WELKOM

ASSESSMENT TOOL AND RECOGNITION OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees

CONTENT

Project "WELKOM"

Project "Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees" (acronym: "WELKOM") is an approved Erasmus+ project within Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. The project has been created as an answer to the growing needs for social, economic and educational integration of the refugees fleeing to the European countries during the last few years. The massive and continuing internal and external displacement of people, especially from Middle Eastern and Northern African countries, has had enormous social, economic and political consequences in these regions, derailing their development path and affecting the growth gains previously achieved. Based on the conclusions of the Council of Europe and the Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (2016-2019), the response to the refugee crisis is planned to be implemented based on three main pillars; the first and most important is the pillar of Education which stresses that focus should be given on (1) language skills as an engine for integration, (2) recognising qualifications held by migrants and refugees, (3) access to education for migrant and refugee children and young people.

The aim of "WELKOM" is to develop transparency, recognition and validation of skills and qualifications held by refugees and migrants based in Belgium, Greece, Iceland, Italy and Sweden. Consequently, this will make it easier for the target groups to study and work in the host countries, leading to further social inclusion and integration. Hence, our main objective is to analyze and plan the terms for the valid recognition of skills and qualifications already held by refugees and migrants, to make them more coherent and easier to use, and to ensure a stronger focus on the needs of pupils, students, workers, employers and society as a whole.

For more information, please visit: http://www.projectwelkom.eu.

Introduction to the Report

According to the original Application of the project, Intellectual Output 6 – Assessment tool and recognition of learning outcomes was created to respond to the specific objective "Develop an assessment tool for the validation of learning outcomes". This assessment tool was addressed to the learning outcomes that would derive from Intellectual Output 5 – Organization and implementation of training courses. As originally planned, during the initial IO5, training courses with 3 months duration and with the participation of 20 refugees per country would be implemented, and IO6 was directly connected with providing a template for recognising the learning outcomes of the participants in IO5.
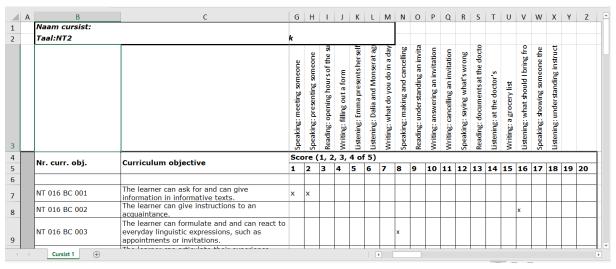
However, IO5 was excluded from funding and, thus, the organization of training courses was impossible to be carried out as planned. Consequently, this created a practical gap on the implementation of IO6, which the project partners discussed in detail during the 3rd Transnational Project Meeting in Thessaloniki, Greece in 28-29 November, 2018 and decided to proceed as follows: to develop a methodological roadmap that could add value to the practices either of the learning, teaching, training schemes of the partner organizations of "WELKOM", or of other organizations that implement similar learning, teaching and training activities. Hence, it was decided that all project partners will share their organizations' relevant templates, while OECON GROUP that leads this IO will conduct research over the European as well as global methodology and standards for assessment and recognition of learning outcomes, with the ultimate goal being to combine all inputs in order to share an integrated approach.

Based on this notion, this Report's structure begins with the presentation of the (four of the five) partners' collected results of assessment processes and schemes in their respective countries (Belgium, Sweden, Italy and Greece), and continues with the aim to provide a theoretical background and presentation of the methodological guidelines for designing assessment of learning outcomes procedures to be utilized by various stakeholders, based on EQF, ECVET, ECTS and other standards.
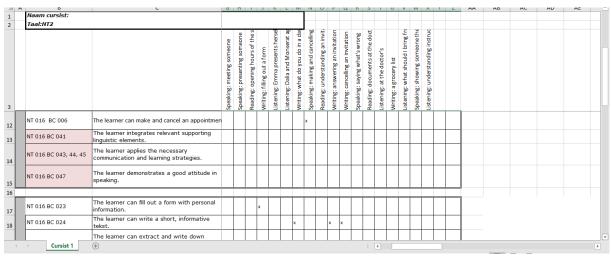
BELGIUM

UCLL from Belgium has shared a scoresheet that is used to evaluate learners of Dutch as a foreign language. The scoresheet is completed by the teacher – not by the students – and works as follows:

On the left it mentions the development goals per skill, according to the European curriculum for level A1 (Breakthrough). For example, the oral evaluation "Meeting someone" tests the following development goals: The learner can ask for and can give information in informative texts, plus the learner can articulate their experience, such as wishes, needs and feelings, and can ask for the experience of their conversation partner (these are indicated in the spreadsheet with an X). With a score from 1 to 5 you can indicate to which extent the learner has achieved this goal in a specific evaluation. At the end of the learning cycle, the learner should have participated in all tests, and should have received a score for each development goal. The specific formula then automatically calculates the total score at the bottom of the spreadsheet. The total score determines whether the learner has successfully completed the learning cycle or not.

