



Definition and Selection of Competencies

DeSeCo Symposium

Neuchâtel, October 13-15, 1999

Draft Agenda

DeSeCo Symposium

Overview of the symposium

The symposium program consists of nine sessions.

The introductory session (Session One) places the symposium in the context of OECD work and the DeSeCo Program and presents the objectives of DeSeCo and the symposium.

Sessions Two and Three address topics that are essential to building a foundation for identifying key competencies: clarifying the meaning of the term competence and other related terminology and recognizing the role of normative assumptions.

Sessions Four through Seven focus on conceptions of key competencies, using the five expert papers as a starting point. The authors of expert reports present their ideas about key competencies and other experts react to their presentations and reports in a panel discussion (Session Four); symposium participants continue the discussion in small groups (Session Five), and then come together to identify convergences and divergences among the viewpoints (Session Six). In Session Seven, representatives of practical fields discuss the relevance of the competencies for different spheres of life.

Session Eight consists of a reflection about current and future efforts to identify and define key competencies.

Session Nine closes the symposium with a summary, conclusions, and next steps.

Schedule Overview

Wednesday, OCTOBER 13, 1999

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| 11.00-15.30 | Registration | Hotel Beau-Rivage |
| 16.00-17.15 | Session 1: <i>Opening and Introduction</i> | Castle of Neuchâtel (States Room) |
| 17.15-19.00 | Reception hosted by the Government of the Canton of Neuchâtel | Castle of Neuchâtel (Knight's Room) |
| 20.00 | Group Dinner | Hotel Beau-Rivage |

Thursday, OCTOBER 14, 1999

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| 9.00-9.50 | Session 2: <i>Concepts of Competence</i> Presentations | Hotel Beau-Rivage (Grande Salle) |
| 9.50-10.45 | Session 3: <i>Normative Assumptions</i> Presentations Open Floor | |
| 10.45-11.15 | Break | |
| 11.15-12.45 | Session 4: <i>Defining and Selecting Key Competencies – Different Viewpoints</i> Presentations | |
| 12.45-14.30 | Lunch | |
| 14.30-16.00 | Session 4 (continued): Panel discussion and reactions from the authors | |
| 16.00-16.30 | Break | |
| 16.30-18.00 | Session 5: <i>Towards a Common Understanding – Group Discussions</i> Group discussions | |
| 18.00-18.45 | Workshop (Group rapporteurs) | |
| 19.15 | Assemble to board public transportation to the Castle of Boudry | |
| 20.00 | Group Dinner hosted by the Swiss Authorities | Castle of Boudry |

Friday, OCTOBER 15, 1999

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| 9.00-10.00 | Session 6: <i>Towards a Common Understanding – Feedback from the Group Discussions</i> Summary of feedback from group discussions Presentation and open floor | Hotel Beau-Rivage (Grande Salle) |
| 10.00-10.15 | Session 7: <i>Relevance for Different Spheres of Life</i> Presentation | |
| 10.15-10.45 | Break | |
| 10.45- 12.30 | Session 7 (continued): Panel discussion and open floor | |
| 12.30-14.30 | Lunch | |
| 14.30-15.00 | Session 8: <i>Implication for the future</i> Presentation | |
| 15.00-15.30 | Session 9: <i>Summary, Conclusions and Next Steps</i> | |
| 15.30 | Adjourn | |

Wednesday, OCTOBER 13, 1999

Castle of Neuchâtel, States Room

SESSION ONE

Opening and Introduction

16.00 – 17.15

Opening of Session and Welcome

Carlo Malaguerra, Director General of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office

The Policy Context

Thomas J. Alexander, Director for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD

DeSeCo and Outcome Indicators within INES

Eugene Owen, Director of the International Activities Program, National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education

The Background of the DeSeCo Program

Heinz Gilomen, Vice-Director of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office

