning and pupils' participation. These competences should be integrated in curriculum if the competence is a part of learning outcomes of a subject. So the Basic Skills and the Quality Framework have to be seen in connection. They both cover the issue of key competences out of the Lisbon strategy.

As this is a conference for councils, I want to show you for example how the main stakeholders in VET are involved in this reform. The whole reform is based on cooperation and dialogue. Councils have a crucial role in this process. Norway has a long tradition of cooperation between decision makers and stakeholders in VET. One of the main objectives of the cooperation is to assure relevant and qualitatively strong vocational education and training in all vocational areas. The VET programmes have been designed to meet the needs of society and the labour market. We have 220 different occupational standards for skilled workers. The National Council for VET involves all

national stakeholders, not only social partners but also teachers and pupils organisations, school owners (counties). In addition we have established 9 trade specific vocational training councils (one for each vocational program which corresponds with the broad sectors). These councils have developed the occupational standards (competence platforms) which are the basis for the development of learning outcomes in the curriculum. All key stakeholders have taken part in this development. There was also a broad consultation all over Norway. The new curricula should thus be well anchored in the Norwegian society. The implementation at regional level (19 counties) is followed up by the social partners. A three-partite system of cooperation exists both on national and regional level. The other councils (basic, secondary education) don't exist any more, they are integrated in the Directorate for Education or in the national Quality Framework.

I want also to say something on the challenges of learning outcomes and assessment. It is not enough to formulate learning outcomes. The link with assessment methods has to be clarified. This is one of the key issues in Norway. Research, reports and surveys have shown that there is an absence of systematic assessment as basis for improvement on both individual and system level. There are a lot of various activities going on in schools. But teachers focus more on the activities than on actual learning. Therefore it became a necessity to describe what is expected from the pupils or the learners at the end of a learning process, both in subject and in basic skills. If we want to know if we make progression, we need development of the assessment system. Several research reports have pointed out that schools in Norway are characterised by a culture where the learners are not given adequate challenges at a level that is high enough. The learners have little notice of the objectives of their learning. Pupils and apprentices do not have much knowledge on what is a good or excellent achievement, nor do they receive adequate feed-back. There is an absence of systematic assessment as a starting point for improvement in the Norwegian education system, both at teacher/pupil level and at system level.

It is not possible for the ministry to make decisions on good assessment practice and good assessment culture. Therefore the Ministry of Education has given an assignment to the Norwegian Directorate of Education and training to carry out a national trial of different models for characteristics of achievement of learning outcomes. The objective is to obtain increased assessment competence at all levels; increased assessment competence at all levels; a more professionally relevant and equitable assessment practice; improved system of documentation of continuous- and final assessment of the pupils (includes apprentices, adults). Assessment will always be a question of using one's judgment. Good assessment, however, is a question of professional judgment.

There are new national tests in basic skills in reading and numeracy (after the 4th and 7th level in primary school) which are introduced from autumn 2007. The tests are not in subjects but in basic skills. The test results will determine whether pupils' skills are consistent with the learning outcomes for the basic skills. Results are to be made available to those who are involved with qualitative development in the schools. There will be no ranking of schools but the results will serve a platform for qualitative development at local level.

Example: The craft or journeyman's final exam

Four parts: ability to plan the work; ability to carry out what is planned; ability to make documentation on the work done; ability to reflect on the work done (self-assessment). The basis for the test is the learning outcomes in the curriculum for the specific skill qualification.

I want to say also just a few words on the link with the EU-reference tool EQF. The learning outcomes approach in the EQF corresponds to a high degree with the new Norwegian curricula but there is need for further national debate. Priority has been given to the development of a qualifications framework for higher education as part of the Bologna Process. Therefore we

organised a broad consultation with all stakeholders. Norway has chosen to move step for step in the implementation of the EQF in its system. This spring, a technical working group will develop a proposal for descriptors for the VET sector. The work will be done in close cooperation with the social partners and relevant stakeholders.

There is also a common understanding of the need and recognition of prior learning (recognition of non-formal and informal learning) for the development of a lifelong learning strategy. It is a legal right to have your prior learning validated and assessed - this is regulated in the Education Act. The County Municipalities are responsible for the validation process and assessment. Validation and assessment is done in relation to the learning outcomes in the Curriculum for the Knowledge Promotion. The main challenge is to develop a uniform practice across the regions (equality and quality) and to promote reporting routines.

The challenge for the future is to obtain a shared understanding of learning outcomes and of the assessment of the learners' attainment of the learning outcomes. The formal task to implement learning outcomes in the curricula is done. However, to make it work in practice is a longer term action. School-owners have a need for support and guidance for the implementation of the reform. Latest research points out that the schools have the experience that they are left to themselves. They need examples and guidelines on how to change the practice in relation to adapted teaching and training, basic skills, learning strategies and self-assessment.

Questions and remarks

Coufalik: What is the difference between the activities of the Ministry and the Directorate for Education? What is the relationship between both institutions?

Berg: The Directorate get its assignments from the ministry. The Directorate must carry out the regulations on assessment and on curriculum development. The curriculum and the whole system of assessment (national tests) are developed within the Directorate. The Ministry deals with policy development, the Directorate does the practical work.

Tas: In the beginning of your contribution, you said that there were low expectations, low achievements and low motivation. Do you think that the reform in Norway can have an effect on pupils' motivation? As I understood from your presentation, you raised the levels and the standards...but I think that motivation is a question of a school and teachers approach.

Berg: We have taken measures that make it possible to adopt teaching and learning to the needs of the individual students. You can use more time for those who are slower.

Spain: I represent a small community in Spain, Navarra. Our school results are good and there is a high standard of living. Before I was involved as a professional in the education councils, I spent 32 years in the classroom. We often forget the pupils in the whole story. I am not sure that they enjoy their learning process. Probably education systems take insufficiently care of the motivation and creativity.

Borg: In Europe we have a long tradition of equal opportunities but very little commitment towards equal outcomes. So, my question is 'Are these outcomes presented as a legal entitlement of each student in Norway?'

Berg: It is not expected that every child should reach the same level. The assessment will say to what degree you have obtained the learning outcomes. There is no real commitment towards equal outcomes.

Douterlungne: What about the motivation of teachers? Are they in favour of this reform?