Development goals per skill (example 1)

Development goals per skill (example 2)

Development goals per skill (example 3)

	Naam cursist:	
	Taal:NT2	

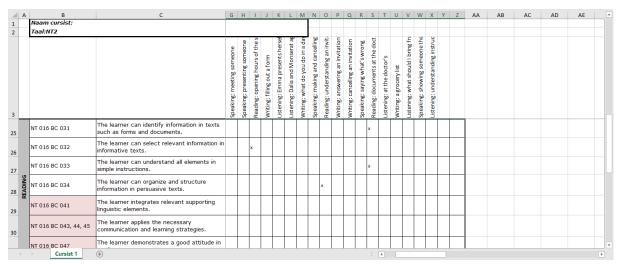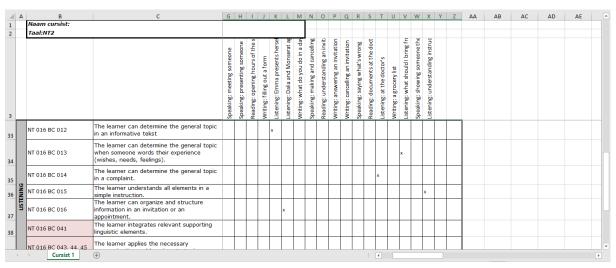| Skill	Code	Goal	Speaking: meeting someone	Speaking: presenting someone	Reading: opening hours of the s	Writing: filling out a form	Listening: Emma presents hersel	Listening: Dalia and Monserat a	Writing: what do you do in a day	Speaking: making and cancelling	Reading: understanding an invit	Writing: answering an invitation	Writing: cancelling an invitation	Speaking: saying what's wrong	Reading: documents at the doct	Listening: at the doctor's	Writing: a grocery list	Listening: what should I bring fro	Speaking: showing someone the	Listening: understanding instruc
WRITING	NT 016 BC 025	The learner can extract and write down simple, concrete information from written texts.														x				
	NT 016 BC 026	The learner can extract and write down simple, concrete information from spoken interaction.	x																	
	NT 016 BC 041	The learner integrates relevant supporting linguistic elements.																		
	NT 016 BC 043, 44, 45	The learner applies the necessary communication and learning strategies.																		
	NT 016 BC 047	The learner demonstrates a good attitude in writing.																		

Development goals per skill (example 4)

	Naam cursist:	
	Taal:NT2	

Skill	Code	Goal	Speaking: meeting someone	Speaking: presenting someone	Reading: opening hours of the s	Writing: filling out a form	Listening: Emma presents hersel	Listening: Dalia and Monserat a	Writing: what do you do in a day	Speaking: making and cancelling	Reading: understanding an invit	Writing: answering an invitation	Writing: cancelling an invitation	Speaking: saying what's wrong	Reading: documents at the doct	Listening: at the doctor's	Writing: a grocery list	Listening: what should I bring fro	Speaking: showing someone the	Listening: understanding instruc
READING	NT 016 BC 031	The learner can identify information in texts such as forms and documents.													x					
	NT 016 BC 032	The learner can select relevant information in informative texts.			x															
	NT 016 BC 033	The learner can understand all elements in simple instructions.													x					
	NT 016 BC 034	The learner can organize and structure information in persuasive texts.									x									
	NT 016 BC 041	The learner integrates relevant supporting linguistic elements.																		
	NT 016 BC 043, 44, 45	The learner applies the necessary communication and learning strategies.																		
	NT 016 BC 047	The learner demonstrates a good attitude in																		

Development goals per skill (example 5)

	Naam cursist:	
	Taal:NT2	

Skill	Code	Goal	Speaking: meeting someone	Speaking: presenting someone	Reading: opening hours of the s	Writing: filling out a form	Listening: Emma presents hersel	Listening: Dalia and Monserat a	Writing: what do you do in a day	Speaking: making and cancelling	Reading: understanding an invit	Writing: answering an invitation	Writing: cancelling an invitation	Speaking: saying what's wrong	Reading: documents at the doct	Listening: at the doctor's	Writing: a grocery list	Listening: what should I bring fro	Speaking: showing someone the	Listening: understanding instruc
LISTENING	NT 016 BC 012	The learner can determine the general topic in an informative tekst				x														
	NT 016 BC 013	The learner can determine the general topic when someone words their experience (wishes, needs, feelings).																x		
	NT 016 BC 014	The learner can determine the general topic in a complaint.														x				
	NT 016 BC 015	The learner understands all elements in a simple instruction.																		x
	NT 016 BC 016	The learner can organize and structure information in an invitation or an appointment.						x												
	NT 016 BC 041	The learner integrates relevant supporting linguistic elements.																		
	NT 016 BC 043, 44, 45	The learner applies the necessary																		

