

CIDREE Expert Meeting Utrecht, the Netherlands, 8 - 9 October 2015

What's most worth learning?

During two days in early October, 16 representatives of 10 European countries came together to discuss what's most worth learning in basic education, and explore new developments to improve learning for the future.

What's most worth learning is one of the most relevant curricular questions at this very moment. In many countries discussions are taking place on what and which 21st century skills are of importance, how to incorporate them and how to assess them, if possible. Beyond the 21st century skills debate, is how we understand learning and how knowledge is linked to all this: whether at the center of the skills, or as content around the skills, or as part of general objectives through which competence is built.

Traditionally the dimensions (or elements) of transversal competences are described as knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. An important dimension added during the expert meeting is the dimension called 'volition', or 'the faculty or power of using one's will'. Many of us found it an important contribution to the set of competences already incorporated in the 21st century skills. As the future is unknown and the need for our young people to steer themselves and take informed action will only grow, volition is a dimension of any given competence our young should possess. Wicked, or complex multidisciplinary problems need to be solved through collaboration between maybe unforeseen fields connecting together. Open mindedness to build such connections is important.

The future asks for resilient, determined and collaborative people. Education should foster such qualities. Question that needs to be answered is if and how transversal competences could be assessed. There is a need to develop formative assessment and ways of giving constructive feedback to pupils in order to support them in developing their competences. Maybe also pupils' self-assessment and peer assessment are better ways than the more classical forms of assessment known to us. It is important to trust pupils and help them find solutions by themselves and create new knowledge as well as develop new skills through expansive learning. The importance of providing opportunities for pupils and students to practice their volition and agency in school is clearly visible.

Our conversation should not stop after this expert meeting in October 2015. There is much more work to be done in order to incorporate volition and expansive learning in our educational systems. This is a rather big challenge, as the promising examples that were shared during our meeting in Utrecht showed. Too often such learning is placed 'outside' mainstream education, and people find it difficult to see how such projects could be of value when assessment is problematic or unwanted. Some examples also showed that it is possible to include the development of transversal competences and expansive learning in mainstream education.

Almost all participants shared that promoting competence is important for the future, but do also see that summative assessment and central examination having negative influence on many initiatives. More often, assessment should be seen as a part of the learning process and it should help pupils to understand their own learning process and gradually take more responsibility over it. Professional development of teachers and other stakeholders is necessary to create space for the development of competence education.

<https://youtu.be/HA6uX2rFz8k>