

Result 8

Analysis Report: Reality of learning outcome orientation in different countries

Summary

The analysis report shows the current status of the learning outcomes in the selected four countries. It has been shown that the information needs of VET experts differ (trainers in companies, teachers in vocational schools). In the Czech Republic and Spain, there is an interest in implementing accessibility for a work-based training. In Austria there is an interest in methods of competence assessment based on learning units. The different needs are taken into account in the learning platform.

Czech Republic

The concept of learning outcome orientation has been implemented in the Czech educational system since 2006. Curricula for vocational education define key competencies required for graduation and particular learning outcomes are linked to EQF levels. Following the Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council, ECVET elements have been introduced since the end of 2012. Teachers and trainers have been actively involved in this gradual implementation process through developing units of learning outcomes, training modules and integrating them into the School Educational Program. Special ECVET courses have provided support for teachers and trainers during this process. The key challenges of the implementation process lie in connecting the existing qualifications system with ECVET principles and ensuring the recognition of learning outcomes. Further problems may occur with the proper definition of competencies and the assessment of portability of competencies. In the Pospolu Project cooperation between schools and companies have been pilot tested since 2012. The project will provide detailed feedback concerning possibilities and limits of mutual cooperation.

Austria

The implementation of learning outcome orientation in Austria has been connected with activities on NQF and with an inter-ministerial strategy for lifelong learning (LLL-2020). Before the strategy paper on LLL was published in 2011 the skill level of people was still measured by formal certificates with

little relevance of non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes. Unless proper instruments to measure these non-formal and informal learning outcomes existed they were rarely used. The strategy for lifelong learning (LLL-2020) addressed those deficits with several countermeasures. Up to date, descriptions of learning outcomes are used more frequently, e. g. in the educational objectives of training programs. However, they are often abstract, unsystematic and without reference to validation criteria. Despite several individual initiatives to develop and test competency models, learning orientation has so far not been systematically implemented in the Austrian apprenticeship system. Formal foundations to anchor learning outcome orientation in training and examination regulations remain the key challenge in making learning outcome orientation operationally defined and verifiable. There are several factors in the state of play that may affect learning outcome orientation in a positive way: The professional profile in vocational education and training is already structured according to skills and knowledge but needs to be further developed. The modularization that has been started in 2006 may also be beneficial for the implementation of ECVET. Moreover, the strong sequencing of some occupations nearly matches the structure of units of learning outcomes. Further hindrances are the input-oriented description of school curriculum and description of school and work training contents in separate documents so that responsible authorities are hard to determine. Several projects to facilitate the paradigm shift have been established, e. g. “expertise with systems”

Spain

Many regulatory mechanisms have been established in order to increase learning outcome orientation in Spain. Applying modularization and unification principles in the structuring of training programs, a competence-based catalogue of vocational qualifications could be developed. As the formulation of learning outcomes has a strong impact on teaching and training in practice, the translation process of work tasks (competences) into learning outcomes and finding a suitably detailed description remain critical. Therefore, an active approach of teachers and trainers to interpret the standards and deliver high quality learning programs is indispensable. In practice, many teachers find written competences not sufficient and instead of the necessary active approach teaching often is still based on the content in the written curriculum. Due to this insufficient integration of learning outcomes in the written curriculum special efforts are required. Learning and assessment guidelines shall help defining learning outcomes; facilitate teaching methods and delivering LO in certificates. All in all, learning outcome orientation as a relatively new system is increasingly spreading across the educational system still causing some mistrust among society and education community.

Italy

The learning outcome orientation approach has been implemented in the Italian qualifications system. A system based on modular qualifications according to the ECVET model has been partly adopted. However, there are still differences among subsystems and several hindrances concerning learning outcome orientation. Firstly, the entanglement of formal education, training pathways and professional integration of young people into the labor market is critical as there are still specific rules for each of these categories. Further hindrances are the lack of interregional regulations for

learning outcome recognition and the diffusion of the apprenticeship in the transition between vocational school and occupation. Moreover, the general lack of appreciation of apprenticeship as a real training opportunity is considered a hindrance to creating a homogenous system of learning outcomes orientation. The learning outcome orientation approach will be extended in the near future by adopting the latest national regulations on VET as well as the second referencing process of the national qualifications system to EQF.