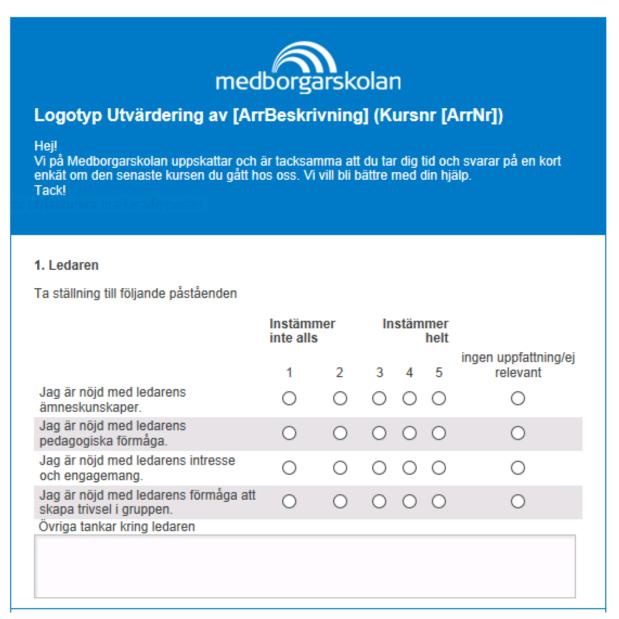|	Dit gedeelte vult zich automatisch aan	
	score /100	
SPEAKING		
WRITING		
READING		
LISTENING		
Totaal:		

Total score calculator

SWEDEN

Medborgarskolan from Sweden has shared the Course Evaluation where the learners – not their teachers – fill in their opinion about the course they have taken. They can agree to each statement from 1-5 where:

1 means "I do not agree at all";

5 means "I totally agree";

or the last box which means "I don't know".

As it can be seen below, the Course Evaluation sheet is divided in 4 assessment parts (1. The teacher; 2. The learning outcomes; 3. The course materials; 4. The institution), plus 3 more parts that are used for other information and comments:

Course Evaluation sheet (example 1)

4. Medborgarskolan som arrangör

Ta ställning till följande påståenden

	Instämmer inte alls				Instämmer helt
	1	2	3	4	5
Jag har fått ett bra bemötande av Medborgarskolan.	○	○	○	○	○
Jag är nöjd med information/administration kring kursen.	○	○	○	○	○
Det gick bra att anmäla sig till kursen.	○	○	○	○	○
Jag är nöjd med den fysiska miljön där kursen hölls.	○	○	○	○	○
Jag är nöjd med kursen som helhet.	○	○	○	○	○
Jag kan rekommendera Medborgarskolan som kursarrangör.	○	○	○	○	○

Övriga tankar kring Medborgarskolan

5. Hur fick du kännedom om kursen?

○ Tidningsannons   ○ Muntlig information

○ Medborgarskolans tryckta kursprogram   ○ Facebookannons

○ Medborgarskolans tidning Magasinet   ○ Googlesökning

○ Medborgarskolans hemsida   ○ Annat sätt:

○ Medborgarskolans nyhetsbrev   ○ Ingen uppfattning/ej relevant

○ Kurser.se

6. Jag fick information om Medborgarskolans övriga utbud

○ Ja

○ Nej

Course Evaluation sheet (example 2)

7. Övrigt

Är det något annat som du vill passa på att framföra till Medborgarskolan?

Course Evaluation sheet (example 3)

<u>Accordingly, the translations of the questions above are as follows:</u>

1. The teacher
- I am content with the teacher's knowledge on the subject
- I am content with the teacher's pedagogic skills
- I am content with the teacher's interest and engagement
- I am content with the teacher's ability to create a good environment

Note if you have other comments

2. The learning outcomes
- The course gave me new knowledge
- The level of teaching was right for me
- I have been able to influence the content and the form of the learning

Note if you have other comments about the learning

3. The course materials (literature, books, web pages, descriptions and other materials)
- The course materials were relevant for the course and the subject

Note if you have other comments about the course materials

4. Medborgarskolan as provider
- I received good services from Medborgarskolan
- It was easy to enroll in the course
- I am content with the environment and the premises
- I am content with the course in general
- I can recommend Medborgarskolan to other students

Note if you have other comments about Medborgarskolan

5. How did you get information about the course

- Newspaper advertisement
- Medborgarskolan catalogue
- Webpage
- Newsletter
- Portal www.kurser.se
- Oral information
- Facebook advertisement
- Google search
- Other way
- Don't know

6. Did you get information about other courses at Medborgaskolan?

- Yes
- No

7. Other comments

Lastly, Medborgarskolan has shared an example of the Certificate that they give to the course participants, after they have completed a minimum attendance of 80%.

Diplom

Beatrice Larsson

har genomgått Medborgarskolans utbildning

Diplomutbildning Ekonomi och redovisning

HT 2018, 38 studietimmar

KURSINNEHÅLL
Grundläggande företagsekonomiska begrepp
Budgeteringssyfte,innehåll och utformning
Kostnad och intäktsanalys
Bokföring Visma
Bokslut, periodisering och ekonomiska rapporter

Kursledare Martin Lundin

Stockholm 2018-12-19

Selene Hellström, verksamhetsansvarig

medborgarskolan

ITALY

Futuro Digitale from Italy has shared a Report that consists of the results of the comparative analysis of OLS (Online Linguistic Support) course provided by the European Commission and by Italian language schools for refugees and migrants. This Report has 3 parts; 1) the first part is the general overview of OLS course, 2) the second part is the overview of FD's approach, 3) while the last part is the comparison table by criteria provided.

