

Chapter 15

Bildung and Twenty-First Century Competences: In Need of Mutual Recognition?



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Abstract Internationally, curriculum policy is often shaped through either content-based or competence-based curriculum approaches. Considering these two framings of educational policy discourse and curriculum policy making, this chapter compares and contrasts Bildung and twenty-first century competences as outcome(s) of education by examining the latest OECD and European Union (EU) education frameworks and visions and the latest curriculum reform agendas in the national contexts of Norway and Kosovo. The chapter relies on qualitative document analysis methodologically, and it is theoretically framed by non-affirmative education theory, critical-constructive didaktik and curriculum ideologies. Through a comparative reading of aims of education promoted by the OECD, the EU, Norway, and Kosovo frameworks, it is found that the OECD is recalibrating the education goals towards individual and collective well-being, the EU maintains the focus on mastery of key competences for lifelong learning, Norway promotes its dual mission of schooling towards education and Bildung, and Kosovo aims at mastery of key competences introduced in the latest curriculum reform. It is concluded that a Bildung-oriented curriculum policy could provide for a more holistic view of the individual and human development as it gives more agency to the individuals to shape their lives in their own terms and resume responsibility accordingly.

Keywords Bildung · Competences · Curriculum policy · Norway · Kosovo

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Bildung and Twenty-First Century Competences: An Introduction

Two main narratives have dominated education policy discourse and curriculum policy-making in recent history and development. The first one relies on content-based curricula, and the second focuses on competence-based curricula. The content-based narrative has been more nationally oriented, while the competence-based narrative is globally oriented but makes its way into many national contexts. Influential transnational organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the European Union (EU) through the European Commission (EC), for example, have been the most vocal proponents of competence-based curricula as a response to overcoming and outdoing 'outdated' content-based curricula (Tahirsylaj & Sundberg, 2020). At the same time, education is still a hotly debated and contested issue within national contexts, and formally, all decision-making powers regarding education policy, at least in the European context, rest within national boundaries. Considering these two framings of educational policy discourse and policymaking, this chapter compares and contrasts Bildung and twenty-first century competences as the outcome(s) of education by examining the latest OECD and EC education frameworks and visions and the latest curriculum reform agendas in the national contexts of Norway and Kosovo.

While recent literature into the discussion of Bildung and competence¹-based approaches to education has been critical of the latter due to its increased instrumentality of education and towards achieving limited and narrow goals, this chapter takes a different perspective. This chapter intends to open up a discussion pointing towards the possibility that Bildung and twenty-first century competences perhaps rather complement one another to offer relevant educational experiences for students attending formal schooling presently and in the near future. Hence, the main question addressed in the chapter is: What new possibilities could Bildung and twenty-first century competences offer for education policy-making and discourse if they were to mutually recognize the contribution of each towards a democratic, inclusive, and non-affirmative future? The chapter draws on the non-affirmative education theory of Dietrich Benner (Benner, [this volume](#); Uljens, 2015; Uljens & Ylimaki, 2015, 2017), the critical-constructive didaktik of Wolfgang Klafki (Klafki, 1998, 2000), and curriculum ideologies to frame the topic educationally using education-based perspectives for education purposes and goals (Schubert, 2018; Deng & Luke, 2008; Hopmann, 2007).

Methodologically, the chapter uses document analysis as a qualitative research method to meet its aim (Bowen, 2009). The analysis primarily concerns 'institutional' (Deng, 2011) or 'intended' (van den Akker, 2003) curricula, which focus on

¹Educational scholarship is inconsistent in the use of terms 'competence' and 'competency', while both terms are used interchangeably (for example, the OECD uses 'competency' and 'competencies' in its documents, while the EC uses 'competence' and 'competences'; for details, see Tahirsylaj & Sundberg, 2020). This chapter uses 'competence' and 'competences' throughout.

the relationship between schooling and society, and thus it does not concern the programmatic or classroom-implemented curricula. The chapter, first, provides an outline of Bildung as an outcome(s) of education from the non-affirmative theory of Dietrich Benner ([this volume](#); Uljens & Ylimaki, 2015, 2017) and the critical-constructive didaktik of Wolfgang Klafki (1998, 2000). Second, it provides a summary of twenty-first century competences, as defined from an international perspective through the OECD (OECD, 2018) and the EU (The Council of the European Union, 2018), as well as within national contexts in Norway (The Ministry of Education and Research [MER], 2017), and Kosovo (the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology [MEST], 2016). All these have adopted, in varying degrees, competence-based curricula, which serve as data material.