Berg: I think they are in favour of the reform and of the learning outcomes approach. It gives them more freedom but they are also uncertain...they miss guidelines to reach the best level of all their students. So, we have to develop these guidelines as a help for the teachers. The Directorate also has to develop assessment criteria to have a shared national understanding of the curriculum and its assessment.

New challenges for education in Spain and in the EU

ALEJANDRO TIJANA, National University of Distance Education (Spain)

Introduction (**CARMEN MAESTRO**)

It is an honour for me to introduce Alejandro Tijana. Many of the participants know his academic and professional trajectory but I want to summarize it briefly. He is PhD in philosophy and has done research on the history of education. He was vice chancellor and director of the Centre for documentation, research and assessment. He has been in charge for assessment in the representation of Spain in the European Union and at the OECD. He was also chairperson of the international agency for evaluation. Since 2004 he has been in charge of the new Spanish law on education. Some call this law, the Tijana law, which shows the enormous efforts that Alejandro and his team have invested on this project. On behalf of the State Education Council I want to thank Alejandro's generosity to our council. We are very pleased that he has accepted to speak here. He has been vice-minister for four years but this is not his responsibility any more. Nevertheless he insisted to be here. I think that Alejandro Tijana is one of the persons that can speak the best about the challenges and the achievements of Spanish Education.

ALEJANDRO TIJANA

It is a pleasure for me to participate in this EUNEC conference focusing on learning outcomes and the role that learning outcomes play in the design, the construction and conduction of education policies. I will talk about the challenges that education is facing right now. My diagnosis will start from the Spanish situation but I would like to frame it within the challenges that the whole European Union is facing.

The first thing that needs to be said is that the European Union is a set of very heterogeneous countries, united with a common objective. We have education systems with different histories, traditions and evolutions. This is part of the European wealth but it also puts some challenges and difficulties. For instance, due to historical (religious) regions, the population of the Scandinavian countries was already lettered in the 18th century, where Spain had in the middle of the 20th century almost 50 % of the population that was illiterate. This is a fact and this is still important. Some countries had all their children in the 19th century in primary education, in Spain this didn't even happen 25 years ago. Therefore talking about education in Europe sets of with very different situations. We have come to the European Union from very different starting situations. This is something that has to be taken into account when we talk about European challenges. The challenges for the future are the same for all of us but we have to take in account that we have to look at the diversity of situations in all our countries. So, strategies in the different countries have to be adopted at their specific situations.

Starting from this heterogeneity we have built in Europe a common educational policy. I say this with great reserve because all of you know that training and education policies were not core

European competences. But they have become very important, not by formulating obligatory directives but by voluntary cooperation. There are (and this will not change in the near future) no common regulations on teaching and we don't organise our education systems in the same way. However in the year 2000 within the Lisbon Strategy, Europe made a decision with was establishing a set of common education objectives. This was a very important decision with large consequences for the future. There will be no European educational law in the future but establishing common objectives and monitoring mechanisms will affect our national systems. The establishing of aims, benchmarks and monitoring processes will cause dynamics in all the countries of the EU and will lead to a kind of convergence of our educational systems. Perhaps this won't be a convergence in structures and organisation methods. Within this perspective, the Lisbon objectives are key for the direction European education systems are going in. We are almost in 2010, but this is only a first stage. There are many things that we will not achieve by 2010 and our ministers are already thinking about the objectives after 2010. Within this context it is relevant to think about the challenges for education in the future.

I will not speak about all the challenges in detail. I will not be comprehensive and include all the different aspects of this issue. I will merely highlight the challenge that I think are particularly relevant for the future and in the face of which education system are supposed to react. These challenges are vital if we want to reach the Lisbon objectives on a sustainable knowledge based economy with a strong social cohesion.

The first challenge that is essential is obtaining academic success for all within basic education. I come from a country that is facing enormous problems with failure rates. We have a high percentage of pupils that finish basic education without having obtained the corresponding qualification. The European Union does not have indicators to measure success in basic education. It has indicators and benchmarks on finishing secondary education because they have the assumption that everybody finishes basic education satisfactory. The reality is that different countries have different methods to check the success of basic education. For instance the final certificate in Spain is only awarded to those who have reached a sufficient level. This causes a failure level of nearly 30 % and we have to reflect on this. Other countries however award a certification to anybody who has remained in school until the end. These countries have better school success rates (nearly 100%), but in these countries too pupils finish their basic education without having acquired the knowledge, the skills and competences that are necessary to continue education or to join the labour market. So we are talking about a problem that is, in one way or another, affecting all European countries. It is true that it affects countries in a different way, the visibility of the problem is different depending on how we measure it, but the problem is real. This is a challenge because we cannot afford the waste of talent; we cannot afford young people not joining a productive adult life in our society. As a society, if we leave some young people behind, we are running a risk. The more and more complex and competitive society also demands higher levels of education. We are leaving some young people behind in circumstances that entail high personal risk for their lives. When the economy is healthy one can find unqualified jobs but in other circumstances this becomes more difficult. This is really a threat for social cohesion and it can have individual and social implications.

What are educational systems doing to face this challenge? We have different possible solutions or strategies. In England there was the strategy of personalising education with for instance schooling after 17 years. How can we cater for the diversity of the students? How can we guarantee success in basic education? All European countries have succeeded in putting young people into school; the challenge now is to make education a quality education. Therefore it needs to be adapted to student diversity. The minimum conditions have to be achieved by everyone. The European Union has been working on this issue: we want everybody to achieve at least the key competences. This

should be entailed by incorporating curricula with basic competences. This is a set of knowledge, capacities and skills to be able to precede a normal life. We all know this catalogue of eight competences. The content of the subjects is important but even more important is the question why we teach these subjects, where for, what do we expect from our young people. What do we want them to know? What do we want to be able to do? How should they react to the new circumstances of life? This is the idea behind these basic competences. I like the idea of the French 'socles de compétence' that says competences are the sense behind schooling. It is the reasons why we are keeping these young people at school for such a long time. The sense is allowing them to interact with the world, to understand the natural languages, to be able to act as citizens in complex societies, to live in a social, cultural and artistic environment. The problem is that we don't know how we can measure all this. We are talking about knowledge application and not about defined pieces of knowledge. This is more difficult to assess. If we believe that we must incorporate not only knowledge but also competences in the curricula, the challenge is to organise the monitoring or the follow-up of the results. Some years ago I wrote an article for a French magazine on the conduction of an educational system to the assessment of results. This will be a long term task. By incorporating the concept of basic competences from the European level, we are faced with new challenges on assessment systems.

