

The integrated person

How curriculum development relates to new competencies

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Foreword

Some years ago the Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE) decided to issue a yearbook in which important and relevant themes would be examined in depth and to which specialists working within the themes would be invited to contribute. In this way, it was felt that specialised know-how obtained by members of the sixteen (semi-)governmental institutions could be presented in an accessible manner for a general readership.

This is the fourth volume in the series, which began with three books dealing respectively with new trends in education, the absorption of immigrants into the educational system, and educational ambitions of Europe.

The CIDREE institutions are all, in one way or another, deeply involved in curriculum development approaches and so the choice of addressing the concept of basic competencies was an obvious and self-evident one.

All the institutions that are members of CIDREE are fervent proponents of European collaboration in education. They are particularly involved in reviews and innovations on what children and youngsters should learn at school. Via collaborative projects, exchanges of experiences, by discussing and comparing the practices in different countries, CIDREE is in a pole position when it comes to the identification, the development and the implementation of new tendencies. Currently, the concept of basic competencies – and how this concept is understood by different actors – is subject of a broad debate. I am convinced that the variety and richness of the contributions in this book is part of the best that can be offered in Europe nowadays.

In order to guarantee the objectivity of the contributions the authors were specifically requested not to write from the perspective of their organisation or institute but to formulate comments and conclusions from the perspective of their personal areas of expertise.

Dr Roger Standaert
President of CIDREE

Contents

Foreword

Roger Standaert

Contents

Introduction

Jos Letschert

7

Competence: conceptual explorations

Joost Klep, Toon van Haperen

25

Knowledge and competencies

Benő Csapó

35

New competencies in compulsory education:

EU framework vs. Spanish curricula

Javier M. Valle

51

New basic skills in Europe and Flanders

Chris van Woensel

87

For better or for worse: new curricular formats for German schools

Eike Thürmann

105

The competency-based content regulation system in Hungary

Vilmos Vass

125

Increasing the focus on skills in a subject-based curriculum: a Wales perspective

Hugh Griffiths

137

A triad of competencies in general education at the secondary level in Austria	153
<i>Erich Svecnik</i>	
Competence directed orientations in the Netherlands	171
<i>Joost Klep, Toon van Haperen</i>	
Competence-based curriculum: the Norwegian example	193
<i>Ellen Rye, Arild Thorbjørnsen</i>	
About the authors	211

Introduction

Jos Letschert

The changing face of education

This new CIDREE yearbook fits very well in the themes of the yearbooks originated until now. All themes deal with aspects of the changing face of education. This yearbook focuses on competencies we expect from pupils to cope with expectations and needs of post-modern societies and to fulfil their individual well-being. The assumption is that factual knowledge is so fleeting and that the amount is so uncontrollably large, that education can better focus on methods of knowledge acquisition and meta-cognitive skills, instead of overestimating the process of transferring knowledge. Core curricula in CIDREE member states tend in a direction of abandoning specified content schedules and core objectives, in favour of broader goals, often indicated as competencies to obtain or to aim at.

It seems a general trend that national curricula (national documents regulating teaching and learning) are increasingly based on or shifting to the definition of *competencies* to be acquired by pupils, rather than on the definition of (e.g. cultural, scientific, artistic) *contents* to be learned. The country contributions in this yearbook make this trend clear, and so do other internationally oriented sources. For example, OECD (2001) states that the importance of knowledge, skills, and competencies to individuals and society is widely accepted among policymakers in OECD countries. At least at the discourse level, a well-educated, knowledgeable, highly qualified citizenry is seen as playing an eminent role in facing the challenges of the present and the future.

This change of intentions from content acquirement to the development of competencies has been influenced by changing views on learning and teaching, from behaviouristic approaches to constructivist ways of creating meaningful knowledge. Changing expectations of the specific tasks of education in society also influence it. The CIDREE Yearbook 1, on new outlooks on education (Letschert, 2001), is dedicated to that subject.

The competence lifecycle

The field of education is, like other sciences, strewn with concepts, theories and philosophies in order to make it accessible, manageable and understandable. In this process of understanding we see a coming and going of buzzwords. These words try to interpret thoughts that are relevant in the contemporary context and curriculum policy.

