

Was sind Schlüsselkompetenzen, warum sind sie wichtig, und wie können sie gefördert werden?

What are key competences? Why are they important? How to foster them?

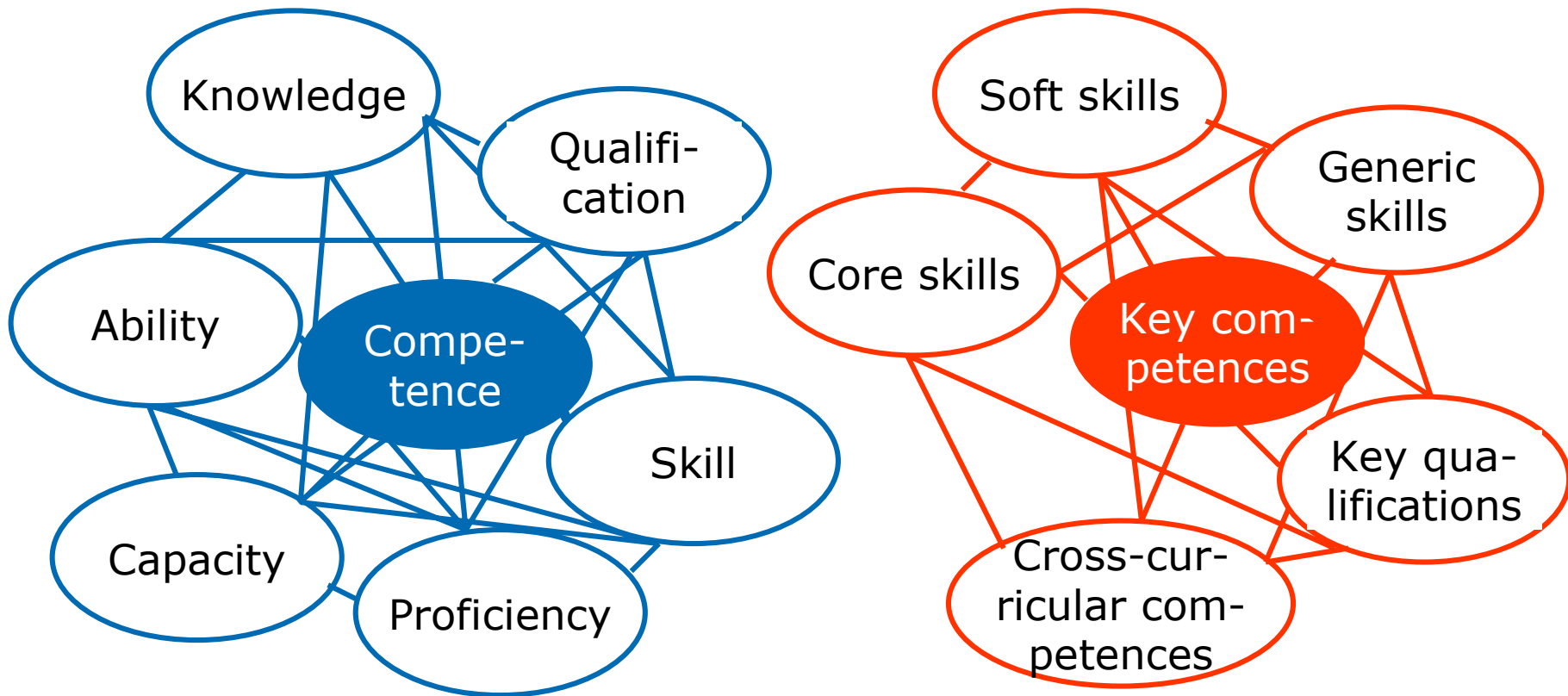


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I. Concepts of competence and key competences

„It seems as if the concept of competence reveals a negative correlation between its popularity and its precision.“ (Weinert 2001a: 2434)