We cannot separate this challenge from other challenges. Enabling lifelong learning is very much linked with the first challenge. We cannot just look at basic education, this is only the base. Nowadays education takes place in several circumstances and in different stages of our life. Obviously in the early stage of our life it is very important because it is a full time activity. But it doesn't finish there. Education systems have to react more and more to this new idea. Europe has already introduced certain indicators but it is a task that has to be completed. I think on mechanisms to validate the knowledge and competences from non formal and informal education. We also have to pass this idea (that education never stops) to the next generations. We have to convince them that there are always opportunities to train themselves to learn and that this is useful. This challenge goes beyond the competences of governments. It is also related to the role of the media, our social organisation. Basic education is not enough. We have to establish real education opportunities throughout the person's life, not only to recover what was not done but also to develop new learning opportunities. The 21st century will produce new knowledge and tools and people will need to adapt this new knowledge and skills in their own personal and professional life.

European societies are becoming more complex, more mixed and more plural. People coming from all over the world come to Europe and this trend will continue. We need to learn to live with this problem. We can fix limitations in migration policies but we cannot reverse this trend. Our future societies will be mixed societies. This gives new challenges for the education systems. Some countries have experienced this for a long time (with positive and negative results) but for countries such as Spain and Italy this is a very recent change. It is something that happened in the last 10 years. The Spanish population usually emigrated but now the country is receiving immigrants and this is a new situation. This is the new social model in Europe and it will have consequences for the educational system that needs to respond to this heterogeneity. If we want cohesive societies, our educational systems (and other social policies) will need a transformation to favour the integration and the inclusion of migrants. Schools are not only places to teach subjects...it is also places to learn to live together, to co-exist.

Another important issue is the question of autonomy of schools. What is the function of the state? Education is still a public service and schools cannot just be left over to market policies or market laws but favouring flexibility and autonomy of schools is important. Schools have to be able to solve their problems in their own contexts. I am sure that some countries have made more

progress in this matter than Spain, but we consider this in Spain as one of the key issues for the future.

Finally it is important to search for the best possible set of teachers to deal with the new challenges in education and training. Schools are under pressure, there are growing demands of the environment. Quality of education does not only depend on the quality of the teachers but the quality of education cannot be greater than the quality of teachers. How do we train our teachers to face the challenges of the 21st century? How can we attract the best teachers? How do we keep them? How do we motivate them to continue in the profession? How can we give them recognition?

These are the major challenges that we have to deal with in the near future.

Learning outcomes: some experiences from the Netherlands

CATHERINA DRENTHÉ, Onderwijsraad (The Netherlands)

The presentation I am giving comes at a moment that education in the Netherlands is a little bit in confusion. I feel a bit like a snake that sheds its skin. The cracks of the old skin are there, the new skin is under that skin but I am not able to show it completely.

To introduce myself, I am a master in Biology and I was a teacher and a headmaster of a secondary vocational school. After that I joined the inspectorate for seven years. Now I am a member of the board of 27 schools in the inner city of Rotterdam and I am also a member of the Dutch Education Council.

I was very pleased with the presentations of Mrs Berg and Mr Tijana because I recognised so many problems that we have in common. In the big cities in Holland we see for instance how difficult it is to deliver diplomas to our students.

I will talk about the Dutch experiences in primary education, in secondary education and in VET and afterwards I will try to come to some conclusions. This is big word because we are a bit in confusion and we don't know if the way we are going now is the right way.

Introduction on learning outcomes

I will not speak about the higher vocational and university education. I will only talk about primary, secondary and vocational (vmbo, mbo) education. As I said, there is some confusion. 17 years ago, we changed the education system in Holland and this change was not appreciated by the field. It was too fast. Teachers have the feeling that we did not consult them in the right way. So a couple of years ago, opinion makers, teachers and parents started to criticise this change and the current level of education in Holland. The strange thing is that if you ask parents to give a mark to the Dutch education, they give a 6 on 10 (average). If you ask the same concerning the school of their children, they give a 7,5. So, none of them says that our education is insufficient. The Netherlands are also rather high in the PISA research. So it looks a bit strange that parents and teachers are not longer happy. The government established also a committee (Commission Dijsselbloem) and they did a big evaluation of the Dutch school system (1992-1-2008). The report of this commission was very critical for the ministers and the ministry of education. This feeling of uncertainty (where are we? Why was our reform not good enough? What can we do in the future and will that be good enough?) leads to a need for certainty. And learning outcomes offer in a way a kind of certainty.

Why and for whom do we need learning outcomes? In the first place we want to improve the pupils own learning process and the teaching process (classroom level). At school level we do it to inform institutional strategic planning. At system level, we can use learning outcomes to inform consumer choice. Once a year, magazines and newspapers publish the results of individual schools in order to inform the consumer using data on learning outcomes. The inspectorate doesn't make or publish rankings. You can also do it to compare learning outcomes across institutions and to inform national policy development.

There are two kinds of learning outcomes: cognitive and non-cognitive. The cognitive outputs concern students' achievement, competencies and performance. In a way they are the easiest ones. But we also have the non-cognitive outputs: students' interest in domains, their attitudes and beliefs, self-concept of ability and citizenship. Those learning outcomes are difficult to measure. Citizenship is very important in Holland because the country is becoming a multi-cultural country. In our 4 big cities (The Hague, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Rotterdam) the cohort of 14 year old children is 60% not Dutch, with about 40 different nationalities.

The Dutch inspectorate monitors the quality of education by using these indicators: curriculum, learning time, teacher level: pedagogy and didactics, supporting individual students, school climate, assessment and examination, supporting pupils with special needs and the use of activating learning styles. Schools are inspected every year based on documents and once every four years the inspection is based on classroom visits, documents, interviews with school leaders, parents, teachers and pupils. Underperforming schools are visited more often. The Commission Dijsselbloem had critical remarks by the last indicator on activating learning styles. The inspectorate gave often a verdict on the 'how' and not on the 'what'. Inspectorates should only be allowed to look at the learning outcomes (the 'what'). The way you get there, that is up to the schools unless the results of the central exams are bad. It is not to the government to judge the style of teaching.