17.15 – 19.00 **Reception Hosted by the Government of the Canton of Neuchâtel**

20.00 **Group Dinner at the Hotel Beau-Rivage**

OCTOBER 14, 1999
Hotel Beau-Rivage, Grande Salle

SESSION TWO

Concepts of Competence

9.00 – 9.50

Presentation

9.00 – 9.50

Franz E. Weinert, Max Planck Institute for Psychological Research

- **Theoretical and conceptual elements related to the notion of competence**

The purpose is to clarify theoretical and conceptual elements that underlie a concept of competence relevant for identifying competencies needed by individuals to live a successful life in modern, democratic societies, and for society to face the challenges of a changing and often conflictual world. The presentation will focus on the theoretical and conceptual components necessary for a common understanding of the concepts of competence, in particular on competence as learned knowledge, skills, and related metaknowledge/metacompetencies. It is recognized that although DeSeCo and the symposium focus on competencies of individuals, competence can also operate at the group (aggregate, collective) level.

- **Definition of important terms such as meta-competence, skills, knowledge, and key competencies**

Special attention will be given to clarifying the meaning and the relationship of terms useful and used for identifying sets of important competencies. In particular, different applications of the term “key competencies” and the relevance of different levels of abstraction for identifying competencies will be discussed.

SESSION THREE

Normative Assumptions

9.50 – 10.45

Presentations

9.50 – 10.00 *Monique Canto-Sperber*, CNRS

- **Normative reference system(s) for identifying key competencies**

The objective of identifying relevant “*competencies needed by individuals to lead a successful and responsible life in a modern democratic society; and for society to face the challenges of a changing and often conflictual world*” raises questions such as what kind of society do we imagine/desire/not desire, what constitutes a successful life in a modern democratic society, what are the critical fields of life for which key competencies are needed, what are the selection criteria for prioritizing a limited number of key competencies, etc. The relevance and the consequences of normative assumptions and premises for questions such as these will be addressed on the basis of the available expert reports. Commonalities and variations will be laid out and a normative reference system—shared by most actors—for describing what kind of society we want, defining a successful life, and specifying critical fields will be proposed.

10.00 – 10.10 *Alexandra Draxler*, UNESCO

- **Recognition of both: invariants and diversity**

The issue of invariants/universality/uniformity on the one hand and social and individual diversity on the other hand is raised in several of the expert reports. The DeSeCo Program assumes that there are sufficient commonalities across individuals and societies to develop a theoretical and conceptual foundation for identifying key competencies that are relevant across modern, democratic societies.

Although not a main issue at this stage, cultural and individual variability is also recognized as a crucial dimension that needs to be further developed in reference to a theoretical and conceptual framework. Factors such as culture, age, gender, status, etc. play an important role in the production and development of key competencies as well as in the forms they take on in particular contexts and life cycles.

Open floor

10.15 – 10.45 Feedback and comments on the issues presented in Session 2 and 3

10.45 – 11.15 Break

SESSION FOUR

Defining and selecting key competencies – different viewpoints

11.15 – 16.00

Presentations

11.15 – 12.45

Presenters: *Richard Murnane*, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Helen Haste, University of Bath
Philippe Perrenoud, University of Geneva
Jean-Pierre Dupuy, CNRS/Ecole polytechnique
Jack Goody, St. John's College

- **Key competencies identified by the authors of the expert reports**

The presentations will focus on the various identified sets of key competencies deduced from different theoretical and practical backgrounds. Critical and/or problematic elements for building up a common understanding and a framework through an interdisciplinary approach in an international context (i.e., the OECD context) will be delineated.