	Czech Republic	Austria	Spain	Italy
Current status of implementation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Started in 2006 Introduction of ECVET elements since 2012 Strong involvement of teachers and trainers in the development of LO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities on NQF and strategy for LLL More frequent descriptions of learning outcomes Individual initiatives to develop and test competency models No systematic implementation so far 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many regulatory mechanisms Development of a competence-based catalogue of vocational qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LO orientation approach has been implemented A modular qualifications system according to the ECVET model has been partly adopted
Difficulties in implementing learning outcome orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bringing existing qualification system into conformity with ECVET Utilization of LO orientation recognition Formulation of competencies Assessing portability of competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal foundations to anchor LO orientation in training and examination regulations Input-oriented description of school curriculum Description of school and work training contents in separate documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Translation process of work tasks (competences) into LO Finding a suitably detailed description of LO Mistrust among society and education community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interregional regulations Relationship between formal education, training pathways and professional integration of young people into the labor market lack of appreciation of apprenticeship
Future pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from the Pospolu Project will show limits and possibilities of cooperation between schools and enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects to facilitate the paradigm shift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning and assessment guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of the latest national regulations on VET Second referencing process of the national qualifications system to EQF

Czech Republic

Implementation of the learning outcome approach

Learning outcomes were introduced into the Czech educational system by the act 561/2004 Sb., on Preschool, Elementary, Secondary and Tertiary Vocational and Other Education (the Education Act) and have been gradually implemented since 2006.

How are units of learning outcomes designed?

Core curricula establish a clear hierarchy between knowledge and skills. By knowledge is meant a system of facts and theories which students acquire by being taught. Knowledge forms the foundation of education. By skills is meant the ability to perform certain tasks. For many skills appropriate knowledge is a prerequisite. The orientation towards skills is further strengthened by the notion of key competences. These are defined as collections of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which are necessary for personal development and are useful in common situations.

The curricula and EQF descriptors are generally in agreement. Qualification levels are defined in terms of learning outcomes. The learning process is interpreted in a comprehensive sense, to include knowledge and skills in the cognitive, physical and social domains. This knowledge and these skills are not considered in isolation, but are combined into more general competences. The linking of particular learning outcomes to EQF levels demonstrates clear and significant similarities.

Curricula for vocational education (RVP OV) define key and professional competences which constitute the requirements for a graduate in a given study field. Education in all areas of vocational education focuses on helping the students acquire, and building on their basic education, develop the following key competences: learning competences, problem solving competences, communication competences, personal and social competences, civic competences and cultural awareness, professional and business competences, mathematical competences, IT and communication competences, and competences for working with information.

As far as knowledge is concerned, level 3 of the EQF requires the “knowledge of facts, principles, processes and general concepts, in a field of work or study”. Analyzing the key competences, toward which education in given fields of study is geared, may demonstrate, that graduates will obtain the knowledge required for EQF level 3.

Level 3 skills “a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information”; as well as to EQF level 3 competence, which require that learners “take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study, adapt own behavior to circumstances in solving problems”. Terminology on level 3 is the least conclusive in the area of competence, considering the lack of a precise specification of learning outcomes, referring merely to “a responsibility for fulfilling tasks”. Important elements of responsibility may be found in the definition of technical competences: “ensure work safety and health protection; strive to achieve the highest possible quality of work, products or services; and act economically and in accordance with the strategy of sustainable development”.

How are units of learning outcomes assessed and documented?