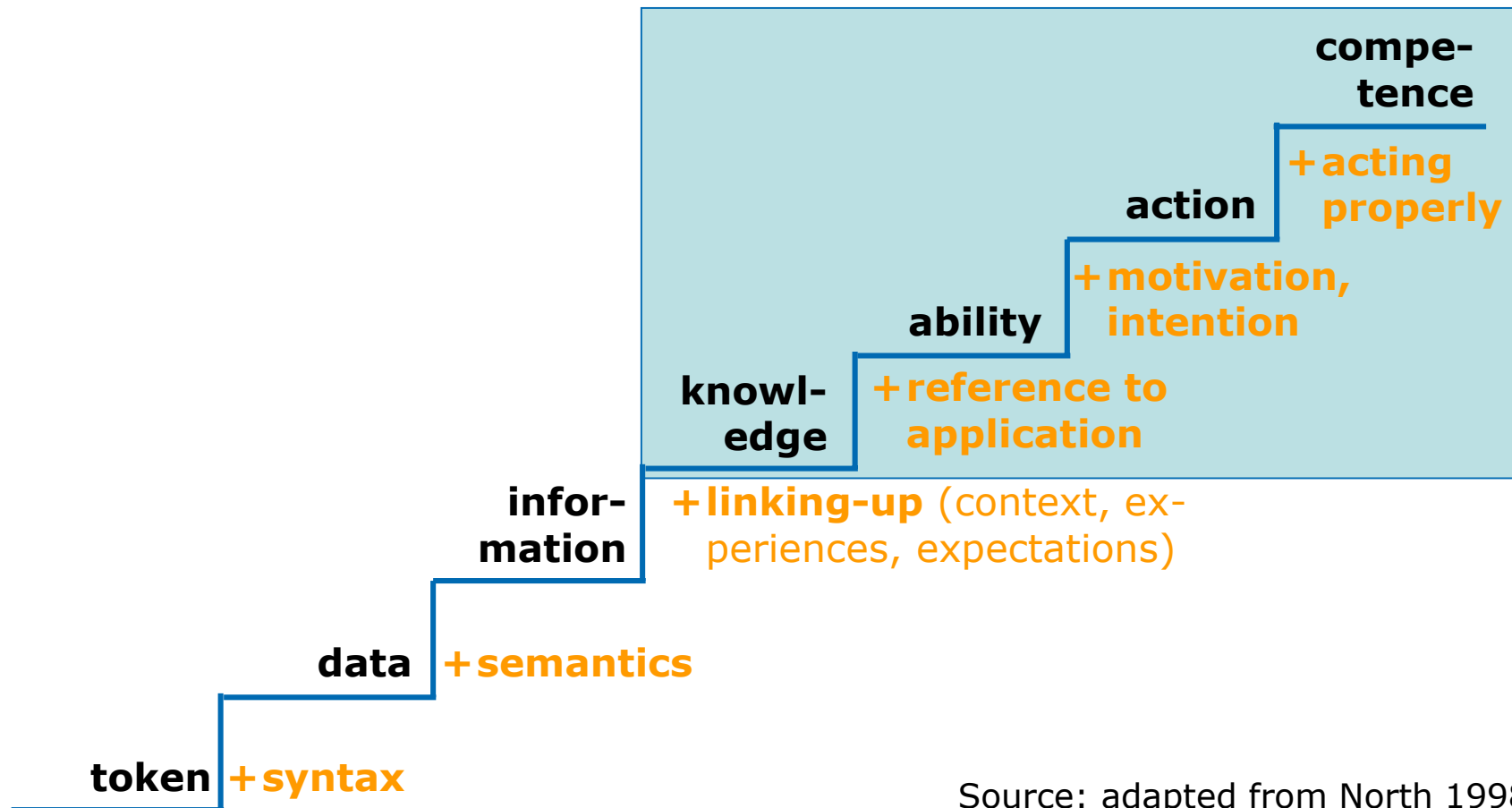


Definition of competence

Weinert (2001a: 2433) understands “‘competence’ as referring to combinations of those **cognitive, motivational, moral, and social** skills available to (or **potentially learnable** by) a person ... that **underlie** the successful **mastery** through appropriate understanding and actions of a range **of demands, tasks, problems, and goals**”.

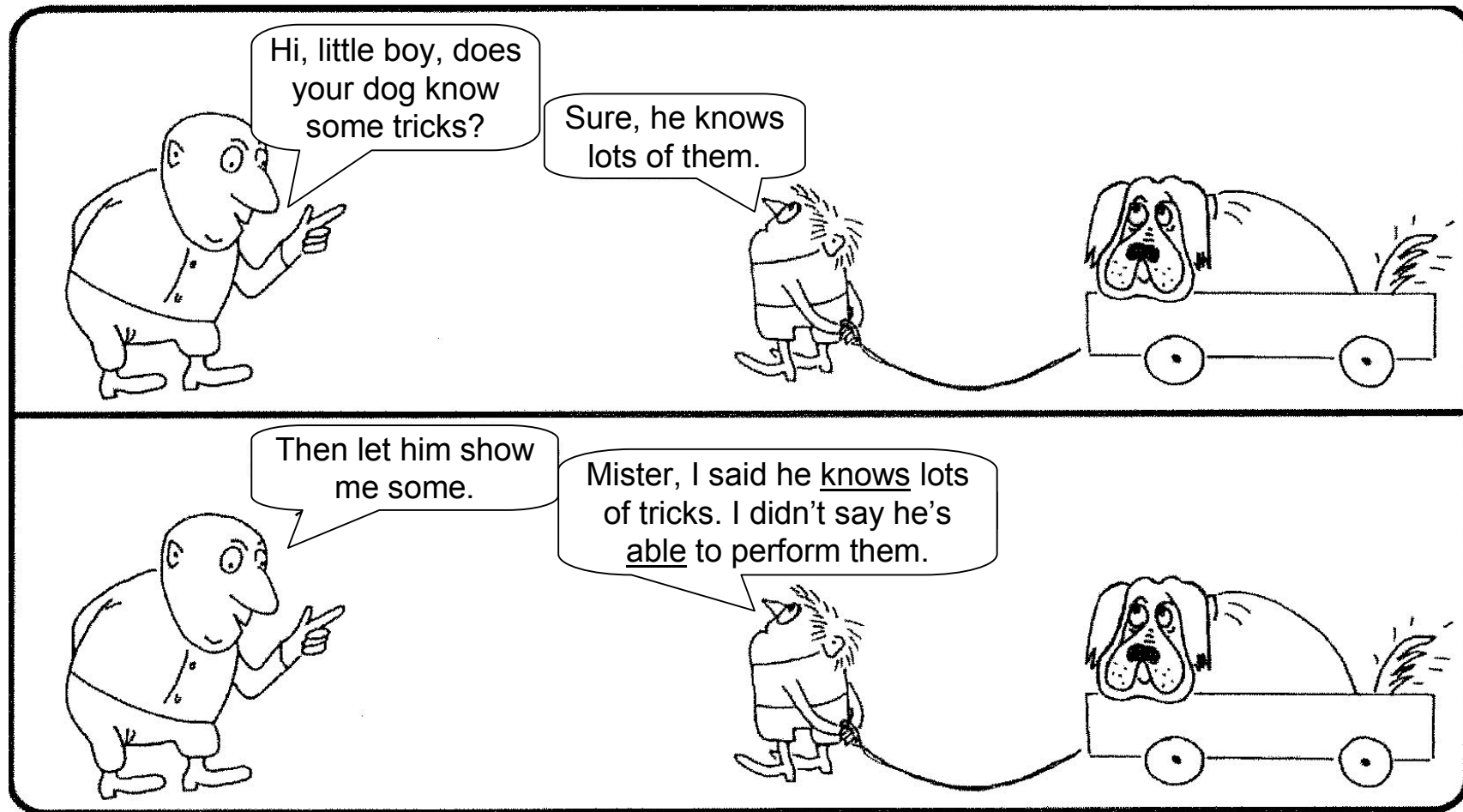
- competences refer to the fulfilment of (complex) tasks, the solution of (complex) problems and coping with (complex) demands
- competences consist of both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects
- competences are not inherited but can be learned (and, to a varying extent, taught)
- competences are considered as a *potential*, a *disposition*