1) More specifically, OLS is an online course with different modules and activities per module, which consist of the following:

First of all, there is a general introduction video about Italian language (the origins, where can we find people who speak Italian, etc.), as well as about basic knowledge of Italian language (yes, no, hello, goodbye, thank you, etc.). Depending on the learners' level, they can find different activities, but they can also skip and go through wherever they want. Structure:

A1 – Initiation (not available for grammar)

A1 – Beginner

A2 – Elementary

B1 – Intermediate

B2 – Upper Intermediate

C1 – Advanced (not available for grammar)

The course is divided by topics, and every topic has its own vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation part. Some of these topics are (for the basic level):

- Presenting yourself
- Describing a person
- Describing the different parts of the house
- Describing your main activities (job/hobbies)
- Likes and dislikes
- Asking for information
- Colors
- Hours

Every topic has three parts, and every part contains the following modules:

Vocabulary module

In every vocabulary lesson, we can find:

5 comprehension exercises (depending on the topic). These exercises may consist of the following:

- Matching pictures with sentences (the verb/word or thing that the picture shows)
- In a group of words, which one is not related with the others
- True of false exercises

- Complete the gaps (with a list of options offered or with no options offered→with listening)
- Put the sentence's parts in the correct order

1 exercise of dictation and spelling

- Complete the gaps of a conversation with what you listen

1 Pronunciation exercise

- About repeating on the microphone what you listen

Grammar

The learner can see a general explanation, which can be downloaded in a PDF version. Every session is different, and they are not connected:

- Qualifying adjectives

After this, you have to complete different exercises, which have the same structure as in in the vocabulary module:

- Matching pictures with sentences (the verb/word or thing that the picture shows)
- In a group of words, which one is not related with the others
- True of false exercises
- Complete the gaps (with a list of options offered or with no options offered→with listening)
- Put the sentence's parts in the correct order

The progress is assessed in every part of every module, and then in general statistics: these statistics show how many parts of the course you have completed, with your correct and non-correct answers, and how much time did you spend in the online platform.

It is not possible to send the writing task for evaluation as there is not a writing task. Additionally, it is not easy to indicate the numbers or hours needed to reach A1 level, as it depends on the time that every student spends on the platform.

The speaking section is about pronunciation, not about having a conversation. However, there is a section called "Live coaching", which consists of video-chatting with one qualified Italian person, among five other Erasmus students top, about a certain topic or certain skills. There is not a specific way to check the progress of the student in this area, as there is no review from the qualified person/teacher. There is no evaluation of this part, but the number of completed sessions is registered in the platform as an indicator.

2) In general, asylums seekers, refugees and migrants who have a low educational level when they arrive to Italy (average middle school level, mostly). As a necessary step in order to continue their education on a higher level, it is to learn the Italian language, even when this learning has not to be exhaustive. When they are able to communicate and understand Italian

(by reaching a B1 level), it makes them capable of going to school and continue there their education in Italy.

About the Italian course
All teachers are trained to teach Italian as foreign language, and the teacher in charge of the Italian lessons in the camp is specialized in teaching methodology for migrants. The levels of Italian education that centre offers are:

A0 – For illiterate (which it consists in teaching some basic writing and reading skills)

A1 – Basic level

A2 – Basic level +

B1 – Advance

Migrants and asylum seekers learn Italian only at a basic level, due to the necessity to get an A2 language certificate in Italian to be given a residence permit in Italy.

As most of the education and services offered, the Italian language course is focused on increasing the opportunities of the people participating to get a job. This is why the course is taught using a practical approach and non-formal ways; pretending to prepare them for daily life (for example, asking information to the police, making appointments to the doctor, fillings documents, accommodation search, etc.). This explains why the most important module is the oral communication one. However, students' participation in class is not high, as the teacher is the one who speaks the most during the lessons (about 70% of the time). Our suggestion would be trying to implement CLT (communication learning teaching), that would have more satisfactory results for the students, and for the teachers themselves.

All these circumstances make the Italian learning process different from a regular Italian course. That is why there is no understanding how the methodology materials provided before they are connected with the real job of the teacher because we found out many materials for B2, C1 levels which is not the aim of the organization. Moreover, the materials provided do not have the clear structure and methodology explained, just basic information about key competences expected in terms of grammar and vocabulary.

One of the difficulties that the learning procedure has it is that the students are not divided by language skills level, but are rather accidental, due to their lack of constancy attending the lessons. Neither there is a developed methodology in case of higher language skills, so the students which have a higher level realize the same programme as the rest on lower levels. This can result as a non-beneficial way of learning for those people with more advantaged language skills, who can be demotivated.

Due to political changes, the learning process has varied: instead of teachers sent by the Ministry, the students have to go to a special center (CAIT) in order to get an official certificate. However, in the center the teacher who is in charge of the Italian course is able to extend a certificate that is valid as a proof of the competence of the student.

