



Mission Report

Type of mission	Study Visit
Subject	Competence-based Learning: Basics, perspectives, implementation
Location	Vienna
Date	9-10 September 2019
Authors	Mohamad Oueidat, Chafic Mokbel

General Context

(Bullets)

- M. Oueidat and C. Mokbel, two Higher Education Reform Experts (HEREs) from Lebanon participated in the study visit organised by SPHERE in Wien University of Applied Sciences, Austria, on September 9-10, 2019 about Competence-based learning (CBL), its basics concepts, the perspectives it offers and possible implementation.
- The choice of the Applied Sciences University of Wien is very good. The University has implemented competence based learning and developed learning and teaching around this concept.
- The timing of this study visit is convenient. Actually, the Lebanese HEREs are in close contact with some professional orders and in particular the Order of Engineers and Architects in Beirut trying to push towards the definition of the required competences in the profession as a first step to link with profession-oriented academic programmes.
- The experience of the Wien University of Applied Sciences in this domain is rich and diverse. The two HEREs as well as the colleagues from other countries have measured up the strategic dimension of competence based learning in the academic developments. Actually, a teaching philosophy has been established where competence based learning appears as a pillar.
- Good preparatory documents have been distributed to the participants allowing to structure the debates and to stress upon the important issues related to CBL, in particular the links with learning outcomes and the difficulties associated with the non-precise definition of competences.

Discussions

(Bullets)

- The organisation of the study visit was well thought of. It moves from the presentation of the strategic choices and perspectives at the first presentations to end the visit by the students' perspectives about CBL. Several facets of CBL have been covered including the impact on curricular development and on teaching and learning without forgetting the links between higher education and the socio-economic stakeholders.
- The study visit was interactive and good time was reserved to questions and answers. There have been good interactions that permitted to clarify several points. One focal point was the links between learning outcomes and competence-based learning.

My contribution

(Bullets)

- The HEREs have actively participated in the discussions that took place in nearly all the sessions
- The HEREs have also participated to the social activities and have profited to reinforce their networking

Lessons learned

(Bullets)

The major take home ideas relevant, according to the authors, to the Lebanese HE:

- **Teaching philosophy**: The definition of a formal teaching philosophy has a positive impact on the development of teaching and learning in an institution. It defines precisely the axes of development. The facets of such philosophy are multiple. It is obvious that the host university places the student at the centre of the process and has a particular attention to the development of the learners' competences. This comes without neglecting the precise tools that are the learning outcomes. A focus is also placed on the usage of modern technology in the learning processes. The Wien University of Applied Sciences also develops Application and action-oriented teaching and dedicates resources to foster the didactic competences of the teachers.
- **Support to faculty members**: The support offered to measure and further develop the didactic competences of the faculty members is well structured and of interest. It is guided by the teaching philosophy. Faculty members are also encouraged to use more modern technologies.
- **Curricular development**: The curricular development takes into consideration the needs of the socio-economic stakeholders. For regulated professions the development is fully conformant with the regulations but additional competences are also developed. For all programmes the developments take into account the results of well structured discussions with the different stakeholders.

- **Links between competences and learning outcomes:** Learning outcomes remain at the centre of the academic process because of the precision needed especially in the development. While competences are much less precise they provide a larger direction of development and allow better linking and dialogue with socio-economic stakeholders.

Ideas for exploitation

(Bullets)

- Lobby for formal definition of strategies and philosophies in teaching and learning. Actually the process of definition by itself promotes self learning
- Structure the dialogue with the socio-economic stakeholders
- Access to the most possible precise definition of competences and link the learning outcomes to it
- Pursue the efforts with the Order of Engineers and Architects and other professional orders

More details about the conference (presentations, ...) can be found at:
<https://supporthere.org/event/here-study-visit-competence-based>

It is also possible to discuss specific points with any of the two HEREs by sending an email to:

chafic.mokbel@balamand.edu.lb

mohoueidat@yahoo.com