Recent Bildung and Competence-Oriented Research in Norway and Kosovo

In Norway, and the Scandinavian context more broadly, researchers have been critical of the neo-liberal turn education policy taken since the 1980s because it challenged the traditional Nordic education model rooted in social justice, equity, equal opportunities, inclusion, nation-building, democracy and participation (Imsen et al., 2017). Nordic education policy experienced a shift from the *welfare state values* of equality and participatory democracy towards *competitive state values* of competition and preparedness for the labor market (Imsen et al., 2017). The transnational influences affected sharply the Norwegian education policy reform with the introduction of the Knowledge Promotion Reform of 2006 (MER, 2006), which shifted the focus from inputs to outputs of education around basic skills and learning outcomes (Imsen & Volckmar, 2014). In general, researchers were critical of the shift because of its emphasis on competences and learning outcomes while downplaying content-based curriculum and Bildung ideals (see, for example, Blossing et al., 2014; Mølsted, & Karseth, 2016; Willbergh, 2016; Willbergh, 2015). Recent research has examined the ‘knowledge question’ in the latest curriculum reform in Norway (MER, 2017). It built upon the previously introduced idea of basic skills in 2006 and questions whether powerful knowledge can be developed under competences as a governing category in education (Sundby & Karseth, 2021); however, without discussing the references to Bildung made in the latest Core Curriculum document. In their turn, Bachmann et al. (2021) investigated teachers’ work plans in a Norwegian context. They found that Bildung ideas were more present in subjects such as social sciences, arts, physical education, and religion and less present in subjects that are part of the national testing system, such as mathematics, Norwegian, and English language, which focused more on assessment-oriented descriptions of basic skills instead. These findings reveal the inconvenient truth that the three subjects that are part of the national testing system in Norway also take up most of the teaching time in the school timetable. As such, they have to

prioritize mastery of specific learning outcomes as defined in the curriculum requirements and the assessment frameworks, aiming for better student performance in such national tests, which may or may not contribute to students' *Bildung*. They also indicate that while historically Norway ran an education system built on the *Bildung*-oriented *Didaktik* tradition (Tahirsylaj, 2019a), its latest national assessment practices having shifted it towards the competence-based and social efficiency-oriented ideology of the curriculum education tradition.

In Kosovo, education policy has been largely shaped by international organizations that assisted in rebuilding Kosovo's education system after the war in 1999. Of interest here is the latest curriculum reform of 2011, which took a 'competence-turn' introducing six key competences as main goals of pre-university education, following the EU/EC recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (Tahirsylaj, 2018, 2021a; Tahirsylaj & Fazliu, 2021). Traditionally, Kosovo's education system followed a *Didaktik*-based model adopted from former Yugoslavia, but the latest education policy reforms have moved the curriculum towards a social efficiency-based education tradition that promotes key competences and external assessments (Tahirsylaj, 2021b). A growing body of recent research has investigated the introduction of competence-based curricula in Kosovo and its various implications for public schooling, such as in citizenship education (Tahirsylaj, 2021a), the shift from content-based to competence-based curricula (Saqipi, 2019a; Tahirsylaj & Fazliu, 2021), critical thinking in curricula in comparison to other European nations (Tahirsylaj & Wahlström, 2019), and teacher education policy (Saqipi, 2019b). The findings reveal the influence that transnational education policies have had on Kosovo's education, which in turn followed 'loud borrowing' as policy adoption to signal Kosovo's aspirations to match its education with European trends (Tahirsylaj, 2021a).

Transnational Tendencies Internationally, key competences and competence-based curricula have generated much attention among researchers; however, policy-wise, most so within the European context (Anderson-Levitt, 2017; Tahirsylaj & Sundberg, 2020). Still, peer-reviewed research is limited, and a lack of consensus on definitions of competences is still persistent (Tahirsylaj & Sundberg, 2020). Despite disagreements, a more generic definition of competence, as found in the OECD and EC documentation, that promotes competence as a mobilization of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to produce competent workers and citizens is most dominant (Anderson-Levitt & Gardinier, 2021; Tahirsylaj & Sundberg, 2020). All four major transnational organizations – the OECD, UNESCO, the World Bank, and the EC – have actively been promoting competence-based approaches in education since the early 2000s (Anderson-Levitt & Gardinier, 2021). However, individual national contexts have adopted competence-based curricula in various ways, with some borrowing more straightforwardly from the EC and the OECD documentation

and others more silently and recontextualizing them to fit with national education traditions.²