The unit of learning outcomes is defined as a certain part of the qualification, which may be specific to a single qualification, but may also be common for several qualifications. It consists of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competencies - expected learning outcomes which can be verified, evaluated and acknowledged. Defined competencies should be based on real work tasks and connect the world of education with the labour world.

Each unit can be assessed by number of points that represent its weight within the qualification. ECVET system awards first with points of the qualification in general and then awards each unit (in this direction will be ECVET further elaborated in connection with the National Qualifications Framework). For qualifications, which have no determined points, can be estimated points according to the significance of unit for the given qualification and for the labour market.

The initial training points are determined by estimation according to the significance of the given educational field (to reach or "exceed" education defined by an appropriate FED) and for entering the labour market; in fact it will be a small number of points. The use of point assessment is voluntary. It will depend on the agreement of both institutions and on the possibilities for the point implementation in practice.

In the ECVET system are units of learning outcomes instrument for transferability and recognition of achieved results in different environments. The learner can get them in various ways – formal, non-formal and informal learning, both in his country and also in abroad. Learning delimited in the form of units is implemented on the basis of the training modules. The unit cannot be substituted with a part of the formal learning program, e.g. for training module or curriculum of the School Educational Program.

How can the role of the teachers or/and trainers be characterized? Is there an opportunity for a better support during the arrangement of competence orientated learning?

Teachers are involved in the development of the School Educational Programs, where they create units of learning outcomes, training modules and integrate them into the SEP. The goal is to motivate students and improve their vocational training.

Teachers have the opportunity to take an ECVET course, where they learn to assemble the unit of learning outcomes, which will help them to improve pupils' practical training in companies. Participants will become familiar with the European instruments for the support of the vocational training and mobility of pupils, with the possibility to describe the results of learning outcomes through knowledge, skills and competences. They will have an opportunity to practice and try to formulate learning outcomes, so that the learning outcomes will be understandable and useful.

Potential to improve & deepen this focusing on the learning outcome approach

The aim of the implementation of learning outcomes units and ECVET in initial education is to promote learning mobility, increase the attractiveness of vocational education and to support the quality in education. Challenging in the Czech Republic is the connection of the existing qualification system with ECVET principles and utilization the learning outcomes recognition.

Further development of the NQF is currently influenced by the implementation of ECVET. The intention is to use the competency model to define the "transversal qualifications" and to obtain a practically usable "units of learning outcomes". Reflections about the possibilities of ECVET system implementation lead to the assumption that units of learning outcomes could be mostly covered with particular competencies in the qualification standards of professional qualifications.

The problem may occur in the method of defining competencies - not all competencies in the standards of the NQF are properly formulated. Another problem may be the detection of true portability of selected competencies or their parts.

Short outlook: Plan to convey the learning outcome orientation?

The secondary education system does not currently use a credit system. Nevertheless, the Czech Republic has agreed to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and Council of 18 June 2009, on the Establishment of the European Credit system for Vocation Education and Training (ECVET). This has been undergoing testing since 2009. In April 2012, the Ministry of Education approved a draft strategy for the implementation of ECVET in the country. ECVET elements introduced in the Czech environment since the end of 2012 Pospolu project - Support for cooperation between schools and companies with a focus on vocational training in practice. Implementation of ECVET in the Czech Republic supports the Coordinating Center for ECVET. It was established by decision of the Ministry of Education in April 2012.

The ECVET elements are introduced in the Czech environment since the end of 2012 by the Pospolu project - Support for cooperation between schools and companies with the focus on vocational training in practice. Within the project, schools could participate in the development of the generic, but particularly of the specific applied models of cooperation related to the groups of fields of study included in their own curricula, either during the phase of creating or subsequent commenting. The form of applied models will be developed in the course of the whole project. A school may, together with the enterprise with which it has established cooperation, participate in a tender for pilot testing of these models. In such a case, the school and the enterprise jointly prepare, in line with the terms and conditions of the tender, a proposal for pilot testing in their environment. An important benefit for the project and consequently also for the whole system of VET will be the detailed feedback acquired from pilot testing of cooperation between schools and enterprises from the entire country in terms of possibilities and limits of mutual cooperation under the existing legislation.