Learning outcomes in Primary education

Example 1: core objectives for English

- 13 The pupils learn to acquire information from simple spoken and written English texts.
- 14 The pupils learn to ask and give information in English about simple subjects while developing a confident attitude in expressing themselves in that language.
- 15 The pupils learn the spelling of a number of simple words about everyday subjects.
- 16 The pupils learn to look up the meanings and spelling of English words using a dictionary.

Example 2: core objectives for numeracy and calculation

- 26 The pupils learn to understand the general structure and interrelationship of quantities, whole numbers, decimal numbers, percentages, and proportions, and to use these to do arithmetic in practical situations.
- 27 The pupils learn to quickly carry out the basic calculations in their heads using whole numbers, at least to 100, whereby adding and subtracting up to 20 and the multiplication tables are known by heart
- 28 The pupils learn to count and calculate by estimation.
- 29 The pupils learn clever ways to add, subtract, multiply and divide.

30 The pupils learn to add, subtract, multiply and divide on paper, according to more or less contracted standard procedures.

31 The pupils learn to use the calculator with insight.

What do you see, when you read these core objectives? Learning outcomes are described as core objectives. They describe the desired results (what), not the how or the didactics. The content and objectives should be closely linked, connected to everyday life, and presented in coherence with each other. Attention should be given to objectives that are important for all learning areas (a proper working attitude, able to use different learning strategies, reflect on own actions and learning, express thoughts and feelings, listen respectfully and criticise others' opinions, acquisition and processing information, develop self-confidence, deal respectful and responsible with each other and care and appreciation for the living environment.)

What happens when you use this method with teachers? They say: it is so much, so broad, so vague...that I can do exactly what I want. And that is what happened. It was just too much. The disadvantages of core objectives in primary education are that they are non descriptive and that they are offering too much freedom to schools. They are also too many which causes no teacher ownership. They are also very hard to measure.

This asks for a solution. In 1999 the Education Council advised to introduce three reference levels (basic, sufficient and advanced) for Dutch and mathematics. Recently these levels have been described by the commission Meijerink and will be introduced in 2010. For instance, we still don't have proper language tests for pupils with parents that are coming from other countries and speak another language at home. We don't know where the gaps are and what their intellectual possibilities are.

Learning Outcomes in Secondary education

Example: Core objectives - English secondary education

11 The pupil learns to increasingly familiarise himself with the sound of the English language by listening frequently to spoken and sung texts.

12 The pupil learns to use strategies to expand his English vocabulary.

13 The pupil learns to use strategies to acquire information from spoken and written English texts.

14 The pupil learns to find, arrange and assess information in written and digital sources in English, for himself and others.

15 The pupil learns to give others an impression of his everyday life in colloquial speech.

16 The pupil learns to conduct standard conversations in order to purchase something, seek information, or ask for help

17 The pupil learns to maintain informal contacts in English by email, letter and chat.

18 The pupil learns about the role of English in different types of international contacts.

We can still see that the core objectives are input based. They are on isolated learning paths. We also notice the absence of teaching examples but they are less descriptive and more exact than those in primary education. If we compare core objectives to reference levels, we see that they are

more outcome based. They are a better way to offer a continuous learning path (to cure the gaps), they include teaching examples and they are more descriptive.

Central exams are a holy cow in Holland. We also have school based final exams (50% - 50%). We see that school exams score much higher than central exams and that worries us. Should we put more weight on the central examination? Or do we establish a differentiation according to the subject (mathematics, Dutch and English with an absolute minimum level in order to get a diploma)? We don't know yet which direction we will choose.

Learning outcomes in vocational education and training

In VET, we have the vmbo (4 years in secondary education) as well as the mbo (another two years). We promised each other to work with competencies in mbo. But teachers often just don't know what it means to work with competencies. Therefore, they will need help. Core objectives are a very general statement about the larger goals of the course or programme. Competence based outcomes are a very specific statement that describes exactly what a student will be able to do in some measurable way. A competence may have several specific learning outcomes so a course typically contains more outcomes than competencies.

Example:

Classical core objective 'Travel salesman'

Description: the TS is able to conduct a travel sales talk in order to reach a maximal commercial result and optimal client commitment

Process criteria: TS focuses on client needs, TS selects offers, TS steers the sales talk, TS realises cross and up selling, TS takes commercial action (proposals), TS finalises the sales talk etc.

Result: a satisfied customer, a transaction

Travel salesman new format: more outcome based

Competency: cooperating and consulting

Output indicator: reports information to colleagues and superiors so that they are informed about relations

Competency: relating and networking

Output indicator: approaches future clients pro-actively so that they are informed about travels/opportunities

Measuring competencies

The classical description of a travel salesman was so easy to test. The new description in terms of competencies is much more difficult to test. Competencies are increasingly complex in nature, rather than deriving from the addition of multiple low level objectives. There is a necessity for more complex assessment, involving portfolios, experimental learning assessment in field experience, demonstration in varying contexts, role play, use of standardized patients or clients etc...

Concluding remarks

Which way are we going in Holland? In primary education we are going towards reference levels for core subjects (more standardization). In secondary education, we are going to reference levels and a change in central and local examinations. In VET, if we are combining process and outcome in

one statement, it means that workforce requirements intrude the learning processes and that good assessment and examination is of growing importance. One of the vital issues is to learn teachers to make good assessments and examinations.

Points of discussion

The importance of assessment and examination: is our system evolving to a system of teaching to the test? How do we gain more expertise to make good assessments? There is an interference professional autonomy of teachers.

A single focus on outcomes can measure the cognitive competences. But the non-cognitive competences are so important. How do we measure these?

Learning outcomes can be misused to rank or evaluate schools.

Questions and remarks

Tas (Hungary): There is also a question of values. When I see the description of the travel salesman, I fear that a lot of current competences are not mentioned (How can I convince the client to buy more? How can I do what my company wants?) How does education to responsibility and environmental care fit with the requests of a free market based on more and more consumption?

Drenthe: This is a kind of rhetorical question and if I had the answer, I would give it to you. Education to responsibility is something that goes on throughout the whole live. A lot of things you don't learn at school. It is also a question of the values that are defended by a society. Everybody has to take his own responsibility on this global issue of environmental problems.