Bildung, on the other hand, has seen a growing interest in the academic community in recent years, but similarly to competences, the concept of Bildung suffers from a lack of a broadly agreed and accepted definition. Variations in definitions display the preferential choices of references authors make when bringing Bildung into their writing. However, a few limited examples of the use of Bildung in recent research show that Bildung and Bildung-oriented Didaktik are often offered:

- (a) as an alternative to competence-based curricula (see, for example, Ryen & Jøsok, 2021; Willbergh, 2015),
- (b) as a central concept in Bildung-based Didaktik,
- (c) as an alternative to the perceived ‘curriculum crisis’ and in relation to Michael Young’s concept of powerful knowledge (see, for example, Deng, 2021; Tahirsylaj, 2019b),
- (d) as a contribution towards bridging educational leadership, curriculum studies, and Didaktik (see, for example, Uljens & Ylimaki, 2017); and
- (e) as a concept of exploration through quantitative approaches (see, for example, Tahirsylaj & Werler, 2021).

Next, the chapter offers an overview of Bildung from the perspectives of non-affirmative education theory and Wolfgang Klafki’s Bildung-centred Didaktik, as well as curriculum ideologies, to provide a framing for discussing concepts of competence as found in the OECD and EU/EC documents and national curriculum frameworks of Norway and Kosovo. Thus, the discussion is limited to the main education policy goals aspired by these different framework documents in transnational and national contexts and how those education policy goals may be reframed by embracing a Bildung-oriented perspective.

An Educational Theoretical Framing of Bildung and Twenty-First Century Competences

Scholarly debates on Didaktik and curriculum education traditions over the past 30 years have proved useful in understanding the theoretical underpinnings and epistemological assumptions of the two (Westbury et al., 2000). Comparative perspectives have shown that the central concept of Bildung within the Didaktik tradition and the lack of it within the curriculum tradition is one of the most distinctive differences between the two (Deng & Luke, 2008; Hopmann, 2007; Tahirsylaj et al.,

²See, for example, the Special Issue in *Comparative Education* Volume 57, 2021, Issue 1: Contextualising global flows of competency-based education: Polysemy, hybridity and silences. With Kathryn Anderson-Levitt and Meg Gardinier as guest editors.

2015). The comparative perspective of the two traditions has appeared frequently in recent educational scholarship.³ This section provides only a brief overview of the Bildung-based non-affirmative theory of education, Klafki's Bildung-based critical-constructive Didaktik, and curriculum tradition.

Bildung-based non-affirmative theory of education rests on three core concepts: *recognition*, *summoning to self-activity*, and *Bildsamkeit* (Uljens, 2015; also Benner, [this volume](#); Uljens, [this volume](#)). First, the non-affirmative position is defined in contrast to affirmative approaches to education, where 'Affirmative approaches typically intend to transform given values, while a non-affirmative approach allows for critical discussion on the values lying at the foundation of democratic education' (Uljens, 2015, p. 25). Of interest here is the distinction that Dietrich Benner ([this volume](#)) makes between affirmative and non-affirmative education (in German: *Erziehung und Bildung*), which reveals language limitations as no such distinction can be made straightforwardly in English, but which can be operationalized as an integrated teaching, studying, and learning process (Uljens, [this volume](#)). Returning to the three concepts, *recognition*

[...] refers to how the self is aware of the other as being indeterminate or free (ontological assumption), not only as an awareness of the other's situation or reality (epistemological relation), but also to a moral relation in terms of the self's responsibility for the other's worth, dignity, and inviolability as a person and individual (ethical relation). (Uljens, 2015, p. 28)

In turn, *Bildsamkeit* and *summoning to self-activity* are necessary in the process of being and becoming in the modern world. Here 'Bildsamkeit refers to the individual's own conscious efforts aimed at making sense of the world and his/her experiences, while 'summoning' may be seen as the leader's or the teacher's invitation of the Other to become engaged in a self-transcending process' (Uljens, 2015, p. 28). From the non-affirmative position, the main goals of education must include enabling pupils to participate independently and through self-responsible action in the deliberations on what is to be preserved and what is to be changed in society (Benner, [this volume](#)).