3) Comparative table

Criteria to compare	Online Linguistic Support (OLS)	Futuro Digitale Italian Courses
Way of teaching	Online interactive platform for self-learning	Teacher leading in-class learning
Target audience	Accepted for Erasmus+ Exchange Undergraduate and Graduate students motivated to learn initial skills in language of the host mobility country	Asylum seekers and migrants wanted to get necessary papers for permanent residence in the host country
Target aspects	Attention to vocabulary first, but also grammar and pronunciation	Attention to "basic skills", grammar and vocabulary concentrated on "importance for life" material
Human checking	Writing tasks cannot be checked, speaking practice through online chat. Grammar and vocabulary checked by platform	Teachers are responsible for evaluation of all skills, including writing
Levels Available	From A1 to C1	From A0 to B1.1
Public availability	Just Erasmus students can take the course	For asylum seekers and migrants
CCQ (checking comprehensive questions) approach	Does not exist	Very limited use by teacher
The proportion of self-learning	100% self-learning. Requires organization and motivation	70% teacher speaking in class. Requires motivation but self-organization of students is at a low level
Examination	At the end you get language certificate provided by the European Commission. Limited acceptance, not possible to use for University entrance	Official certificate of A2 which gives the possibility to get residence permit
Duration	Depends on the student's performance. The access to the platform only during the mobility period	6 months (can be extended to 12 months)
Fee	Free of charge for accepted students	Free of charge for refugees and migrants

GREECE

As OECON Group from Greece has provided, in Greece there is not a common system in use for the official recognition and validation of informal and non-formal learning outcomes. The issue has been in discussion for a number of years, especially within the public sector organisations responsible for adult education.

Nevertheless, as the Greek Government fears skills shortages in professional sectors such as information and communication technology (ICT) and foreign languages, the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs has set up a system of summative assessment, based on examinations, to confirm and certify the knowledge of modern languages obtained through non-formal training. The process leads to obtaining the "State Certificate of Competence in Languages". The certification can be obtained by Greek native speakers for foreign languages including English, French, German and Italian. Additionally, foreign nationals can obtain certification for their knowledge of Modern Greek.

Regarding VET on the other hand, the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs has designed and is about to launch a training scheme for refugees aged from 15 to 24 years old in vocational specialties, in collaboration with the General Confederation of Greek Workers and with some Greek Universities. Indicatively, focus will be put on their training in geo-technical fields through the relevant Faculties of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Agricultural University of Athens.

The Greek Government recognizes the problem of limited participation of refugees in HEI and VET and is working on a simplification of admission procedures for refugees. Study programmes in Greek HEIs are already organized in learning outcomes by applying the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). There is, however, no system in place for the recognition of informal or non-formal learning outcomes. VET in Greece on the other hand is organized by the Hellenic Qualifications Framework, in accordance with the European Qualifications Framework, in order to better respond to labour market needs. The next step is to develop an accreditation system for the unification of a recognition methodology, so that the VET system responds to new social, economic and educational needs. This means that the education programmes should be organized in learning outcomes and linked to labour market needs in content. Simultaneously, trainers' educational capacity in teaching adults should be constantly expanded and updated.

Currently, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System is a credit and credit transfer system that has been developed experimentally and is already being implemented on a large scale. Its purpose is to strengthen and facilitate academic recognition procedures among Europe's collaborating institutions through the use of real and generally applicable mechanisms. ECTS provides a code of good practice for the organization of academic recognition by enhancing the transparency of student curricula and achievements. ECTS itself does not in any way regulate the content, structure or equivalence of academic programmes. These are quality issues that the Universities themselves must define in order to provide a

satisfactory basis for bilateral, multilateral or multilateral cooperation agreements. The Greek Institutional grading system, in correlation with the ECTS, is equivalent as follows:

Greek Institutional Grading System

10 – 8.5	Equals to "ΑΡΙΣΤΑ" (ARISTA) = EXCELLENT
8.4 – 6.5	Equals to "ΛΙΑΝ ΚΑΛΩΣ" (LIAN KALOS) = VERY GOOD
6.4 – 5	Equals to "ΚΑΛΩΣ" (KALOS) = GOOD
5	Equals to the minimum passing grade
4 – 0	Equals to FAIL

ECTS grading scale

ECTS Grade	% of successful students normally achieving the grade	Definition
A	10	EXCELLENT – outstanding performance with only minor errors
B	25	VERY GOOD – above the average standard but with some errors
C	30	GOOD – generally sound work with a number of notable errors
D	25	SATISFACTORY – fair but with significant shortcomings
E	10	SUFFICIENT – performance meets the minimum criteria
FX	-	FAIL – some more work required before the credit can be awarded
F	-	FAIL – considerable further work is required

ECTS credits

1 term/trimester	=	20 credits
1 semester	=	30 credits
1 full academic year	=	60 credits
Bachelor's degree	=	180 – 240 credits
Master's degree	=	90 – 120 credits

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Assessment of Learning Outcomes