Douterlungne: It is really a question of values in education? In the Flemish Council we have got a big discussion about the key competence 'entrepreneurship'. A lot of stakeholders didn't want that competence in the educational curricula because they argued that education has to lead to critical citizens and not only to citizens that fit in the liberal market.

Leney: I am a little bit confused by a part of your very interesting presentation. When you talked about your changes in the primary curriculum, you were insisting on the fact that the outcomes had to be measurable or gradable. You concentrated on two key areas: Dutch and mathematics. In moving towards a concentration towards learning outcomes in Dutch and mathematics, I have got the impression that somehow you are leaving behind the other wider objectives as an important part of the learning experience. Is this true?

Drenthe: Maybe these wider objectives don't worry us. We are happy with the way we developed them in the past. They work. But the learning outcomes in Dutch and math really worry us. We need standards to prevent a lot of pupils from failure. We should know what they do know and what they don't know on math and language. That is the only way we can fill the gap. We did not lose the other objectives.

Global remarks

Miguens (Portugal)

I want to start with a brief story. It is about a man who lost his keys and couldn't find them. A friend came up to him and asked 'What are you looking for?' He said: I am looking for my keys, I have lost them. Have you lost them here? No, I don't have lost them here, but here is where the light is and that is why I am looking for them here.

I think that this is the situation where we are in. We are looking for the light when we talk about learning outcomes...

On the other hand, I fear that we are going back to process approaches not embedded in any content at all. We have learned however that this was not a good way. If I look at this 'Bloom revisited' with its behaviourist jargon and when I am looking at lists of verbs that define objectives (I remember this from the 80ies)...I fear that we get more and more confused. It is such a penoplea of terms and conceptual misunderstandings, with so many difficulties in producing clear common definitions of the concept that we try to use here. It is important to focus on results. I agree with that and we all agree on the point that we are not happy with the performance of our educational systems and that we have to focus on the learning outcomes of our children and our youngsters. We can do it by defining clear objectives and clear standards. We must previously define where we want to go. We also have to focus on assessment. We have to know what the students have learned. The difficulty here will be, as Alejandro Tijana said, how to assess learning in terms of competences. We have to try to combine the challenges that Alejandro brought to us this morning with the different possibilities and approaches that we have in our different countries.

Frias (Spain)

I would like to share a general reflection. When we talk about learning outcomes, we are talking about a new paradigm. Is this really so or is this just a new way of looking at things? If we examine the European recommendation on key competences, we will see that terms that are used match with the objectives that in the past were formulated in terms of capacities. Are we talking about something we already had? I don't think that we are talking about a new paradigm. However, the key competences are a way of organising the curricula. We have our objectives, our contents, our pedagogical methods and our criteria for evaluation...but now we are giving more emphasis on the achievement of competences.

Bultot (Belgium)

I think the concept of learning outcomes comes from Europe, from the Lisbon process. Learning outcomes are a macro tool. But this macro tool needs to reach the classroom. It is as important for the management of a class as it is for managing the system. The teachers have to be free to choose how they want to reach the learning outcomes. We should avoid a too bureaucratic and technical approach for teachers. It is up to the teachers to find solutions for their classroom.

A Spanish participant

We have to be aware that we don't break the screw when we turn it on and on...In the film *Dangerous Minds* the students say that the teacher (Michelle Pfeifer) has been the light for them and that was the reasons why they wanted to come back to the classroom. We have to succeed in including youth in society. We need to give all of them a place in society.

Pedrosa (Portugal)

We should be a little more modest. Learning outcomes are simply a term that helps to express ourselves about educational achievements. It causes more transparency. We tend to use this language mainly in the political arena and this is useful to design policies or to assess the results of

a system. But I would like to focus on the concern for what is happening in the classrooms at schools. That should always be our main concern. How can we use this tool help teachers, parents etc. in such a way that we achieve better education and better educated citizens in our countries?

Barthel (Belgium)

I want to join the position of Mr Pedrosa. Europe has fixed the challenges and adopted the benchmarks. All European countries have defined together criteria and global objectives on more transparency and better mobility. Learning outcomes serve as a tool to obtain these global objectives. We change from input towards output oriented education. Learning outcomes include knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences. The big question is 'How can we pass from the level of the politicians, researchers and our own councils to what is taking place in the classroom?' How can we establish this new way of thinking and this new role of teachers. This will be the theme of the next EUNEC seminar in Vilnius. The teacher is no longer the person that fills the funnel but (s)he is the coach of the learning process. We all have to look in our countries on what we can do to boost these new developments in education and to implement them. I think that the precise definition of learning outcomes does not really matter. What matters is that education deals with the challenges where it is faced with.

Blanco (Galicia)

After these two days I was thinking on my 20-30 experience as a teacher. I think that in Spain we have advanced a lot during the last decade. I would like to emphasise the importance of teachers in order to achieve quality education. We need pedagogical and didactic methods to improve our learning outcomes. We have to look into and analyse the learning processes. We should avoid going back to the past (conductivist methods, Blooms taxonomy...). We have to pay attention on how pupils learn and how teachers teach.

Douterlungne

I would like to make a last global remark. To implement this change, to make things work, you have to create ownership...so that the different stakeholders (especially teachers and pupils) go for it. It seems to me that we lack this sense of ownership at the moment.

Learning Outcomes development: roles of stakeholders and education councils

TOM LENEY, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (United Kingdom)

These remarks about stakeholder involvement in design and implementation of reforms involving the appropriate use of learning outcomes are drawn from the Learning Outcomes Study and from the life conversation with 70 or 80 participants during the Cedefop Conference last November in Thessalonica. But I also want to reflect on some remarks and questions which have come up during these two days.

Firs of all, I would like to remind you on the last image that I used yesterday: the image of the Russian doll. When we are talking about the learning outcomes, we are not talking about a single set of ideas on a two dimensional plane. We are talking about something which is definitely three of four dimensional. Learning outcomes are useful in a range of settings: reforming the curriculum; innovation in teaching and learning (this is absolutely a key conclusion of this conference); developing lifelong learning; reforming and linking qualifications; levels and statements in National Qualification Frameworks; Making assessment more fit-for-purpose; and validation and recognition.