Klafki's Bildung-based critical-constructive Didaktik defines Bildung as a three-dimensional concept aiming at promoting the learner's self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity. Here *self-determination* is primarily about enabling students to make autonomous decisions; *co-determination* is primarily about being collaborative and connecting with others to achieve common goals; and *solidarity* is primarily about being active in reaching out to those in need or underprivileged so that they too have opportunities for self-determination and co-determination and achieve Bildung (Klafki, 1998). Klafki positioned that the concept 'critical' pertains to the interest of knowledge '[...] insofar as this approach to Didaktik is oriented towards the goal of guiding all children and adolescents to greater capacity for

³For an extended discussion, see for example, Hopmann, 2007; Deng & Luke, 2008; Hopmann, 2007; Tahirsylaj, 2019b; Tahirsylaj et al., 2015; Uljens & Ylimaki, 2017; Wermke & Prøitz, 2019; Westbury et al., 2000.

self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity’ (Klafki, 1998, p. 311). In turn, the concept ‘constructive’ refers to the interplay between theory and practice and to allowing for an ongoing reform or reforming practice for humane and democratic schooling. In Klafki’s perspective, Bildung is construed as the capacity for reasonable self-determination, as subject development in the medium of objective-general content, as a relationship between the individual and the general, and as inclusive of a moral, cognitive, aesthetic, and practical dimension (Klafki, 2000). Of interest here is Klafki’s conceptualization of Bildung as inclusive of the cognitive dimension, which also includes a notion of competence as an integrative part of education towards Bildung as a capacity for self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity. Klafki’s critical-constructive Didaktik also posits that the main education aims and contents of Bildung need to be regularly updated through and for each generation, echoing a non-affirmative perspective in which education not only affirms but also leaves the possibilities open for a critical discussion of the educational aims and values of a society. Overall, the Didaktik education tradition features three main elements, including a commitment to Bildung, the educative difference between matter and meaning, and teaching and learning as autonomous activities (Hopmann, 2007).

Within the curriculum education tradition, four main curriculum ideologies, often appearing in varied labelling, have been most dominant over the past century: namely *academic rationalism*, *humanism / learner-centeredness*, *social meliorist/social reconstruction*, and *social efficiency* (see, for example, Deng & Luke, 2008; Kliebard, 2004; Schiro, 2013; Tahirsylaj, 2017). A fifth ideology labelled *postmodern and global anti-imperialist* has been added recently (Schubert, 2018). These curriculum ideologies primarily vary with regard to the goals of education they promote and how they define the subject matter to be covered in formal schooling. To summarize, *academic rationalism* promotes the transmission of disciplinary knowledge as the primary goal, while the subject matter includes the canonical body of disciplinary knowledge and ways of knowing; *humanism*, which promotes the development of individual learners who pursue personal development, self-actualization, innovation, and creativity, while the subject matter is defined as learning activities. *Social reconstruction* promotes the use of education for social reform with an emphasis on socio-cultural contexts rather than on the individual needs of learners while perceiving the subject matter as a learning experience where students are engaged in meaningful learning experiences that might generate internally or externally directed social agency. *Social efficiency* promotes the preparation of future citizens with the requisite skills, knowledge, and capital for economic and social productivity, while the subject matter is defined as practical or instrumental knowledge and skills that possess functional and utilitarian value (Deng & Luke, 2008). Finally, a *Global and global imperialist* perspective mainly contrasts the first four ideologies, challenging the mainstream education goals due to their reliance on primarily Western, white, male education ideals, and calls for abandoning master narratives and allowing for a fair representation of the narratives of all stakeholders in what education ought to include (Schubert, 2018). Out of this set of curriculum ideologies, social efficiency has been the most dominant in shaping education visions and curriculum orientations

in Anglo-American contexts (Tahirsylaj, 2017). This overview of Bildung-based and curriculum-based traditions of education can dissect the main approaches promoted by specific education frameworks either at the transnational or national level when referring to competences as education policy aims.

Bildung and Twenty-First Century Competences in Transnational and National Education Frameworks

What are the main aims of education and competences promoted in transnational and national education frameworks? Is it possible to find references to Bildung in such frameworks? To answer these questions, Table 15.1 summarizes the main aims of education and competences promoted by the latest education frameworks of the OECD (OECD, 2018), the EU/EC (The Council of the European Union, 2018), Norway (MER, 2017), and Kosovo (MEST, 2016) as selected examples.