When designing assessments, it is important to make sure that any exams or assignments match the learning outcomes of the course. Assessments should be based on material you've covered in the course, and students should perceive the material as relevant and fair. As summarized in the Stanford Testing Handbook:

Testing not only lets you and your students know how much they have learned, it also provides a chance for more learning to take place, by reinforcing course material or by requiring students to use or think about what they have learned in a new way. Tests should be designed with primary course objectives in mind and should cover material from all components of a course (sections, lectures, textbooks, etc.). The nature of the exam will directly influence how students prepare, study and learn. For this reason, the format and frequency of your testing will directly influence what and how much students learn. If students have reason to believe that you will mainly stress recall of information, for example, then they are much less likely to devote time to the mastery of concepts and the synthesis of material. On the other hand, if your tests will demand a deep knowledge of the ideas discussed, students are likely to respond accordingly.

In this regard, the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) emphasize the centrality of learning outcomes in the concept of student-centred learning and teaching. Assessing and demonstrating the achievement of learning outcomes are of vital importance for connecting education with larger society. Achieved learning outcomes are what students take with them as they enter the labour market and embark on a career in work and lifelong learning. While the adoption of learning outcomes to describe the final qualifications of study programmes has been accepted well in higher education in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), assessing and demonstrating achieved learning outcomes still need attention, as is underlined in the Bucharest Communiqué of 2012.

The topic of achieved learning outcomes brings up several issues connected with the use of learning outcomes in general on which there still is a lot of uncertainty and difference of opinion among stakeholders. These issues include the technique and idiom used in formulating learning outcomes, the balance between formalism and autonomy in the use of learning outcomes in developing programmes, the involvement of students and other stakeholders, and the role of internal and external quality assurance in all of this. Besides, the contexts of higher education and the practices of implementing learning outcomes differ a lot. Considering this, it becomes evident that:

a) the topic of achieved learning outcomes and their assessment and demonstration cannot be seen in isolation from the general use of learning outcomes;

b) there is no one single method or guideline for the implementation of achieved learning outcomes.

Learning Outcomes and Quality Assurance

Learning outcomes are accepted because of evident benefits to all stakeholders. Quality assurance has an important role to play in supporting the use of learning outcomes by establishing guidelines and good practices for the design of programmes and methods of assessment, as well as for aligning teaching with the learning outcomes and facilitating cyclical improvement. Enforcing the use of learning outcomes in a rigid manner through quality assurance without proper attention for the professional's insights and experiences has not been beneficiary to the implementation of the concept. Providing insight in the quality of programmes supports the demonstration of achieved learning outcomes as it assures the validity of the awarded degrees. Benchmarking learning outcomes with national and international qualification frameworks is effective in connecting learning outcomes with the demands in society. Further benefits include the improvement of student mobility and the establishment of a 'brand' of higher education that is recognized in society as well as abroad.

Learning outcomes do not always cover what teachers or students perceive as the "essence" of a study programme, that part that is in between the modules and often has to do with building personality and gaining experiences outside of the comfort zone of regulated learning.

The discussion on the added benefit of learning outcomes and the role of quality assurance brings up important questions. The pressure of many different changes and developments is felt throughout society and not in the least in the field of education.

Even without the introduction of student-centred learning, there has been growing pressure on higher education to account for their output to society in a quantitative and qualitative sense.

Learning outcomes provide a valid and effective framework to assure quality. But, in any case, some critical points are still under discussion by the scientific community:

- Does quality assurance based on learning outcomes leave enough room for innovation?
- How can institutions and quality assurance agencies find the right balance between autonomy and regulation?
- Are students interested or involved in the process of implementing learning outcomes?
- What if the pressure from external quality assurance is gone, will innovation last?
- Is the terminology that is used in the process clear for all those involved, is there a common language?

Nevertheless, the use of learning outcomes has an impact on a range of education and training practices and policies. The main aim of transforming education provision by emphasizing learning outcomes in curricula and qualifications is to enhance learning and to make that learning explicit. When it comes to curricula, the main role of learning outcomes is related to the willingness to actively engage learners in management of their learning process alongside their teachers. If this shift is actually taking place it should be possible to observe an impact of

learning outcomes on pedagogy whereby teachers are increasingly adopting a role of learning facilitators alongside delivering instruction.

From a qualifications' perspective, using learning outcomes to recognize learning contributes to:
- Better matching of qualifications with labour market expectations.
- Greater openness of education and training systems to recognize learning achievement independent of where it was acquired.
- Enhanced flexibility and accountability of education and training systems which are expected to deliver the defined outcomes whilst enabling greater autonomy in defining the routes to those outcomes. Learning outcomes need to be written so that they are fit for purpose – for setting occupational and educational standards, for describing single qualifications and curricula, for outlining assessment criteria and for orienting learning and teaching processes.

As a conclusion, the importance of learning outcomes has been repeatedly stressed in policy papers at the European level, where cooperation in education and training has increasingly adopted the learning outcomes approach as a defining principle. All the European instruments and processes currently being developed and implemented, notably European qualifications frameworks and credit transfer systems, are based on this approach. This should not be surprising since learning outcomes are the only common factor in all education and training efforts and mechanisms used to achieve more, better and more equitable lifelong learning throughout Europe and the world.