So there is no singular usage for learning outcomes. If we try to put everything into a single definition of learning outcomes, we are making a mistake. It is rather a linking concept. If you want to use the concept of learning outcomes in your countries, you have to recognise the variety and specificity of your general education, VET, higher education etc. and you also have to honour the richness of your language, educational cultures and approaches to reform. There is no standardised European version of learning outcomes.

Are Learning Outcomes a new paradigm? Personally I don't think so. They are a useful set of tools, used in different contexts. But I do think that we are developing a new paradigm in education as a combination of active learning approaches (as a social process) and involving new learning environments (not only the classroom...e.g. the ICT learning of youngsters) in a lifelong learning perspective. Learning outcomes are simply one of the sets of tools, of spanners that help us to develop that new paradigm. This paradigm is linked to developing knowledge societies and for us to the European social model. Competences or learning outcomes are the 'sense behind schooling' (Alejandro Tiana on France's *socle commun*).

It is very important to emphasize that we are working in a decentralised set of territories now in which stakeholders of different kinds have a much more important role. Governance depends strongly on consensus-building and no longer only on central government regulations. Consensus building is a difficult and very active process and it involves multiple stakeholders working on broad frameworks that set goals and objectives. In some European countries this takes the form of legislation. Other countries (Denmark, The Netherlands) prefer an approach based on bottom-up change.

Who are the stakeholders? Social partners have a prominent role as stakeholders, particularly in VET developments. Teaching and training professionals are at the heart of reform informed by learning-outcomes. Researchers can provide an evidence base for reforms and initiatives, and help trial and evaluate. I also want to emphasise the wider civil society. Education councils often encompass this wider society and school councils do it too (parents, local community, students...). Students and learners have also become important agents in this process. In many countries, education councils form the platform for this stakeholders' involvement.

It is important to recognise that the focus changes. It is not a total change from approach one to approach two. There is, in the planning of the learning experience, a shift from the content led curriculum to a learning outcomes approach. The focus changes, but the other components remain important in planning and implementation. Stakeholders should help to achieve 'the appropriate balance'. Education councils are in excellent position (commuted neutrality) to play this role.

I also want to say some things on the labour market as a point of reference in VET. Learning outcomes are often tied in with the standards and skills of the labour market. But the labour market and the social partners cannot be the only agencies that should have a deciding role in the formation of VET courses. Even in countries as Austria and Germany 35% of young people who train for a particular job go immediately after a training to a different kind of occupation. So there is no straight line between a particular vocational and training preparation and the job that a person is going to do afterwards. If we prepare people only for one particular kind of job, then we are short-sighted. In many countries the identification of learning outcomes has begun in the VET sector but however, a systematic use of learning outcomes means taking account of the specificity of the different learning contexts. So, key competences or cross curricular themes in the school curriculum have a far wider point of reference than the labour market. We can also have a strong debate on what are the appropriate points of reference in higher education. The credit definitions in higher education are different from the one in VET because the context, the environment is somewhat different.

The challenge is to try as education councils to help develop governance that links aims and objectives to new forms of decentralisation and to new approaches to learning through the different levels in the education system. This is why new forms of partnership are developing and why education councils have an increasing amount of responsibility.

The final point is a kind of take care. Don't try to rush things too much. Don't make too many reforms too fast. You have to allow change to emerge. Developing the use of learning outcomes is an important part of the diverse activities for successful reform. This involves a culture shift and cannot be achieved top-down. Making change happen also means allowing sufficient time and efficient measures for change to emerge. The countries that are making reforms successfully are mostly small countries that achieve a real active consensus with their stakeholders. There is no fast way of getting a good result about the business where we are involved in. It is much better to crawl and to learn to walk and to get there successfully with all the partners on board than try to jump from A to B in a very short time. In these aspects education councils clearly have a role.

Questions

Modra (Czech Republic)

Why do we implement learning outcomes? They are an input for a system of validation and assessment. It is very necessary to look at the stage where we are going to assess the learning outcomes. Without proper assessment, we cannot reach the objectives. Learning outcomes are only one tool of a whole system that has to be reformed.

Leney

I think you raise several important issues. The whole purpose of putting emphasis on local outcomes is important. I don't want to see a single middle of the road European term which is supposed to describe everything. We in England sometimes talk about Eurobabel, which use terms on which everybody agrees but that doesn't mean anything for anyone. Please use your own robust concepts and stick to them. At heart, the idea of learning outcomes is a simple one. Learning experience can no longer be driven by the teacher and what is in the textbook. There are some more important things than that. That is the reason why our colleagues of the case studies were talking about narrow competences (languages, maths, scientific competences) and the broader key competences that are much more difficult to assess (tolerance, open mind, elements of the European social model). I don't think a learning outcome is something as narrow as a statement that can be included in a learning programme and can then be assessed. We have to understand them in a broad humanistic context. This wider value is very important.

Borg (Malta)

Did you encounter any scenarios in your Cedefop study where teachers were genuinely involved in the drawing up of learning outcomes?

Leney

Yes, I can give Finland as an example. Finland decentralised its curriculum. They have a core curriculum which includes subject hours and cross curricular themes. They are using these cross curricular themes as a way of defining a number of very important key competences, linked to learning outcomes. Teachers in Finland are trained up to masters' level, so they can not only use research but they are also quite comfortable being involved in small scale action research models. Professional development is very much a part of that. The ministry and the Board of Education no longer say: this is the curriculum, these are the cross curricular themes, now you have to teach them. They have decentralised the responsibility. The country has quite an important responsibility

for the operational curriculum. The key responsibility is the school leadership and the teachers. They have to plan the curriculum that they are going to teach over the year. So, there is a direct involvement and a legal responsibility of teachers in the active part of developing a curriculum. They don't rely on a national curriculum any more by falling back on a textbook. It is really important to involve the teachers as central partners in this process.

Bultot (Belgium)

I am interested in the different ways to consider learning outcomes. In my country I am very much involved in the development of ECVET. This system develops units of learning outcomes and guarantees mobility in Europe (for instance between school based training and workplace based training). The systems must bridge these different approaches in the future. The concept of learning outcomes is very useful for this purpose. The definition of learning outcomes has to be generic enough. We also need trust in the assessment and evaluations in the different countries. Too specific descriptions of learning outcomes lead to dead ends and do not favour mobility. We really need a generic, more humanistic approach.