'Competence' is a relatively new term, which allows us to broaden our educational thinking to personal functioning and well-being. Klep and Van Haperen state in their contribution in this yearbook that competence is slightly contrary to the classical objectives in terms of knowledge and skills based on the common subject canon. Nevertheless they notice and illustrate that various references to competence can be found in existing and older descriptions of objectives.

Educational concepts and related terms have a certain lifecycle, which is roughly divided in two periods of time: a period of turning up and developing, and a period of turning down and weakening. The time of the whole period is not predictable, but mostly it is noticeable when the first half of time has been used. The concept 'competence' still seems to be in the first half of the cycle, but the first spores of the process of concept-inflation are recognizable and indicated by some of the authors in this book. The destiny of a lot of innovation attempts and related concepts is that they are burned out before you really had the pleasure to warm to them.

In the case of competence-based education we have to admit that the concept still seems to be more apparent in policy documents and educational handbooks than in regular schools. Nevertheless we also notice that the evolving policy approaches, educational theories, and societal and business expectations in this respect, are gradually influencing the contemporary practice of teaching and learning. Authors in this yearbook make this clear too, but of course not without warning for the potential pitfalls, originating from complex processes like these. It is well known (Fullan, 2001; Goodlad, 1994; Van den Akker, 2003) that the way from an intended curriculum to an implemented and attained curriculum can be considered as a 'long way to Tipperary'. Wide differences occur between intended curricula and the actual implementation of these, even if an intended curriculum is fixed and compulsory, for example in the form of core objectives, standards, or a national programme.

Standardization and competence-directed orientations: two different worlds?

An interesting point in the contemporary debate about quality assurance in education, is whether and how the challenges of competency development relate to the demands of standardization. The German educationalist Thürmann describes in this yearbook a remarkable discord in this respect. At the one hand, state authorities take a firm stance on issues such as accountability, quality management, standards and assessment. On the other hand, there is a stronger focus than ever on the individual school to take care of its own affairs being endowed with more responsibility in educational as well as in organisational matters and with a modest budget for teacher training. The German educator Hameyer (2004) wonders in a recent special of the magazine 'Grundschule' if standardization in education is a realistic, manageable and desirable solution for the complexity of educational claims. He discusses if the apparently logical and unbounded standardization in technology and design, is also a suitable panacea for educational dilemmas.

American research (Ogawa et al., 2004) shows the frequently symbolic effects of standards instead of a substantive value: 'Though standards tend to be developed and adopted at the national and state levels, the decisions and actions of local districts and schools ultimately have the most influence on how standards affect instructional practice. The seemingly rational approach to a standards-based curriculum may actually serve more symbolic than substantive purposes, and, in cases such as this, implementation of a standards-based curriculum ironically may work against the primary aim of enhancing students' academic achievement'. Standardization itself is often subject of confusion, because it is an ambiguous concept. In that sense it is comparable with the confusion of ideas related to competence development. Standards can be considered as performance standards, or as a definition of desired outcomes. Standards can also be considered as fixing the curricular content. In that respect they are more demanding on the teacher than on the learner.

Are competence-driven curricula a better answer than, for example, the standards approach to the complexity of societal and personal demands, and how do school systems respond to these demands? Are we talking about something new and challenging, or is it again old wine in new barrels? What are the new questions and problems raised by this

competence approach? The German contribution of Thürmann in this book gives, among other interesting attempts in CIDREE-countries, points of departure for a debate about the changing face of the contemporary concept curriculum in which competencies play a central role. Thürmann however is also sceptical about the political readiness to arrange radical systemic reforms in the educational system, necessary to realize desired outcomes.

The kaleidoscopic character of competence

In this book, which we consider as a quest, we invite you to follow the different approaches and the variety of attempts by CIDREE members to explain and to implement competence-directed orientations in their curricula and in their school practice. We invite you to compare their answers and solutions with your own thoughts, ideas and experiences. One of the most important challenges for the next years will be how competence-based education will come into the heart of education, instead of staying only in the body of politics. How can we make connections between the supra (e.g. European) and the macro (national) level of politics, the meso level of schools and institutions, the micro level of the classroom, and the nano level of the individual learner? In other words: How do we get through the loam layers between political ambitions, school efforts, societal needs and bring about factual effects on the learner? How can we arrange that pupils become more competent by the serious efforts made in all the distinguished layers?