National Qualifications

National qualifications systems are inevitably complex because they have to be based on social and cultural traditions and the institutions of the country. This complexity can make the systems difficult to understand from outside the country, but they can also appear complex for people inside countries as well. Learning outcomes can bring some transparency to systems in terms of the learning individuals are expected to demonstrate. It follows that the interest in learning outcomes at national level is also high and whilst reflecting European level policy, the national interests tend to focus on:
- The need for education and training to be based on explicit standards defined jointly with stakeholders representing the interests of the society, labour markets as well as individuals. This illustrates that transparency of learning is not only about making it easier to 'read' qualifications, systems and institutions, but it is also about having a common language for a dialogue about the objectives of education and training. This in turn leads to a better understanding of learning.

- The desire to create transparency of qualifications and learning pathways for individual learners and for employers as well as creating flexibility in terms of organization of learning.
- The willingness to set up clear expectations that education and training institutions are to meet based on national/regional or sectoral standards.
- The improvement of quality assurance processes linked to education and qualifications systems.

Any guideline on assessment and demonstration of learning outcomes should take the perspective of the creation of quality as its point of departure and not that of quality assurance in formal systems and standards. Quality in education is created in its specific context, be it an institution, programme or classroom, which means that the process will differ for each context and that the implementation of learning outcomes will vary, depending on the context in which this takes place.

As practices will differ in each context, good practices that work in one context, may therefore not always be effective or realistic in other contexts. Still, communication and exchange of experience and practices is needed to build bridges between the various contexts in the EHEA and make progress in implementing the Bologna reforms and student-centred learning.

These differences concern the institutional structures and the extent to which quality assurance emphasizes or formalizes the use of learning outcomes, either intended or achieved. On one side of the spectrum there is the Swedish system which, since its revision of the evaluation of first and second-cycle programmes in 2010, focused on student attainment of intended learning outcomes specified in the national qualification descriptors.

The cycle of reviews from 2011-2014 almost exclusively focused on output, and very little on pre-requisites and processes. On the other side, the Austrian system of accreditation considers learning outcomes in the review of new programmes, but the check whether intended outcomes are achieved is not part of the framework for accreditations. These reviews focus more on internal quality management and the way learning outcomes are made explicit in programmes.

Another case is the UK, which has largely moved towards institutional accreditation, which places the responsibility for making sure that learning outcomes are implemented and achievement is assessed and demonstrated on the institutions.

Countries where achieved learning outcomes have been part of the frameworks of external quality assurance include the Netherlands and Flanders. The experience with this element in various cycles has been that it may raise debates on the autonomy of institutions when external reviewers evaluate final projects or theses of individual students, especially when they criticize the grades given by institutional or external examiners connected to the programme.

Nevertheless, this practice has been effective in raising the level of achieved learning outcomes in certain sectors, raising public confidence in the value of awarded degrees.

In the Dutch system, the focus on the level and the achievement of learning outcomes provided an incentive to programmes to improve the level of knowledge and skill, and improve the systems of assessment. Exam committees became more independent, assessments were critically evaluated by experts and teachers were trained in methods of assessment.

In most countries, the evaluation in external quality assurance is at meta-level and reviews the system of assessment, rather than that it includes the evaluation of individual projects and theses. Other major areas of difference in the implementation of the assessment of achieved learning outcomes include:

- the level at which knowledge, skills (and attitudes or behaviour) are integrated in the assessment;
- the use of internal & external evaluators;
- the level of formalization of the assessment and the inclusion in internal quality assurance.

Overall, the development of national qualifications frameworks with descriptors based on learning outcomes, is a step towards making qualifications and levels of learning (that are often implicit) explicit for all users. Many countries have had at least part of education and training systems based on learning outcomes for some years. However, the move towards use of learning outcomes in all parts of education and training has intensified over the last few years and remains a challenge for most countries.

Designing an Assessment

Learning outcomes are statements that predict what learners will gain as a result of learning. Each intended learning outcome should describe the observable knowledge or skills that you expect students to be able to demonstrate as a result of their work in the unit. A carefully thought-out learning outcome will give a solid indication of what kinds of assessment are appropriate, and of the skills and knowledge the learner will have to demonstrate to pass. Finally, the clearer the learning outcome, the easier it will be to devise an appropriate assessment.

When designing a new assessment or revising an old one, the most important component is to be sure there is a match between the objectives of the unit/course/lesson being assessed, the teaching/learning activities used, and the assessment tool. Therefore, one should consider asking the following questions:

- What are the objectives of the course/unit/lesson that are being assessed?
- What level of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and/or evaluation? Is the level appropriate given the objectives for the course/unit/lesson?
- Is the assessment at a level appropriate to the level of the course (first year, graduate etc.)?
- How well does the content of the assessment match the objectives being assessed?

- How well does the content of the assessment match the learning opportunities presented in the unit/lesson/course (i.e., does the assessment assess what was taught)?
- Is the assessment organized in such a way as to aid clarity and understanding of its requirements?