Conclusion

Vocational education in the Czech Republic aims to gradually increase the transparency and quality of its outputs. The potential of ECVET wants Czech Republic use to improve the attractiveness of vocational education (mainly in technical branches) and to raise the efficient use of material - technical base in initial vocational education. All this combined with the possibilities, offered by international cooperation. The aim is to link the initial and continuing education through the implementation of recognition of prior learning. In the field of continuing education is systematically formed the qualifying system NQF and ECVET. The launching of ECVET will also contribute to increase

mobility of students, not only in initial vocational education. There is informational and methodological support for the implementation of the mobility using ECVET.

The concept of learning outcomes is gradually being introduced in the Czech system of vocational education and training and this helps to increase transparency and to promote transnational mobility. Focus on learning outcomes has become an important part of the systems development in education policy in many countries and in many ways influenced the development of the curricula concept in vocational education and training.

Austria

Status quo of the learning outcome orientation in the Austrian vocational system

Learning outcome orientation is a central part of the Europeanization and modernization of the Austrian vocational system. Therefore, the learning outcome orientation is also in the focus of political efforts to implement a strategy for lifelong learning. Parallel to the activities on the NQF the process of developing a LLL strategy for Austria was started as an inter-ministerial initiative. In 2007 submitted "Guidelines for a coherent LLL strategy for Austria" (see, among others CSENDON 2007), the adopted jointly by the social partners in 2007 position paper "Learning for 2008 and the paper submitted by the BMUKK" knowledge - opportunities - competencies. Strategy for the implementation of lifelong learning in Austria "was followed by a broad consultation process, the results and derived concrete dimensions of action in 2009 as" was expert report on the consultation process, "presented (see, CHISHOLM et al. 2010).

In 2011, the responsible ministries , presented the Austrian strategy on lifelong learning "LLL: 2020", including the key action 10 "process for validation of non-formally and informally acquired knowledge and skills in all sectors of education." This formulated the following objectives:

- Increase the transparency of the entire education system at national and international levels through better comparability of qualifications, regardless of where and how these qualifications were gained.
- Certifiability, visualization and assignability of knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside the traditional educational institutions
- Assessment of formal, non-formal and informal learning processes on their learning outcomes through
- Mutual, institutional and cross-sectoral recognition and transfer of qualifications as a principle throughout the education and vocational training system
- Existence of a comprehensive validation strategy, which also includes the recognition of acquired skills abroad
- Increased within national and international mobility, especially by people with little formal training

At the same time, the strategy paper notes (see strategy on lifelong learning in Austria, 2011, p 46) that in Austria the skill level of people is measured as before based on formally acquired certificates and non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes have little relevance . Although there

are already measures that can be used for the recognition of competences acquired outside formal education, the tools are not yet coordinated and embedded within an overall strategy.

Therefore, the LLL-2020 provides a number of measures to achieve the objectives defined in the scope of the program 10. These include:

- Establishment of 'Qualification responsible bodies', within the framework of the implementation of the NQF
- Further development of curricula and curricula in schools, universities, but also to further education in the direction of learning outcomes in order to allow an assignment on the NQF
- Development of an Austria-wide validation strategy for the comprehensive recognition of non-formal and informal learning with the participation of relevant ministries, the Länder and the social partners
- Implementation of accounting competence models for inclusion and recognition of prior learning and experience.
- Development of audit team skills through appropriate training programs and creation of cross-sectoral quality assurance for the performance assessment process.

Nevertheless, input-oriented descriptions are at least currently prevailing in Austria. Although descriptions of learning outcomes can be found in the educational objectives of the individual training programs or in the descriptions of the educational and teaching tasks, they are almost always very abstract, unsystematic and mostly without reference to validation criteria. This different perspective, the strong teacher-centeredness and the other building logic skills may prove to be inappropriate for the description of learning units.