The Hungarian contribution of Vass describes an attempt in the form of a three-levelled system from national frame working to curricular and methodological support and local content regulation. He gives an interesting insight into the attempts for a dovetail of the distinguished levels. It is interesting to see of course, how the three levels can cope in the long term without conflicts about ownership and autonomy. Other country reports give us insight into similar approaches, conflicts of interest, evolving rapprochements between policy levels, each embedded in their specific tradition and context.

It is intriguing to see how changing societal needs, expected competencies and paradigmatic shifts in thinking about processes of learning and teaching, meet each other in national and international educational policy and processes of quality assurance. We have been familiar for decades with systems of education determined by seemingly stable features like:

- organisation in age groups
- teacher dominance
- focus on the average development of pupils
- use of educational tools and textbooks
- subject orientation
- transmission of knowledge from teacher to pupils
- long lasting stability of knowledge
- specific goal orientation
- overestimation of the attention for shortcomings
- formal and external evaluation and control-based school inspection
- large-scale (international) comparative assessment.

At the moment we see a shift towards:

- more tailor-made educational arrangements
- esteem of individual development
- teachers as facilitators and companions
- pupils taking responsibility for their own learning process
- challenging learning environments
- orientation on broad learning and goal areas
- relevancy of knowledge
- importance of meaningful knowledge and knowledge construction
- development and appreciation of competencies
- lifelong learning
- encouragement of strong points by pupils
- reappraisal of educational approaches
- school-based assessment
- supportive role of the Inspectorate.

These changes do not originate obviously. The country studies in this book make clear how old views on learning and teaching are competing with new approaches and insights. All processes have their own dynamics and starting points, inspired or limited by tradition, national policies, possibilities, constraints, facilitations and not at least by beliefs. How we want to see ourselves is in fact the most important question in curriculum policy. The answers are diverse, often unbridled, always challenging to discourse. Transparency of the underlying concepts of philosophies and thoughts helps to get a better understanding of the main principles, agreements and distinctions in the diverse situations in CIDREE-member states. In a developing common European educational policy, understanding diversity is possibly the most desirable competency to strive for, in contrast to a strong focus on generalisation and equalisation.

The teacher ambiguity

Teachers are unmistakably important and crucial factors in the sketched alteration, but we should not take their tasks lightly. Teachers themselves are products of a system they are supposed to change.

The Boston College professor Andy Hargreaves states (Hargreaves, 2003) that we are living in crucial times, when the world in which teachers do their work is changing profoundly. He calls teaching a paradoxical profession. Of all jobs that are or aspire to be professions, he states, only teaching is expected to create the human skills and capacities that will enable individuals and organizations to survive and succeed in today's knowledge society. Teachers, more than anyone else in Hargreaves' opinion, are expected to build learning communities, create the knowledge society, and develop the capacities for innovation, flexibility and commitment to change, that are essential to economic prosperity. At the same time, he states, teachers are also expected to mitigate and counteract many of the immense problems that knowledge societies create, such as excessive consumerism, loss of community, and widening gaps between rich and poor. Somehow, teachers must try to achieve these seemingly contradictory goals at the same time. This is what Hargreaves means with the professional paradox.

Teachers are operating in an educational system under great strain. Failures in society are often supposed to be repaired by education, or, even worse, they are attributed to the poor investments of teachers. In the period of strong centralized steering by detailed national curricula, core objectives and specified assessment and test instruments, we have deprofessionalized out teachers, by making them less responsible for the educational process than they were before. During the Dewey lecture at the AERA Annual Meeting 2002 in New Orleans, Stanford professor Elliot Eisner confronted his audience with the statement that, where we used to design the curriculum before, today the curriculum seems to be designing us. During the discussions around the introduction of the English common core curriculum, the dominance of the centralised requirements laid down in the curriculum was experienced and expressed by teachers as an act of shunting their professional competences (Dainton, 1996; Lawton, 1996). Besides that, or maybe as a result of it, teachers feel neglected in their professionalism. Parents no longer automatically agree with teachers. On the contrary, parents and teachers are often diametrically opposed. In the movement towards more competency-based curricula, we have to be aware of the nostalgic opposition from parents too, who reflect on their own traditional education and compare it with

what they come across in the schools of their children. We also have to be aware of the fact that proposed changes appeal to the recruitment of teachers and investments in teacher training. Several authors (e.g. Thürmann in this book and Hameyer, 2004) stress this issue and communicate their concern.