These four frameworks give *competences* different labels; for example, the OECD refers to them as ‘transformative competences’, the EU/EC and Kosovo as ‘key competences’, and Norway as ‘basic skills’. However, the fact that these competences have become part of educational frameworks primarily since the turn of the century is what makes them twenty-first century competences. The focus here is on the four documents, which serve as policy guidelines that, when or if implemented, ought to shape the educational experiences that students go through in formal schooling, mainly covering pre-university education. In that sense, it is important to clarify to whom these frameworks ‘speak to’.

The OECD document is the most globally oriented, as it was developed in cooperation with the OECD member countries, which mainly represent some of the most developed countries from around the world. The EU/EC document speaks directly to policymakers among the EU member states. The document is developed through the collaboration of the EU member states but also makes references to other documents on competences, such as those of the OECD, Council of Europe, and UNESCO. Understandably, Norway’s and Kosovo’s documents ‘speak to’ national and local policymakers and education developers who are to translate the national frameworks into specific curricula for specific age groups, grades, and school subjects. While Table 15.1 entries are offered here for the purpose of capturing education policy orientations across the four documents reviewed, this chapter elaborates next on the main similarities and differences when examining them from a comparative perspective and how those similarities and differences could be addressed when viewed from the perspectives of Bildung-based and/or curriculum-based education traditions.

A comparative reading of the aims of education promoted by the four frameworks shows that the OECD is recalibrating the education goals towards individual and collective well-being. The EU/EC maintains the focus on mastery of key competences for lifelong learning that were first introduced in 2006. In turn, Norway maintains the emphasis on its dual mission of schooling towards education and Bildung, while Kosovo aims at mastery of key competences introduced in the latest curriculum

Table 15.1 Main aims of education and competences promoted in the latest education frameworks of OECD, EU/EC, Norway, and Kosovo

	Main aims of education	Main competences
OECD	<p>Individual and collective well-being through competence development Education has a vital role to play in developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable people to contribute to and benefit from an inclusive and sustainable future. Education needs to aim to do more than prepare young people for the world of work; it needs to equip students with the skills they need to become active, responsible and engaged citizens.</p>	<p>Three Transformative Competences 1. Creating new value: New sources of growth are urgently needed to achieve stronger, more inclusive and more sustainable development; To prepare for 2030, people should be able to think creatively, develop new products and services, new jobs, new processes and methods, new ways of thinking and living, new enterprises, new sectors, new business models and new social models. 2. Reconciling tensions and dilemmas: In a world characterized by inequities, the imperative to reconcile diverse perspectives and interests, in local settings with sometimes global implications, will require young people to become adept at handling tensions, dilemmas and trade-offs, for example, balancing equity and freedom, autonomy and community, innovation and continuity, and efficiency and the democratic process. 3. Taking responsibility: Equally, creativity and problem-solving require the capacity to consider the future consequences of one's actions, to evaluate risk and reward, and to accept accountability for the products of one's work. This suggests a sense of responsibility, and moral and intellectual maturity, with which a person can reflect upon and evaluate his or her actions [...]</p>

(continued)

Table 15.1 (continued)

	Main aims of education	Main competences
EU/EC	<p>Key competences for lifelong learning</p> <p>In a rapidly changing and highly interconnected world, each person will need a wide range of skills and competences and to develop them continually throughout life. The key competences, as defined in this <i>Reference Framework</i>, aim to lay the foundation for achieving more equal and more democratic societies. They respond to the need for inclusive and sustainable growth, social cohesion and further development of the democratic culture.</p>	<p>Eight key competences</p> <p>1. Literacy competence: [...] ability to communicate and connect effectively with others, in an appropriate and creative way. [...] in the mother tongue, the language of schooling and/or the official language in a country or region.</p> <p>2. Multilingual competence: [...] the ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for communication.</p> <p>3. Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering: (a) [...] the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking and insight in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations; (b) [...] the ability and willingness to explain the natural world by making use of the body of knowledge and methodology employed, including observation and experimentation, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions.</p> <p>4. Digital competence: [...] involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society.</p> <p>5. Personal, social and learning to learn competence: [...] the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn, support one's physical and emotional wellbeing, to maintain physical and mental health, and to be able to lead a health-conscious, future-oriented life, empathize and manage conflict in an inclusive and supportive context.</p> <p>6. Citizenship competence: [...] the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on an understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability.</p> <p>7. Entrepreneurship competence: [...] the capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas and to transform them into values for others. It is founded upon creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving, taking the initiative and perseverance and the ability to work collaboratively in order to plan and manage projects that are of cultural, social or financial value; and</p> <p>8. Cultural awareness and expression competence: [...] involves having an understanding of and respect for how ideas and meaning are creatively expressed and communicated in different cultures and through a range of arts and other cultural forms. It involves being engaged in understanding, developing and expressing one's own ideas and sense of place or role in society in a variety of ways and contexts.</p>