In connection with the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), however, a tendency for increased description of learning outcomes can be observed.

In 2005, the Federal Ministry of Education initiated a project to develop educational standards for general and vocational core subjects. This is to ensure that the learning outcomes of students in core areas remain similar - regardless of individual or school-free implementation of training programs. The educational standards formulate demands on the problem-solving capacities and on the teaching and learning in order to ensure the placement of basic skills. The desired learning outcomes are described in terms of technical and multidisciplinary skills that students should have acquired up to a certain grade, and also are of great importance for the further education and vocational training. Educational standards consist of a competency model for each subject or subject area. However, since the educational tasks of vocational schools go beyond these core competencies, the standards generally cannot be used to assessing individual students or for a school ranking.

The focus is on job-related competencies and on the competencies needed to work in a profession or field. The target for all occupations common structure of the competency model should be based on three dimensions: knowledge, action and personal as well as general-professional competence.

In individual initiatives competency models have been developed and are already being tested. For example, a competency model for the agro-food and tourism department has been developed which sets Vienna-wide training standards. In it, the focus is directed to the competences to be acquired to ensure adequate preparation for the labor market. The following competency classes were

developed: expertise (including methodological skills), social skills (including communicative competence), individual competence (including creative skills) and implementation expertise.

Up to now, learning outcome orientation has not been established systematically in the apprenticeship system. While it is often argued that in the apprenticeship competence orientation takes place per se because of their immediate and strong practical orientation and alignment to the operational reality and also the practical skills assessment at the end of the apprenticeship, the challenge remains in the formal foundations to anchor learning outcome orientation in the training and examination regulations accordingly in order to make them operationally defined and verifiable, in particular against the background of the aspirations for greater transparency and national and international comparability of qualifications.

In order to develop competence and learning outcomes-based education order successfully, it requires three preconditions:

First, in the training regulations skills and competences to be acquired by the trainees mandatorily have to be defined as a minimum standard. The competence-based description have to take into account the technical, methodical, social and personal dimension.

Second, in the training regulations competences must be described as learning outcomes-oriented. These learning outcomes represent an important tool to improve the flexibility of training regulations, because in this way the focus is placed on the goal of education, which gives more leeway to the company. By learning outcomes orientation the focus on the curricular level can be changed from the input to the output control.

Third, vocational skills are to be considered always in the context of business processes. Therefore the working and business processes have to be the starting point for content structuring and bundling of training content and the skills to be acquired.

The paradigm shift in the apprenticeship from the input to output orientation seems to be manageable. The following factors affect it positively (see PETANOVICH et al 2014):

In vocational education and training, the professional profile has a structure according to knowledge and skills. The professional profile lists the competences an apprentice can run professionally, independently and responsibly after his company and school education. The foundation for the description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes is thus already set for the operational part of the training. Nevertheless, a further development towards genuine learning outcomes is necessary.

With the modularization that was anchored in January 2006 in the BAG , a first step towards a qualification classification in units was set. Although the Austrian conception deviates from the usual definition of modularization in Europe, a certain awareness of a "modular system", however, was created with it. For the implementation of ECVET this may prove to be beneficial.

A range of occupations, primarily from the commercial and administrative area, show a stronger sequencing in units. E.g. in the apprenticeship profession operating services the professional profile is divided in ten units (e.g. "managerial accounting"), and some sub-units (e.g. "cost accounting and calculation", "taxes and payroll", "accounting", "payment" and "accounting"). This type of structure is very close to the proposed representation of qualifications in units of learning.

However, there are some factors in apprenticeship training to counteract a consistent implementation of learning outcomes:

The curriculum for the school part is formulated largely in an input-oriented way. The instructions are not defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competences of the learner's perspective. It is, rather, a list of topics that the teacher must deal with in the context of teaching. For the implementation of outcome orientation and ECVET this form of the formulation is proving a hindrance. A restructuring of the curricula in the direction of learning outcomes would be required in schools.