Competence-based curricula

Referring to authors in this book (e.g. Thürmann, Klep and Van Haperen, Svecnik, Van Woensel) we can repeat that the trend to more competence-based curricula does not entirely come out of the blue. The efforts to define competencies instead of contents to be taught can be seen as an unmistakable shift in thinking about the focus of education and the expectations of it. The competence-driven approaches have recently received significant impetus with the growing emphasis on lifelong learning (European Commission, 2002). See in this respect the Norwegian contribution in this book. The authors Rye and Thorbjørnsen describe the concept of lifelong learning as a steering factor in the curriculum reform in Norway.

The Austrian contribution e.g. states that the rate of participation in education after the age of compulsory schooling in Austria has risen from approximately 80% some 25 years ago to 98% today. Young people are to be empowered, using the competencies acquired in school education, to assert themselves in all lifestyles, not only at the workplace by strengthening their competitiveness on the labour market, but also in shaping a meaningful private life and in making a worthwhile contribution to society in several respects.

Our knowledge society does not expect or accept a one-layered interpretation of knowledge. There is an obvious need for a diversity of meaningful knowledge. In his contribution the Hungarian professor Csapó distinguishes between expert knowledge, literacy and competency. He provides us with a historical and clarifying insight into the emerging development of attention for the organization of knowledge in the cognitive sciences. Csapó states that within the systematization of knowledge three main organizing principles are to be differentiated. One is when the system of knowledge unfolds around *the logic of a specific field*. Another possibility is when the organization is determined by *culture*, surrounding social context, and personal interactions. Finally, the most natural organizing force stems from *the psychology of human learning*, that is the way in which our brain represents the things we know. These principles may also be interpreted as three dimensions. Any

kind of organized knowledge can be situated within this three-dimensional space. This means that each dimension is present in all kinds of organized knowledge, to different extents. Csapó warns us for a kind of fashionable use of the concept of competency, and he invites us to stay close to its scientific roots.

The development of competencies, not only in the context of formal schooling, is a notorious necessity for contemporary societies and their participants. In the Dutch introduction to the notion of competence, Klep and Van Haperen state that the classical canon of knowledge, divided in subjects, is insufficient for complex societies. They emphasise the need for competencies, which they define as one of the conceptualisations of being human. This conceptualisation competes with thinking in terms of stable, unchanging knowledge and skills. In their opinion, the development of competencies bridges the gap between the classical contrast of theory and practice, and makes it possible to comprehend the immense variety of human functioning. The Dutch authors make clear that it is rather difficult to give a strict and unmistakable definition of competencies and competence development. They see the concept of competency more as a challenging field of meaning, instead of a restricted and marked out area.

Indeed, concept confusion or concept devaluation is a risk in the ongoing debate on competencies. In the contributions of the different authors in this book we can see the context dependency of the concept. Competency is sometimes a synonym for learning-psychological dimensions and meta-cognitive thinking, for acquisition of basic skills, for cross-curricular aims and objectives, or it is seen as a time-bounded term for an educational reform or for theories, foreseeable to be converted in a certain period of time.

The shift to a more competency-based approach to teaching and learning is not only noticeable in the way intentions, goals and aims are formulated in curricula, but also in how results of learning processes are followed and measured. The Welsh author Griffith explains in his contribution the use of new measurement instruments, which tend to measure competencies instead of factual knowledge. Pedagogical diagnosis is changing from its original medical background with a focus on deficiencies into an attitude to foster the strong points and to encourage pupils (Grabbe, 2004).

Intensive international work has been started (see Van Woensel and Valle) in order to define and select those competencies that could be

generally accepted, as the most needed ones in the emerging learning and knowledge economy. The perspective, however, is not only an economic one. The Dutch Education Council (Onderwijsraad) states in one of its latest reports (June 2004), that in Europe not everything is focused on economic growth. Solid and tight social cohesion is also an important issue. The understanding of a European identity is important for the creation of acceptance for further development.