Norway	<p>Education and Bildung</p> <p>The school's mission is the education and all-around development (Bildung) of all pupils. Education and all-around development are interlinked and mutually dependent, and their underlying principles should help schools accomplish this dual mission.</p> <p>Primary and secondary education and training an important parts of a lifelong process which has the individual's all-around development, intellectual freedom, independence, responsibility and compassion for others as its goal. The teaching and training shall give the pupils a good foundation for understanding themselves, others and the world and for making good choices in life. It shall also provide a good point of departure for participation in all areas of education, work and societal life.</p>	<p>Five basic skills</p> <p>The curriculum defines five basic skills:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reading 2. Writing 3. Numeracy 4. Oral skills 5. Digital skills. <p>These skills are part of the competence in the subjects and necessary tools for learning and understanding them. They are also important for developing the identity and social relations of each pupil and for the ability to participate in education, work and societal life.</p> <p>The subject curricula establish the content of the various subjects and are based on the following definition of competence:</p> <p><i>Competence is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge and skills to master challenges and solve tasks in familiar and unfamiliar contexts and situations. Competence includes understanding and the ability to reflect and think critically.</i></p> <p>This understanding of the competence concept must underpin the school's work with the subject curricula and the assessment of the pupils' competence in the subjects.</p>
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(continued)

Table 15.1 (continued)

	Main aims of education	Main competences
Kosovo	<p>Mastery of key competences</p> <p>One of the main aims of education in Kosovo is the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required by a democratic society. This will enable young people to become active and responsible citizens so that they deal constructively with the challenges of diversity, as well as cultivate and respect their own rights and the rights of others.</p> <p>The education system in Kosovo enables individuals to become independent, able to fulfil their personal life and to contribute to the continuous progress, prosperity and welfare of Kosovar society.</p> <p>The aims of education are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of personal and national identity, statehood and cultural belonging; • the promotion of general cultural and civic values; • the development of responsibility for themselves, for others, for society and for the environment; • preparation for life and work in the context of social and cultural changes; development of entrepreneurship and use of technological skills; • preparation for lifelong learning. 	<p>Six key competences</p> <p>1. Communication and expression competences: [...] in the mother-tongue; [...] in foreign languages; [...] through various types of signs, symbols and artistic codes; [...] through the use of information technology;</p> <p>2. Thinking competences: Exercising mathematical competence, as well as basic competences in science and technology; Exercising digital competences; Understanding, analysing, judging, synthesizing; Developing abstract thinking; Making information and evidence-based decisions; Linking decisions with their consequences; Assessing and self-assessment; Problem-solving.</p> <p>3. Learning competences: Learning to learn; Knowing, selecting and making use of learning instruments and methods; Mastering reading, writing, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology; Identifying and processing information in an independent, effective and responsible way; Learning in teams and exchanging positive experiences.</p> <p>4. Life, work and environment-related competences: Presenting oneself in the best way, emphasizing one's own capabilities; Working independently and as a member of a team; Organizing and leading learning and social activities; Demonstrating entrepreneurial skills, planning knowledge for work, and rational use of time; Mastering abilities for conflict management and risk assessment; Undertaking independent and responsible actions; Engaging in environmental protection and development.</p> <p>5. Personal competences: Demonstrating an understanding of oneself and others; Demonstrating self-confidence; Managing one's emotions and stress; Exercising empathy for others; Demonstrating one's ability to conduct a healthy lifestyle; Making general choices related to personal health; and</p> <p>6. Civic competences: Competences for interpersonal, cultural, and social relationships; Understanding and respecting diversity among people [...]</p>

Adapted from OECD (2018), the Council of the European Union (2018), MER (2017), and MEST (2016)

reform. To some extent, only Norway's education aim stands out since it is the only framework of the four that refers to *Bildung* (described as all-round development but not elaborated in detail), making it a priority policy goal. In this regard, Norway's educational framework maintains its commitment to *Bildung* as one of the core elements of *Didaktik* (Hopmann, 2007). Further, the centrality of *Bildung* in Norway's educational framework confirms its designation as a 'Didaktik country' (Tahirsylaj, 2019a). The concepts used in Norway's aims of education, such as 'understanding oneself, others, and the world', 'independence', 'responsibility', etc., echo a Klafkian conception of *Bildung* in terms of self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity.

