

Competence-based VET in the Netherlands

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Outline of the presentation

- Introduction
- Central research questions
- Theoretical framework
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion



Changing society

- The nature of our society is changing
- (Post-)modern society can be characterised as a risk society – uncertainty plays a big role
- Fixed patrons are not so fixed anymore
- Citizens are more and more responsible for their own development
- Knowledge economy asks for more higher educated professionals
- One has to make own choices



Changing society

- Lifelong learning; to handle constant change
- Employability
- Accreditation of prior competence
- Study route independent assessment
- Knowledge alone is not enough; it is about applying knowledge

Flexible and demand-driven education is necessary to be prepared for all these developments



Developments in Europe

- Lisbon agenda: sustainable knowledge economy
- Open labour market – mobility
- Promoting Life Long Learning
- Productivity improvement
- European Qualification Framework
- Sector skills development initiatives
- Open method of coordination
- Diversity of national approaches



Competence in Europe

- EU – Competence management in organizations
- UK – Competence in NVQs
- France – Bilan de compétences
- Germany – Handlungskompetenz
- Belgium – Guidance
- Portugal – Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies
- Netherlands – Competence-based Qualification Structure



Examples of fields

- Professional competence
- Personal competence
- Career competence
- Technical competence
- Task competence
- Behavioral competence
- IT competence
- Cultural competence
- Communication competence
- Information literacy competence
- Entrepreneurial competence



Central research questions

- Which principles characterise competence-based VET?
There is an absence of a theoretical framework.
- To what extent is the conceptual framework developed in this study of added value for educational practice?



Theoretical framework - 1

- **Training approach** – fragmented character (Grant et al, 1979) mainly focused on output
- **Professional development approach** – what makes a distinction between good and bad performance (Eraut, 1994)
- **Constructivist approach** – strongly influencing the current European approaches (Biemans et al, 2004; Van Merriënboer, Van der Klink en Hendriks, 2002)



Theoretical framework - 2

- Working with competencies has the following consequences:
 - No more detailed described qualifications
 - Vocational core problems are starting points
 - Authentic learning environments
 - Communities of practice
 - Team learning
 - Representations
 - Assessments



Methodology part 1– Delphi study

- Theoretical insights lead to a preliminary conceptual framework, that is used as starting point for study
- 3 rounds – 1 meeting, 2 questionnaires
- Extensive report of the responses each time ending up in a new version of the framework
- 15 participants – diverse Dutch research institutes
- Delphi study was finished when the overall mean score was satisfying and no convincing changes were suggested anymore



Results part 1– Conceptual framework

- 8 principles
- 4 phases:
 - Not competence-based phase
 - Starting to be competence-based phase
 - Partial competence-based phase
 - Completely competence-based phase



Results part 1 – Principles

1. The competencies that are basis for the curriculum are defined.
2. Vocational core problems are the organising unit for (re)designing the curriculum.
3. Competence-development of students is assessed frequently (before, during and after the learning process).
4. Learning activities take place in several authentic situations.
5. In learning and assessment processes knowledge, skills and attitudes are integrated.
6. Self-responsibility and (self)reflection of students are stimulated.
7. Teachers both in schools and practice fulfil their roles as coach and expert in balance.
8. A basis is realised for a lifelong learning attitude for students.



Results part 1 – Example of a principle

Principle 2	Not competence based	Starting to be competence-based	Partial competence-based	Completely competence-based
Vocational core problems are the organising unit for (re)designing the curriculum (learning and assessment).	There are no vocational core problems specified.	There are vocational core problems specified, which are used as examples in the (re)design of the curriculum	There are vocational core problems specified. These core problems are the basis for the (re)design of some parts of the curriculum.	There are vocational core problems specified and these are leading for the (re)design of the whole curriculum.



Results part 1 – Example of a principles

Principle 3	Not competence based	Starting to be competence-based	Partial competence-based	Completely competence-based
Competence-development of students is assessed frequently (before, during and after the learning process).	Assessment is the final stage of a learning process and takes place at a fixed moment.	Assessment takes place at several moments. Assessment is used for formal assessment and does not play a role in the learning process of students.	Assessment takes place before, during and after the learning process. Assessment is used for both formal assessment and competence development of students.	Assessment takes place before, during and after the learning process. Assessment is used both for formal assessment and competence development of students. Students determine moment and format of assessment themselves.



Results part 1– Conceptual framework

Principle	not	starting	partial	completely
Competences	0	0	0	0
Core problems	0	0	0	0
Assessment	0	0	0	0
Authentic learning	0	0	0	0
Integration	0	0	0	0
Self responsibility	0	0	0	0
Coaching	0	0	0	0
Lifelong learning	0	0	0	0



Methodology part 2 - application in practice

■ Case study research

- Junior secondary vocational education
- Senior secondary vocational education
- Higher vocational education

■ Research activities

- Group interviews (teachers, developers and students)
- Observations
- Document analysis
- Interview management of the VET institution



Results part 2 - application in practice

- The results of the three case studies show an added value of using the conceptual framework
 - Overview of the situation of competence-based learning in the curriculum.
 - Internal legitimation; to frame experiences and transfer it to other curricula in the VET institution.
 - External legitimation; to provide external people involved with a clear picture of the educational program.



Final conclusions

- A conceptual framework is realised.
- Although the conceptual framework is constructed and approved by a group of expert; this does not necessarily mean that the conceptual framework is useful in educational practise.
- However, a first try out in practice shows that using the conceptual framework has an added value for teams that are working on developing competence-based education.



Some final remarks

- To use the conceptual framework as an instrument to distinguish between VET institutions that have a competence-based curriculum and institutions that do not have a competence-based curriculum is difficult. However, the conceptual framework inspires the discussion in VET institutions about the design of the curriculum.
- Further research is necessary to validate the conceptual framework within the educational practice (at European level for example)



Thank you for your attention!

Please contact me for any questions!

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