Besides their impact on teaching skills and attitudes, these notions also have an impact on the development and implementation of curricula. Competence-driven curricula are grounded on different principles and paradigms, such as outcome-based curricula. The main difference is that the curriculum is no longer a protocol, but rather an indicator for change and a blueprint for the way we want to define ourselves. If we have serious intentions to shift to more competency-based ways of teaching and learning, we have to rethink the processes of curriculum development and curriculum policy fundamentally. The onset to interactive, cooperative and democratic processes of curricular redefinition is noticeable in most of the contributions in this book, which makes it valuable for a variety of stakeholders.

Curricular scope and balance

Curriculum development can be defined in terms of a smaller scope (the development of a protocol), or in terms of a broader scope (a comprehensive process of change and innovation). In the essays of the CIDREE authors, curriculum and curriculum development will be understood in the latter sense. We join the vision expressed by the American educationalist Carson in 1989, that a curriculum should be seen as an opening up of possibilities that enable learning, rather than the management of expected outcomes.

The general view is that the curriculum is meant to support and facilitate the development of the learner. All efforts are focused on supporting that process. Measurements at the macro level, the state or national level, are supposed to strengthen the chances and possibilities for learners. Of course, societal and political outlooks colour the curriculum, as do tradition and cultural contexts.

In nearly all cases, curricula result from the mixing of retrospection, reflection and progression. For example, all curricula give ample attention to our cultural heritage, to present-day society, as well as to the preparation of pupils for the future. When dealing with these components of the curriculum mix, great variations in emphasis are found.

The core question in curriculum development therefore is to achieve a workable balance. This balance will never be a permanent one, but should have to be refound repeatedly. The balance is continuously shifting. The present day will gradually become history. The future is gradually turning into reality. Each newly struck balance will be disturbed at a later stage, when once again a new balance will have to be achieved. Within this process, there are many degrees of freedom and various interested stakeholders. This is what makes curriculum development an exciting, challenging and difficult, but above all a continuous process, which cannot be directed purely by market demand. It supposes 'acting knowingly' of government authorities that determine the scope or a framework for increasingly independent schools.

During this whole balancing process, the following issues are considered (Letschert, 2004):

- connecting suitable pedagogical and educational starting points and concepts to the shifting *public views, values and standards* that develop in the evolving society. The question is: what kind of people do we want to be and how can we help to achieve this through education and upbringing?
- offering *intellectual challenges* to each pupil to make education attractive, motivating, and effective for pupils, society and business
- *materialising* the pedagogic, educational and content-related views in advanced teaching materials, in learning environments that are not limited to the physical school environment, and in didactical approaches that put the motivation of the pupils first
- *application of new views*, for example after brain research on how people learn, and from other disciplines concerning how, why and what people learn, and how we may promote learning in our educational system. During this process less than fruitful polarisations often occur, when strongly subject-oriented parties oppose those fractions that emphasise the stimulation of competencies that go beyond subjects (reductive views versus holistic views)
- justification of experiences of users (teachers and pupils), their practices and results, and the adjustment of the *usability* of the curriculum. Usability is a very underrated criterion in curriculum development, especially where the available learning time is concerned
- creating a *consistency* between the various curriculum components, such as the rationale, the goals, the contents, the learning activities, the teacher's role, the educational tools, the ways of grouping, the locations, the applicable age groups and the evaluation methods

- *weighing the relevance* of the curriculum for pupils, and for the economic, social, cultural, and spiritual society in which they grow up.

This balancing process is loaded with values and prone to multiple interpretations. In this respect the Austrian contribution (Svecnik) states that multiple opinions and opportunities in a dynamic and complex environment, combined with a loss of binding values and standards, have prompted the educational system to respond, so as to include all individuals and give them the competencies they need. As a result, this will often lead to highly differentiated and sometimes opposing views of actors taking curriculum decisions. Looking at it this way, curriculum development will almost always suffer from interferences by mutually interacting historical, phenomenological, ontological, political, economical, cultural, gender-related, ethical, ethnical, philosophical, and ideological components within curriculum dimensions. In addition, national system features and traditions have an unequivocal effect.