Another similarity across the aims of education in the frameworks is the reference to the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, which is the prevailing definition of competences within competence-oriented education frameworks that are tracked back to the OECD's Definition and Selection of Competences (DeSeCo) project (Tahirsylaj & Sundberg, 2020). Norway is the outlier here again since it does not refer to competence specifically in the aims. Of interest here are also the notions used in the OECD and EU/EC frameworks, such as 'sustainable future' and 'sustainable growth', which on the one hand, highlight a present global concern over sustainability while at the same time signalling economic thinking with the reference to growth as a way to address sustainability. These positions echo the ideals of efficiency and effectiveness as promoted by curriculum-based social efficiency ideology.

Yet another similarity across the frameworks is the emphasis on education goals towards developing students into active and responsible citizens, who, in turn, contribute to more inclusive, equal, and democratic societies. In particular, the OECD highlighted the role of education in the development of students not only for the world of work but also to become active and engaged citizens, expanding their vision from the limited instrumentality of education. Still, what seems to be *affirmed* in all educational frameworks is the consensus on the need for the further development of democratic societies.

Now turning to competences promoted by the four education frameworks, the OECD highlights three 'transformative competences': creating new value, reconciling tensions and dilemmas, and taking responsibility (OECD, 2018). The EU/EC framework lists eight key competences: literacy competence, multilingual competence, mathematical competence and competence in science, technology, and engineering, digital competence, personal, social, and learning-to-learn competence, citizenship competence, entrepreneurship competence, and cultural awareness and expression competence (The Council of European Union, 2018, pp. 7–8). Norway promotes five basic skills – reading, writing, numeracy, oral skills, and digital skills – which are then stated to be part of the competence in the subjects (MER, 2017), and the definition of competence in the framework follows the definition found in the OECD and the EU/EC framework. Kosovo notes six key competences: communication and expression competences; thinking competences; learning competences, life, work, and environment-related competences, personal competences; and civic competences (MEST, 2016). The competences in Kosovo's framework are

adapted from those recommended in the EU/EC framework (Tahirsylaj, 2018). While the number of competences and labels ascribed to them vary across the four frameworks, the overall trend clearly points towards a convergence of curricula promoting competences as the main outcomes of education. Even in Norway's case, where *Bildung* is stated as one of the two main policy aims of education, *Bildung* is not referenced in connection to competences. For more, Norway's framework clearly states that "[...] the competence concept must underpin the school's work with the subject curricula and the assessment of the pupils' competence in the subjects" (MER, 2017, p. 13). Such a statement in Norway's framework hints that the declared aim for a dual mission in terms of education and *Bildung* (in Norwegian: *utdanning og dannning*) is more declarative and less substantial; in practice, the balance is tinkered towards education (*utdanning*), which focuses on competences in the subjects and their assessment, while *Bildung* (*danning*) is sidelined.

At the same time, while indeed *Bildung* as a term is completely absent in the frameworks where they address competences to be pursued, notions of *Bildung* are hinted at throughout, especially in terms of Klafki's three-dimensional notion of self-determination, co-determination, and solidarity, and to some extent Benner's position with regard to the goal of education being the development of students' capability for self-responsible action. For example, when frameworks list competences that require students to develop their mother tongue, foreign languages, digital skills, personal and civic competences, or take responsibility, they are indeed promoting students *Bildung* in every sense of the word. In other words, the competences, if mastered by students, would directly contribute to students' *Bildung* in terms of students developing an understanding of themselves, their communities, and how they can participate in and contribute to society. The problematic part, especially in the OECD and EU/EC frameworks, is that these competences are primarily aimed at supporting economic growth and the capability of students to create products and services that have instrumental value in the market. Another problematic issue here is the lack of students' possibility to challenge either what competences are to be pursued or what aspects of society need to be preserved or changed. From the non-affirmative theory of education, the frameworks fall short of offering students the possibility to really engage in critical discussion of how society is to develop in the future. Instead, the frameworks clearly affirm in normative discourse and language the consensus of the previous generation on what the next generation is to develop into and contribute towards.