Although school and work training form a unit, the training content is presented in separate documents. "Duality" therefore often is characterized in terms of "separation" and not, as originally intended, as a "supplement". For description of a whole qualification in learning units, as provided for ECVET, this separation could prove to be a hindrance. In fact it is irrelevant where the skills are acquired - it's all about the learning result.

This separation can also prove to be a hindrance in regard to the determination of the responsible authorities. Due to the different responsibilities there are two learning outcome descriptions (each of partial qualifications) by two competent bodies / authorities that make up the overall qualification only in combination. Also here the "separating element" is visible and thus the emphasis on the place of learning.

In recent years, there were, however, initiated a number of projects to accelerate the turn to the learning outcomes in apprenticeship training.

In Austria the model "expertise with systems" (KmS) has been developed, that puts the professional training of the Labour Market Service (AMS) in the context of formal educational qualifications. KmS shall enable people seeking employment to pick up the skills that are necessary to acquire a formal degree by the way of an extraordinary final exam via passing several training modules. KmS is an example of how the model of competence orientation can be implemented in the formal design of dual training and at the same time shows how the apprenticeship system can be used flexibly for the qualification of further target groups in the context of labor market and employment policies.

The AMS initially selected four apprenticeships. For those professions a KmS model has been developed (retail trade, IT Retail, Information Technology, Hotel & Hospitality Assistant). First, a competency matrix was constructed for each apprentice profession, which maps all the contents of the statutory teaching regulation. The work was carried out by the ibw Austria - Research & Development in VET (ibw) in cooperation with the Austrian Institute for Research on Vocational Training (öibf). In the matrix, there are those areas of competence of the profession, which are described in the training regulations. For each of these areas of expertise, there are three skills development stages, the respective preceding level is implicitly included in the next. The level 3 in the competence matrix corresponds to the level the final exam. This is to ensure that the KmS model can be easily classified in the future National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The next step is to develop meaningful training modules that represent a subset of the competence matrix and form at the same time on its own qualification for taking up work. Participants can reflect their previous acquisition of skills during the entire training period. At the end of each training block a so-called "skills check" is held, at which representatives of the economy are involved, and which

reviews whether the participants have reached the target competencies described in the matrix have for each education module. If this is the case, the graduates will receive a certificate.

Conclusion

Although Austria is one of the top countries in the European Union in regard to fighting youth unemployment and preparing a smooth transition from school to employment and despite the long tradition of vocational education and training, there is room for improvement especially in the apprenticeship system in regard to quality assurance and learning outcome orientation. The next years will show whether the various approaches to improve the system and to establish a change of paradigm towards learning outcome orientation will be successful.

Spain

Main Findings and conclusions

It is possible to appreciate over the last decades the increasing presence of the learning outcome approach steering the development of the Spanish VET system, in line with European trends and strategies to achieve more, better and more equitable lifelong learning, and thus, contributing to the European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Like many other European countries, Spain has established policies to increase permeability of its systems and make qualifications transparent and comparable within and across national borders. In this sense, various regulatory mechanisms, notably qualifications frameworks, credit transfer and validation and recognition arrangements, have been put in place taking into account the outcome-oriented approach, key to this process.

Since the mid-1990s, unitisation and modularisation have been two of the principles applied in structuring qualification programmes in most of the initial vocational training programmes as well as in continuing training (training for employment leading to certificates for both the unemployed and employed). These two principles informed the development of the national catalogue of vocational qualifications, which can be characterized as a competence-based system, i.e., taking into account the influence of the learning (or working) context when defining and assessing learning outcomes.

Nevertheless, adapting to the learning outcomes approach requires not only a formal process but also an adaptation of teaching and training praxis to the new requirements. The way learning outcomes are formulated and structured in curricula, shaped by authorities and working groups developing the qualifications on the basis of their understanding of the purposes of such a qualification, have consequences for how the written curriculum is interpreted and how it influences the behaviour of teachers and learners, with mixed results.