Curriculum: an inspiring plan

The curriculum does not reflect reality. The curriculum is a design of conditions, on the basis of which challenging learning can take place. Learning should be exciting. If pupils are not challenged, sooner or later you will lose them. This 'losing of pupils' is something we see all too often in our present educational system. Bored pupils become annoying pupils. The most important cause for uninspired learning lies in the Cartesian dualism of modernist thinking, in which knowledge is severed from its context (Damasio, 1994). Knowledge has become a separate item, disconnected from its context (Toulmin, 1990). If curriculum plays a role in uncoupling meaning and learning, it is necessary to repair the connections. Curriculum should inspire, as basic intention.

A curriculum is a design that indicates which competencies are foreseen and how learning and teaching can take place. A curriculum is a spider web of a learning and teaching rationale, aims and objectives, intended activities, the relations between the activities, the organisation, the role of the teacher, the materials and sources, the locations, the available time and the distribution and the evaluation (Van den Akker, 2003). In curricular perspective the views on how we want to be as human beings and what competences we aim at are as important as the debate on core objectives, learning to read and write and the outcomes of large-scale

comparative research, like the OECD-programme for international student assessment PISA.

The curriculum describes how the above-mentioned components relate to each other, are connected and can be organised effectively. A curriculum describes the conditions for learning and teaching. Curriculum development is an important conditional phase in the process of school development. In that sense, it is important that a curriculum evokes inspiring and vivid images of education. A curriculum has to challenge and to excite teachers. They finally shape the curriculum ideas into real education and pedagogy.

Curricular handicraft

Obtaining a clear view of the principles, contents, structure, usability, intentions, functions, and relevance of the curriculum, is very similar to the processes as they occur in another not always very comprehensive concept: that of art (Letschert, 2004). Curriculum development, at every distinguishable level, is similar to the activities related to art. Both concern design processes, based on inspiration, the giving of meaning, divergent thinking, and a wealth of ideas. Both working fields finally focus on the integrated person.

The processes used in art and curriculum development are characterised by experiments, problems of composition, and concerted quests to find a balance between form, content, function, meaning and origin. Like the arts, curriculum development knows classical, academic approaches, where unity of form is important and where the product is the central issue, next to experimental developments that move along and across the borders of what used to be the curricular domain. In the case of experimental developments, the process of development is far more important than the actual product. In addition, like the arts that break new grounds, it takes a while for such curricula to become widely accepted.

Curriculum development is an *art*. However, like art, it requires learning and skill – in one word: *ability*. An inspired choreographer can entice a dancer to perform masterful images of movement. The condition is that both understand the dancing techniques, can interpret the communication of dance, and are able to make variations upon the basic positions. A dancer has to go to extremes in daily practice in order to realise what seems so effortless during the performance. ‘Art and ability’ are inseparable – also in curriculum development.

The curricular craftsmanship can be recognized in the process of bringing coherence in the diversity of curricular layers and design components. Curriculum development in a broad sense focuses on more than one layer and on many components in the complexity of the educational field. Besides craftsmanship, curriculum development is just like art, also a field of science. The field is complex, diffuse, complicated, interwoven and intertwined.

Curriculum developers have to deal with choices of what has to be learned (*curriculum substance*). In this debate on priority and posterior, the tension between a knowledge-based and a competency-based approach comes to the surface. You will notice that in the diversity of the country studies in this CIDREE yearbook.

Curriculum developers also have to deal with the stakeholders (*levels of concern*), their specific interests and with the connection between their claims. Finally, curriculum developers themselves need new and effective competencies to conduct the orchestral pandemonium of expectations, challenges and constraints (*virtuosity*) and to excel in a balanced, harmonious and well-understood sound.

Trends in curriculum policy

In curriculum design many questions have to be answered which have to do with curriculum policy. Curriculum policy can be considered as knowingly acting in a process of quality assurance concerning the content of education.

Looking at curriculum policy, we observe certain shifts in trends, which occur simultaneously in a number of countries (Le Métais, 2003). These trends concern the management philosophy of educational policy, the views on content and implementation of reforms, and the scope of the curriculum. Typified more subtly, the shifting curricular orientation is manifested from:

- protocol to a way of being
- supply to demand
- directive to transformative
- rational to relational
- school centred to society oriented
- prescriptive to challenging and inspirational
- reasonable parts to a meaningful whole.