Moreover, when designing assessments to match learning outcomes, one must remember:
- The assessment should align firstly with the overall desired learning outcomes and secondly with the more detailed content of the course.
- Be clear about what you are trying to assess. This will make writing assessment tasks or questions much easier. Most courses will need a range of assessment methods to adequately assess the content and desired learning outcomes.
- Pay attention to the cognitive level of the assessment task or question. Some tasks operate at a low level of factual recall, while others asks students to analyze, synthesize, or evaluate information. The cognitive level of the task or question should match your goals in the desired learning outcomes or curriculum plan.

Strategies for Developing Assessments

Creating effective assessments can be accomplished through the use of mapping out the assessment tasks and how they align with learning outcomes, or mapping out the content of an exam against course content. Effective assessments must be both valid and reliable. Validity refers to what the assessment is actually testing and reliability to the consistency of the assessment.

Getting Started:
- If you are taking over a pre-existing course, review old tests to see what material was covered and how knowledge was assessed.
- Inform students, at the beginning of the course, what kinds of assessments will be used.
- If possible, provide sample copies of at least one previous exam to all students.

Building Your Assessment:
Create a table to help align your assessment with your course outcomes. This table can have a column for each of the following:
- Learning to be measured (course outcomes)
- Weighting (relative importance)
- Level and domain of knowledge (i.e. taxonomy)
- Timing/Pacing

Reviewing an Assessment

Each assessment format has its own strengths and weaknesses, and is best used to assess different kinds of learning and skills. Assessments can be either subjective or objective:

<u>Objective Assessments</u> require students to choose a response. These assessments include multiple choice, true/false, or matching questions. It can be more time consuming to develop effective objective assessments, however they are easier to score.

<u>Subjective assessments</u> Subjective assessments require students to construct a response. These types of assessments include essays, short and long answer questions, case studies, projects, or demonstrations. It can be easier to develop a subjective assessment than an objective assessment, however they are harder to score.

Additional ways for reviewing the difficulty of your assessment tool include:

- Can the assessment be reasonably completed in the time provided?
- Is each section preceded with clear directions and an indication of its point value?
- Does the assessment require any skills, knowledge, or vocabulary that wasn't central to the course content? Are you assessing something you haven't taught?
- Do the problems echo examples or exercises previously used in the course?
- Are the problems of graduated difficulty, going from simplest to most difficult?
- Do the problems create a potentially frustrating situation in which the solution to one problem depends on the successful completion of another?
- Is each question clear and unambiguous?
- Is there only one possible correct answer for each question?
- Have any partially correct answers been identified?
- Does each question test at the desired level of knowledge, skill, or attitude?

Conclusions and Limitations

A high level of interest is indicated in learning outcomes development and the objectives that countries share when it comes to the development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and national qualifications frameworks (NQF), European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and the capacity of systems to validate and recognize non-formal and informal learning.

The European and national level discussions have also highlighted the need for some common ground with respect to learning outcomes so that European level tools (EQF, ECVET, the developing taxonomies of knowledge, skills and competences) can function efficiently. This does not imply that there should be a common approach to defining and using learning outcomes across countries. As explained above, such a restrictive approach would not account for important differences in the ways in which learning can be described within national systems.

Among all other stakeholders, this Report should be directed at national policymakers (and their advisers) in the fields of education, training, qualifications and labour market analysis. It

is also relevant for those with an interest in counselling services for learners, workers and job seekers, as well as for European level experts in these areas as well as those implementing or using the European instruments based on learning outcomes (EQF, ECVET, or others).

<u>Limitations of using learning outcomes</u>

The use of learning outcomes is well supported by arguments from policy and practice. It is arguably one of the strong and common policy trends across Europe. However, it is just one method for defining the expectations of learning. The necessary efforts of education and training professionals to deliver high quality learning programmes are another way of looking at these expectations. 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. It can be argued that learning outcomes alone cannot fully capture the qualities of the learner and of the learning process delivered through programmes.

In general, it is evident that much more research is needed to give an overview of how the assessment and demonstration of achieved learning is put into practice by institutions and quality assurance agencies throughout the European Union and beyond.

REFERENCES

- *Assessment and Demonstration of Achieved Learning Outcomes: Recommendations and Good Practices* (2016), Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO);

- *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a renewed EU agenda for higher education* (2017), European Commission;

- *International handbook of teacher quality and policy* (2018), Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group;

- *Matching Assessment to Learning Outcomes*, The Learning & Teaching Office – Ryerson University;

- *Matching Evaluation Methods to Learning Outcomes* (2010), Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology;

- *Monitoring the implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Final Report* (2016), The Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region;

- *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* (2015), Approved by the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan;

- *The Shift to Learning Outcomes; Policies and Practices in Europe* (2008), CEDEFOP;

- *Using Learning Outcomes – European Qualifications Framework Series: Note 4* (2011), European Commission;

- https://ec.europa.eu/education/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced_en;

- https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en;

- https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en;

- https://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/en?cookie=no;

- http://www.ecvet-secretariat.eu/en.