Douterlungne (Belgium)

I have a very simple question. Can you explain in a few words the role of the education councils?

Leney

Education councils are mediating agencies. They are neither the official voice of the government nor only the professional interest of the teachers. You are representing the general interest of the civil society. The councils have a rather privileged position when changes are taking place. They are able to help steer reforms in a sensible way. They are concerned about developing good teaching and good learning. Councils are not driven by a particular government or provider interest. In that respect, the advisory opinions come from a well balanced position that can have some influence in the decision and implementation process. Councils can develop the arguments and set up pilots to see what works.

Tas (Hungary)

In Eastern European countries, the role of councils is a little bit different. The effectiveness of democracy is very different. In Hungary for instance there are two kinds of members in the council: members from the government and civil servants. But usually the government part is stronger than the civil part. The decision is always made by the governmental part. We also have a tradition to borrow policies of other countries without enough care for contextual implementation.

Workshops

Questions

- 1 Formulate one central idea that you have learned during this conference on the concept of learning outcomes.
- 2 Formulate one question for the Commission or Cedefop on the concept.
- 3 What does EUNEC have to transmit to the Commission as a result of this conference?

Results

Group 1

- 1 The conference gave a broad overview on the theme. It was an opportunity to receive information of experiences of various countries on implementation. But we also noticed that common understanding of learning outcomes is missing.
- 2 We would recommend specifying better the positive and negative aspects of the learning outcomes approach.
- 3 We would recommend to explain better the common understanding and to start activities on assessment and evaluation.

Group 2 (Spain)

- 1 What do we understand when we use the concept learning outcomes? Is it a new paradigm or a tool? It is a way of rethinking our curriculum with more focus on the student.
- 2 Teacher training is not solid enough...for a real key competences and learning outcomes approach.
- 3 We need new ways of working for teachers and students. We have to avoid the story of the teacher that tried to teach a dog playing the piano. He did not reach any result although he has been teaching for a whole year.

Group 3

- 1 It is a confusing concept. We think that we do not need a strict definition. We only have to be aware that we use the concept in different ways and we have to be able to explain our own approach.
- 2 Assessment is very important.
- 3 We need a balance between learning outcomes and other aspects. We have to avoid the danger of bureaucracy.

Group 4

- 1 Learning outcomes are context-specific. We need somehow a kind of curriculum Esperanto.
- 2 The role of school leaders is quite important. There are also large implications on teacher training (pre-service, in-service...). Outcome based learning implies teaching for diversity.
- 3 Examples of good practice have to be more accessible to stakeholders. Learning outcomes can contribute to more quality and equity if we go beyond the rhetoric. We have to emphasise the

idea that learning outcomes are an instrument for change and not for controlling the teachers. There is a risk of deprofessionalisation of teachers. Learning outcomes have to be used in the classroom. We need no common definition. Every country has to explain how they use the concept.

Group 5

- 1 Real change happens in the classroom. The context is important. A bottom-up approach is necessary.
- 2 Three elements are important: individual development, active participation (citizenship) and economic integration. The government has to define the minimum core curriculum? The implementation and the pedagogical methods are for the teachers.
- 3 What do countries have to do first? Analyse the learning outcomes or reform the system?

Group 6

- 1 It is not a change of paradigm but a common tool or a language for change.
- 2 The concept has to be seen as a process with involvement of teachers and schools. We need a balance between generic and specific detailed learning outcomes. Need of ownership of teachers. Teachers are often afraid of continuous change. Teachers should be convinced as principal stakeholders.
- 3 We need exchange of common experiences. Implementation needs a stable environment. The consensus model of education councils can be very useful.

VI. Reflections and statements on learning outcomes: the need for clarification

EUNEC conference

Madrid, 16-18 June 2008

1 The EUNEC conference on learning outcomes

1.1 EUNEC

EUNEC is a network of education councils in the European Union. As a network, EUNEC brings together the expertise of advisory bodies and of the stakeholders and experts who are involved in the national / regional advisory processes. These advisory bodies give advice to the governments of the different European countries in the field of education and training.

EUNEC considers the discussion on learning outcomes as part of an ongoing interrogation and dialogue on the necessity of transparency of qualifications. We refer to the reflections on the European credit transfer system for vocational education and training and to EUNEC's elements of reflection on the Commission Staff Working Document, "Towards a European Qualifications framework (EQF) for lifelong learning".

1.2 What are these statements and reflections meant for?

EUNEC discussed the findings of European and national projects focussing in learning outcomes. The education councils gathered in Madrid formulated critical remarks and statements on these issues.

EUNEC wants to disseminate these statements pro-actively towards the European Commission, the European Parliament, relevant DGs and CEDEFOP.

EUNEC also wants to promote action by EUNEC's members at national/regional level. These critical remarks and statements offer an input for national advisory opinions of education councils. They should provide a significant input for reflection and action by relevant stakeholders in the field of education and training such as providers of education, teacher trade unions, social partners (both intersectoral and branch organisations), experts in the field of education and training.

1.3 The conference on learning outcomes

EUNEC organised the conference on learning outcomes on the 16th – 18th June 2008 together with the Consejo Escolar del Estado (CEE). 17 countries were represented, in most cases by their council, some by interested persons of national ministries. The presence and the contribution of Mrs. Mercedes Calvo-Sotelo, minister of Education, have emphasised the importance of this event.

The preliminary work and reflections of the councils of the autonomous regions of Spain and the Consejo Escolar del Estado on key competences contributed to a great extent to the success of the conference. This work came to an end on a conference in Bilbao in May 2008, attended by Tapio Saavala of the European Commission (DG EAC) and Simone Barthel, EUNEC president.

2 Reflections

2.1 Learning outcomes: a confusing global concept but a useful tool

The concept of "learning outcomes" is emerging both in the education and training policies of European countries as in the policy documents of the European Union. At the European level we refer to the Bologna process, the Copenhagen process and the programme "Education and Training 2010". There are different European policy documents using the concept of learning outcomes such

as the recommendation on EQF, key competences, the proposal on ECVET. The London communiqué introduced the concept within the Bologna process.