Bildung and Twenty-First Century Competences: A Potential Way Forward

What are we to make of the mixed policy orientations found in the institutional and intended curricula as promoted by transnational and national education frameworks? Based on the examples referred to and identified in this chapter, a number of

conclusions are drawn. First, *Bildung* as a concept and as an outcome of education is generally absent in ‘policy-speak’. Even when mentioned, as in Norway’s case, *Bildung* seems to be marginalized in favour of competence development. Second, while *Bildung* is ignored as a term, competences do address concepts and approaches that have traditionally been part of *Bildung* as an outcome of education. This double-speak reveals an interesting scenario that begs for a further empirical study on why that is the case. What can explain the absence of *Bildung* in policy documents, especially in transnational education frameworks? For now, what could contribute towards a more holistic education, would be a scenario where *Bildung* and twenty-first century competences are more coherently addressed in ways that each complements one another and are not cast as opposing alternatives. Thus, mutual recognition of the potential of each of the *Bildung*- and competence-oriented traditions would open up opportunities for the education systems to pursue both affirmative and non-affirmative agendas that serve individuals and societies better. Such positions would keep the possibilities open in the future for young generations to decide for themselves, in the true *Bildung* and *Bildsamkeit* sense, how to shape their individual and collective lives.

An educational reading of the four education frameworks, in turn, shows that curriculum-based social efficiency ideology and, to some extent, social reconstruction dominate the framing of policy goals in terms of competence development. Only in Norway’s case is there a reference to *Bildung* as an outcome of education, confirming that the *Bildung*-oriented education tradition at least is still alive, albeit not as strong as competence-oriented education. Overall, the four frameworks offer guidelines for the development of more detailed subject curricula, which then need to be taught and implemented at the classroom level. It is difficult to predict to what extent the formulations in the four frameworks really affect the educational experiences that students go through in formal schooling. What we can pinpoint here is that the promoted competence-based orientations will not allow students the potential opportunities to critically and reflexively shape their education as a *Bildung*-oriented position would allow from both Klafki’s and Benner’s perspectives. If entirely successful, it can be speculated that a competence-based education will, at best, prepare students who have developed a set of competences (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values) that will enable them to participate in society (in terms of further education, work, and societal/cultural life), but such participation has more potential to lead to further reproduction of society and not the transformation that is needed to deal with the present and future anticipated and unanticipated challenges. *Bildung*-oriented education is broader than twenty-first century competences and does not entirely fit under the competence-based framework, but twenty-first century competences could easily be linked to the *Bildung* tradition and, as this chapter showed, they can contribute towards students’ *Bildung*. In turn, from NAT’s perspective, education should prepare students to become able, as citizens, themselves to contribute to a dialogue about the future development of society (Uljens, [this volume](#)). Of course, there is no guarantee that a *Bildung*-based tradition would contribute towards an inclusive dialogue for transformation to reframe the position of humanity vis-à-vis the environment (for example, in order to

avoid a potential environmental breakdown), but it might provide for developing a more critical position towards market-oriented thinking that seems to be dominant in competence-based education approaches.

In sum, from Bildung-oriented perspectives, competences are not ‘twenty-first century competences’ as competence has been an inherent part of Bildung long before the turn of the twenty-first century, albeit not in exactly the same ‘language’, while from the social efficiency-based curriculum tradition, the twenty-first century competences are cast as new educational aims that work anytime, anywhere, towards developing individuals that are productive to and competitive in the labour market. There is no place for Bildung in such a perspective since Bildung is not only about ‘the what’ of education, but it is primarily concerned with ‘the why’ of education, which is not solely about being successful in the labour market. In other words, from the Bildung perspective, education is incomplete if we are only concerned with what competences individuals need to achieve for the purpose of producing value in the marketplace. Education would become complete, or ‘educational’ (Hoveid & Hoveid, 2019), if the why of education assisted individuals in creating meaning for their existence beyond participation in the marketplace. Thus, Bildung expands the why of education to include the reflexive and non-affirmative nature of education that contributes to individuals’ own understanding of who they are, what they can (and cannot) become, and how they relate to the world around them. A Bildung-oriented education policy could provide for a more holistic view of the individual and human development as it gives more agency to the individuals to shape their lives on their own terms and resume responsibility accordingly while at the same time offering them the framework to soundly relate to and actively contribute to the society and environment they are immersed into. Such a perspective also includes the educational aim for individuals to become competent and act competently to navigate the complexities of being capable individuals in the world.

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