The definition of learning outcomes, simple at first sight, can also turn quite complex when considering the level of detail at which learning outcomes should be written: too detailed descriptions can be confusing and tiring, but too general statements may become meaningless and useless. The challenge for an outcome-oriented curricula remains in translating descriptions of work

tasks (competences) into descriptions of what should go on in training and educational institutions (learning outcomes) and how to deliver them.

That is why, without the efforts of education and training professionals to deliver high quality learning programmes, the learning outcomes may turn into hollow statements. These teachers and trainers take it as their task to use their knowledge and experience to interpret standards and broad aims to create the right environment for the development of competent people, since there is virtually no pedagogical guidance embedded in the system, i.e., teachers and trainers remain free to demonstrate their pedagogical skills.

Both subsystems are implementing teamwork among teachers/trainers and documenting the processes, activities and assignments developed by both faculty and students as a way to ensure the same level of quality and meet the requirements specified in the curriculum and learning outcomes.

Previous case studies looking at the learning orientation approach in Spain, amongst other countries, show that the teachers found written curriculum failing to provide a sufficiently detailed or contextualised understanding of these competences, although it does set out learning outcomes. It was also reported that there were many other vocational teachers in Spain who continued to base their teaching on the content defined in the written curriculum (alongside the learning outcomes) rather than take more active approaches, findings that were confirmed in the interviews conducted within the TrainCom project.

Both education and employment-VET systems see each other with a mixture of mistrust and envy, as their working methods and procedures seem to them very different, although they share common complaints, like the lack of a systematic procedure for motivating and rewarding their efforts, being the trainers' career access criteria at both systems very different.

This could suggest that the inclusion of learning outcomes in the written curriculum may not be sufficient to bring about the adoption of more active and authentic learning approaches. It proved helpful that teachers were guided by occupational standards as well as by qualification and educational standards – because an awareness of the competences behind the learning outcomes encourages them to use simulations and authentic work tasks as modes of teaching and learning, but additional efforts are required to achieve the implementation of the learning outcome approach in its full dimension.

There is still a divorce between “theory” and “practice”, which is more marked if we leave the educational environment and look into companies, and between curriculum approved and business's real needs.

Different authorities have developed guidelines to help define learning outcomes, using a common set of rules for writing learning outcomes, which might overcome possible weaknesses. For example, all learning outcomes in the VET curricula follow the same characteristics, providing coherence across the system:

1. They are 'achievements', clearly identifiable (written in the infinitive).
2. They must be achievable within the training environment.
3. They are feasible for students.

4. They must have an observable behaviour.
5. They have to be measurable.
6. As a consequence of 3, 4 and 5, they can be assessed.
7. They establish an educational level and are related to a specific national skill and competence level.

The alignment between learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment become then necessary in order to make the overall learning experience more coherent, transparent and meaningful for learners.

Outcome-oriented curricula face a challenge in translating descriptions of work tasks (competences) into descriptions of what should go on in training and educational institutions (learning outcomes). For this purpose, learning and assessment guides have also been developed for the different Professional Certificates in order to support and guide teachers in delivering the training actions corresponding to each certificate. Their aim is to encourage consistency in training activities of the same certificate with different types of providers, and to contribute to the quality of the planning, delivery and evaluation of Vocational Training for Employment.

These learning and assessment guides intend to facilitate methodological strategies, procedures, teaching methods and resources to trainers, bearing in mind the learning assessment, which has to be made with objective, reliable and valid criteria, throughout continuous and final assessment of the modules and learning units, to check the achievement of the expected results.

Another essential aspect is to facilitate trainees to acquire professional skills in their various dimensions, which include personal and social as well as the ability to learn autonomously and team work. An example of these different skills dimensions can be found in Table 2 , and the proposed methodologies and resources.