Instead of focusing on input factors like the duration, location and particular pedagogical method underpinning a qualification, the focus is directed towards what a learner knows and is able to do at the end of a learning process. These outcome based designs of education could stimulate active learning and learner based approaches.

The participants taking part in the EUNEC conference insisted on the fact that the concept of "learning outcomes" remains vague in certain respects, certainly if seen in the context of global shifts and innovation strategies. While the term learning outcomes can have a clear definition in the English language, this is not the case in numerous of the different European language traditions. This means that, unless an English language concept is to dominate the European discussions, the concept of learning outcomes is at best a developing concept rather than a clear and precise one. It follows, therefore, that the concept of learning outcomes in relationship with other similar concepts is also not clear, and can in practice cause confusion. Does the concept of learning outcomes encompass the concepts of competences, competencies, key competences, skills, objectives, goals, credits, capabilities, standards? ... What are the similarities and differences between all these terms? What are the relationships between them? Does the concept of learning outcomes entail necessarily a global change in pedagogic strategies and approaches in the compulsory education and certainly in the education and training for adult learners?

An analysis based on policy documents shows that the concept of learning outcomes is an evolving one. Therefore the concept of learning outcomes is the object of an ongoing debate and discussion. If it is necessary to have a common understanding of learning outcomes, we also have to take into account that the application varies depending on context and focus (VET, training, higher education, key competences ...), as well as national language and cultural traditions.

2.2 The rationale behind learning outcomes

The formulation of learning outcomes fulfils the following functions:

- Enhancing transparency, valorisation and efficiency of qualifications in relationship to lifelong learning. Formulating learning outcomes in education and training should realise a better interconnectivity between learning pathways and stimulate mobility between and within education systems. In this sense it is an important lever for lifelong learning. Learning outcomes raise the visibility and the validation of learning in formal, non-formal and informal learning. This whole approach is especially important for vulnerable groups in society and at the labour market, such as early school leavers and other learners with "dead ends" in their educational trajectory.
- Secondly learning outcomes should raise the social relevance of learning. Learning outcomes offer a platform for dialogue between the expectations of society and of the labour market and education and training. The work done by the Consejo Escolar del Estado and the Consejos Escolares Autonómicos on key competences is a clear example of such a dialogue.

In themselves learning outcomes are a tool and not a global concept for renewal in education. But the use of learning outcomes within a more global policy and strategies can lead to new learning approaches: more student centred and more active.

2.3 Learning outcomes should be embedded within a wider policy and strategy

Elements of this policy are:

A balanced design between social, political and pedagogic objectives:

- Learning outcomes should not be formulated at a very detailed and accurate level so that the learning outcomes have no consistency and are quickly outdated. In this perspective learning outcomes should not be the result of a strictly behaviourist approach. On the other hand they should not be too generic and abstract so that they fail to describe the core objectives of a training or learning programme.
- It is crucial that every country / region should formulate its own policy towards the use of learning outcomes, honouring the national culture, tradition and language (no policy borrowing).
- The learning outcomes should at no moment be confused with guidelines for the organisation of the learning process or the didactic approach of the school and the school teams. The latter aspects belong these days to the autonomy of teachers and schools.
- Learning outcomes cannot describe every aspect of an education project (cross curricular activities, the hidden curriculum, values...). Learning outcomes have an added value if it is clear what they can describe and what they cannot. Learning outcomes should be part of a global school policy but they cannot deal with all important aspects of a school policy such as the well being of pupils, school climate, equity....
- There is a real danger that learning outcomes only remain a feature of a merely bureaucratic operation. The design and use of learning outcomes have an impact on the learning process of the learners. Therefore the use of learning outcomes should become an element in a wider reform in each country / region. Besides the design, teaching processes should more adequately deal with diversity in learning styles and speed, using better procedures of differentiation. Rethinking assessment procedures to make them fit better for the purpose is absolutely necessary.
- The use of learning outcomes demands for stronger policy making capacities of schools. This is also related to strong and transparent systems of quality assurance and accountability. More school autonomy and devolution of policy decisions from the central level to a more decentralised approach will strengthen this process.
- The use of learning outcomes calls for a better and stronger valorisation of the role of teachers and school teams. The innovation should be built on a sense of ownership of teachers and school teams. The reform should recognize the professional status and autonomy of teachers. Decision makers are urged to make lifelong learning for teachers a reality. This is about ensuring a more coherent pathway between initial training and in service training and will require investments into these provisions. The next EUNEC conference will deal with this theme of professionalisation of teachers and trainers.

3 Statements

EUNEC urges the European partners and experts to further develop European tools to enhance transparency and mobility (between countries, between working life and education and training, between education and training and within different levels of the education system).

But the concept of learning outcomes should be clear. It should also be understood within national contexts, educational contexts, sectors... Without a clear common understanding of learning outcomes as they appear in promising European tools, it will be impossible to implement these tools at a national/regional level. As indicated at the beginning of this advice, during the conference it was clear that participants used a different understanding of what learning outcomes mean. The translation of the term as such could have unwanted effects for the operationalisation at national level.

There is certainly a need for a communication strategy/terms that have a local context and meaning on the coherence of learning outcomes as part of a more encompassing EC policy (EQF, ECVET...). EUNEC proposes the EC and Cedefop to work on a better dissemination of good policy practices that can enrich the policy making and use of learning outcomes in other Member States.

Education councils offer a sound platform for consensus-building and dissemination. Referring to the EUNEC statements on educational reform, EUNEC is convinced that every innovation (and certainly a radical change with far reaching impact such as the use of learning outcomes) needs a negotiating platform with stakeholders. There is a need for an interface between evidence based models, stakeholders' approaches and policy models – consensus building agreements (role for education councils). The conclusions of the EUNEC conference on learning outcomes show clearly that dialogue with stakeholders on central concepts of a renewal are really a necessity for a successful design and implementation.

4 Conclusion

Learning outcomes are an instrument for a change towards an outcomes-based approach to planning and implementing education reform at different levels, but not a new paradigm on their own.

It is clear that further work has to be done on the clarification of the concept. This is less a question of the usage in the English language, which the Cedefop study has helped to clarify, but rather for different language traditions that work in EU member states.

Teachers are a crucial factor of the change in approach. Professionalisation and lifelong learning for teachers is an important policy theme for the years to come.

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