12.45 – 14.30 Lunch

Presentation

14.30 – 14.45 *Albert Tuijnman*, Stockholm University

Introduction of the panel discussion in the form of motivating theses

Panel discussion and reactions from the authors

14.45 – 16.00

Panelists: *John S. Carson*, University of Michigan
Helmut Fend, University of Zurich
Cecilia Ridgeway, Stanford University
Moderator: *Judith Torney-Purta*, University of Maryland

- **Commonalities and interrelationships among identified competencies**

The panelists will discuss the sets of competencies proposed by the authors, with an emphasis on identifying common elements and interrelationships among them. They may also identify more specific competencies that are component parts of the proposed general key competencies. These observations will serve as a starting point for a conceptual overview of the different perspectives, to be developed throughout the symposium.

- **Other issues: divergences, missing elements, and empirical evidence**

Areas in which the normative or conceptual viewpoints diverge will be laid out. Panelists will note areas for addition or clarification, and discuss empirical evidence pointing to the importance of the competencies.

16.00 – 16.30 Break

SESSION FIVE

Towards a common understanding – group discussions

16.30 – 18.00

Presentation

16.30 – 16.45 *Dominique S. Rychen*, Swiss Federal Statistical Office

Introduction of the group discussion

Group discussion

16.45 – 18.00 8 Tables each with 7-8 participants

- **Commonalities and interrelationships among identified competencies**

The purpose is to continue discussion of the issues raised in the preceding panel discussion: commonalities and interrelationships among identified sets of key competencies, divergences, missing elements, and empirical evidence. Participants will be asked to consider the normative, theoretical and conceptual elements of the work of the expert authors.

Workshop

18.00 – 18.45

Group rapporteurs meet with DeSeCo management to provide feedback

19.15 **Assemble to board public transportation to the Castle of Boudry**

20.00 **Group dinner at the Castle of Boudry hosted by the Swiss Authorities**

OCTOBER 15, 1999
Hotel Beau-Rivage, Grande Salle

SESSION SIX

Towards a common understanding – feedback from the group discussions
9.00 – 10.00

Presentation

9.00 – 9.15 *Laura Salganik*, Education Statistics Services Institute

Summary of feedback from the group discussions

Open floor

9.15 – 10.00 Questions to the authors, commentators and panelists

Moderator: *Norberto Bottani*, Service de la recherche en éducation

SESSION SEVEN

Relevance for different spheres of life
10.00– 12.30

Presentation

10.00 – 10.15 *Walo Hutmacher*, Education Consultant

Introduction of the panel discussion in the form of motivating theses

10.15 – 10.45 Break

Panel discussion

10.45 – 12.00

Panelists: *Jean-Patrick Farrugia*, Medef
 Bob Harris, Education International
 George Psacharopoulos, University of Athens
 Laurell Ritchie, Canadian Auto Workers
 Leonardo Vanella, Centro de Estudios e Investigacion del Desarrollo
 Infanto Juvenil

Moderator: *Barry McGaw*, OECD

- **Perspectives from practical experience**

Different sets of competencies were initially proposed by academics from different disciplines. In this session, representatives of business, social, and policy spheres will add insights based on their know-how and experience, addressing the relevance of the identified key competencies developed during the symposium as representatives of different social fields.

The focus of this session will be on specifying the meaning/significance of the proposed key competencies within particular areas or fields of activity, with the goals of adding the perspective of practical know-how and, at the same time, generating a common understanding of competencies that are comprehensive and applicable to a range of broad fields of activity. The relationship between the proposed competencies and the panelists' views about competencies needed within their particular areas and the sources of possible divergences among the different viewpoints will be analyzed and discussed in order to generate a fuller understanding.

Open floor:

12.00-12.30 Reactions, questions to panelists
Moderator: *Barry McGaw*, OECD

12.30 – 14.30 Lunch

SESSION EIGHT

Implications for the future

14.30 – 15.00

Presentation

14.30 – 15.00 *Uri P. Trier*, University of Bern

Possible future scenarios: a window to the unknown

SESSION NINE

Summary, conclusions and next steps

15.00 – 15.30

Presentation

15.00 – 15.30 *Heinz Gilomen*, Swiss Federal Statistical Office

Concluding remarks