Another example can be found in the Order ESS/1897/2013, which contains various templates to record different activities in order to ensure and improve quality of professional certificates' training delivery. These templates made reference to the following types of reports:

- Teaching programme planning
- Teaching Programme
- Planning learning outcomes assessment
- Individualized assessment
- Assessment Act
- Training programme for the practical training in workplaces

In conclusion, the educational system has a long tradition in planning, designing and delivering VET, a quality assurance system well perceived by society, a well trained staff capable of adjusting to the various changes and different teaching approaches but also installed in bureaucratic procedures and certain inertia.

On the other hand, training for employment is a relatively new system, with most of the trainers hired ad hoc, but it enjoys more economical resources and smaller group size. Nevertheless, there is still some mistrust from the education community and society in general, with poor recognition of its

real value, which authorities try to overcome with regulations geared to make more transparent the learning outcomes and improve its overall quality.

This shifting process towards the learning outcome approach is still on the move, being a top down initiative from the authorities in charge of VET matters, which has been zealously implemented throughout the designing of qualifications, but whose impact in actual training delivery is still unequal and pending to assess in its full extent.

Italy

In Italy, due to the 21 regional authorities, the recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes from one region to another is still critical, although national standards exist. The latest regulations are moving to a more efficient and homogeneous national qualifications system based on LO, more flexible qualifications and assessment standards. ECVET can support European mobility which is now increasing for students and workers and can also aid networking among training providers, communication between VET and the labour market and recognition of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning.

As far as the application of ECVET principles is concerned, the Italian perspective – particularly concerning the learning outcomes approach - is closely linked to the evolution of the relationships between formal education and training pathways and professional integration of young people into the labor market. There is no single law that regulates the transition from compulsory education and initial vocational training, but each category has specific rules that are based on their National Collective Labour Agreement (CCNL). This prevents the creation of a homogeneous system of recognition and assessment of skills (Learning Outcomes), as there is no regulation about skills certification that is valid both at interregional and national levels.

The main problem of the Italian system is the lack of interregional regulation for the learning outcomes recognition and the strong diffusion, for historical and cultural reasons, of the apprenticeship in the transition between vocational school and occupability. Vocational education has long been a topic of discussion in the debate of economic policy. Many have stressed that Italy is losing ground in terms of competitiveness, and how this is due, among other things, to the lack of investment in human capital formation. According to the latest Eurostat survey on education made by the companies, the percentage of firms with at least ten employees who had carried out training activities in 2005 (about 70 thousand) were 32 per cent of the total, compared to 60 per cent of the EU average . Our country was placed third to last place in the European rankings, ahead of Bulgaria and Greece. This collection, though dated, allows us to highlight the lack of attention to the training of Italian firms.

The apprenticeship has been used by companies as an opportunity for low-cost labor rather than as a real training opportunity.

Unfortunately, while it is on this ground that confront other partners, Italy has long been in trouble for both the quantity and for the quality of employment opportunities offered to young people. This creates considerable waste of human and material resources, which is exacerbated during the recent economic crisis.

In general terms, the crisis has highlighted the nodes on the bottom of the Italian labor market, in particular for the class of young people: the strong regional disparities, the segmentation between Italians and foreigners, and large number of people who give up looking for a job.

Trying to resolve that situation, the learning outcomes approach has been implemented in different areas of the Italian qualifications system, although differences, mainly terminological, still remain among different subsystems. The LOs approach will be extended in the near future with reference to the second phase of the referencing process of the national qualifications system to EQF and the implementation of the latest national regulations on VET.

A system based on modular qualifications (ECVET model) is partially adopted. Some subsystems can give citizens the opportunities to achieve partial qualifications after the assessment of prior learning or accumulating the units and related value in terms of credit, changing from one pathway to another. With the implementation of the latest national regulations on VET, the LOs approach and the transfer opportunities will be further developed.