Besides these trends there are more drivers for changing features of curricula. The Austrian contributor Svecnik also points out a shift in the

life cycle of curricula. In the past, he states, this cycle was approximately ten years. Today, rapid changes in society and in science make it necessary to adapt curricula earlier and more often. The Hungarian author Vass asks for our attention for the trend of localising curricula and the consequences for educational policy. The prudent search for balance between central steering and local responsibility and ownership can be seen as an international curriculum issue. The Welsh author Griffiths in his contribution, it is mentioned already, brings the necessity of a clear and tangible system of evaluation and assessment to our attention. The traditional instruments are not fully effective in a competency-based curriculum. The development of key-skills has to be made transparent in order to steer and to follow the learning and teaching processes. Instruments like portfolios e.g. are introduced to replace assessment tools and procedures that are no longer sufficient. We have to consider these developments in the light of national, but certainly also in the perspective of European policy. In the Spanish contribution the author, Valle, describes the development of an emerging European educational policy and he gives an overview of the dominant reports in that process. The Flemish author Van Woensel provides an introduction to one of the activities of the European expert group B on key competences in stage one: the definition of the concept 'new basic skills'. Europe is ambitious. We already referred to the Lisbon-ambitions and we would also like to refer to the preceding CIDREE yearbook 'Becoming the best' (Standaert, 2003) on educational ambitions for Europe. We think the theme of this yearbook again fits perfectly well in the line of thinking and sharing ideas of the previous volumes.

Looking for the integrated European

Most CIDREE institutes play an important role in devising and revising national curricula. The trends mentioned above have far reaching implications for the work the institutes are doing and even more for the development of education in each specific context and in Europe in general. Interesting issues and questions are raised in the contributions of the authors from the participating CIDREE institutes. Each author has chosen a specific focus and describes developments from the context he or she is working in. Together, we think, the collection of essays gives a vivid image of how Europe is dealing in an educational perspective with the challenges of the current and prospective times, with a competent and integrated person in mind.

This brings us to the title of this CIDREE yearbook. In Norway educational reform began in 1993 with a consecutive curriculum that

promoted the integration of a diversity of human features. The perspective of the Norwegian curriculum was and is an integrated and balanced person, who is able to take responsibility for himself, herself and others, who is able to work and study with perspective and understanding, and who has the ability and willingness to take on new challenges. This Nordic curriculum can be considered as a precursor of the contemporary emphasis on competence-based development in education and schooling. As a tribute to that Norwegian initiative, we give this yearbook the title 'The integrated person'. It makes clear the importance of coherence in education and the relation between what the Germans distinguish so delicately with the terms 'Bildung' and 'Ausbildung'.

It is not our intention and not our capability to find or to give final answers in this book to how we should see the competencies of European civilians of the twenty-first century. In fact, we even prefer raising questions to giving answers. Just as in education, putting a good question is more difficult and challenging than giving an answer. Being curious, interested, motivated, challenged, are in our opinion the main competencies for the pupils, who we prepare for their roles in society and business. In that process we have to deal with lots of issues and questions addressed by the authors in this book, such as:

- the need to understand the differences between expert knowledge, literacy and competency in order to find ways to deal with them in the organization of education
- the urge of finding new balances between cultural literacy, moral and social behaviour, societal and business skills
- the challenge of discussing relevance of existing and forthcoming educational contents and aims with respect to the curriculum load and the relevancy for learners
- the long and windy road of gaining insight into the sustainable effects, the transferability, the applicability and the usefulness of competencies, especially in comparison with what sometimes is indicated as 'old learning'
- the shift from recovering old, to inventing new pedagogical approaches and learning environments that encourage pupils instead of demotivating or boring them
- the urgency to develop encouraging instruments for pedagogical diagnosis, instead of assessment and diagnosis that are focused on finding and emphasizing deficiencies
- the quality of teacher training

- the intriguing, but also bumpy path of implementing the results of new strategies and theories on learning in daily practice
- the seemingly mission impossible, but nevertheless extremely important assignment to integrate the expectations of pupils, parents, society, business and schools in one meaningful educational context for all participants.

As said before, we are not as arrogant as to suppose that we have found final answers to these essential questions. We hope we succeeded in clarifying the issues that are playing a part in the ongoing struggle on our way to the integrated and competent human being. The final answer is not in the least the most interesting element in this search. Just like in the quest for the grail, the solution lies in the process of searching.

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