Difference between knowledge (“Wissen”), ability (“Können”) and competence: the “knowledge staircase” („Wissenstreppe”)



Source: adapted from North 1998

Difference between knowledge ("Wissen") and ability ("Können"): illustration



Definition of key competence

= competence + "transversality"/multifunctionality + importance

- "Key competencies are transversal across different spheres of life or social fields ..." (Rychen/Salganik 2002: 12) "The term generally refers to multifunctional and transdisciplinary competencies that are useful for achieving many important goals, mastering different tasks, and acting in unfamiliar situations." (Weinert 2001b: 52)
- "... the notion of key competencies is used ... as a synonym for critical or important competencies ... that contribute to a successful life and a well-functioning society, are relevant across different spheres of life, and are important for all individuals." (Rychen/Salganik 2003: 54)
- Functional, demand-oriented approach for classifying competencies as key competences: "If one wants to go beyond an individual's adaptation level to the world of today with its limited possibilities of further development, and change the world by providing people with the appropriate competencies, it is necessary to choose a normative starting point, and not an empirical one, when defining key competencies." (Weinert 2001b: 53)

Classification of key competences

Social competence ("Sozialkompetenz"): ability to exchange information, to communicate, and to establish, develop and maintain social relationships (e. g. ability to work in a team)

Self-competence/personal competence ("Selbstkompetenz"): refers to attitudes towards the world in general, towards work and the self, includes classic working virtues such as motivation, diligence, accuracy, commitment, but also more general traits such as self-esteem, flexibility, and sense of responsibility

Methodical competence ("Methodenkompetenz"): the ability to select, plan, realise, and develop adequate problem solving strategies (e. g. critical thinking, learning ability)

Factual/technical competence (not task-specific) ("Sachkompetenz"): knowledge elements, skills, and abilities applicable across disciplines, subjects and occupations (e. g. foreign language skills, IT skills)

Task-specific factual/technical competence ("Fachkompetenz"): subject-specific/occupation-specific skills, knowledge, and abilities

Why are key competences important? – Past explanations

- Various tasks of education:
education for personal development, preparation for work, education for social behaviour/participation in society (Mertens 1974: 37)
- Labour market and employment (Mertens 1974):
 - ➔ difficulty to predict future qualification demands
 - ➔ increasing obsolescence of occupational knowledge

Why are key competences important? – Current explanations

- Process of individualisation:
 - ➔ disembedding from traditional social forms and commitments of the industrial society (e. g. class, family, institutions of the welfare state), increasing ascription of control and responsibility to the individual
- Fundamental change of the economy, of work, and of human labour
 - ➔ globalisation
 - ➔ tertiarisation
 - ➔ informatisation/increasing knowledge intensity
 - ➔ new modes of production and work organisation
 - ➔ erosion of occupationally segmented labour markets/of the occupational principle of work structuring

Achatz/Tippelt 2001, Bergmann 2000, Voß 2000

Changes in society and economy and their implications for qualification demands

individualisation

- ability for self-direction, self-organisation, self-control, self-motivation, self-management, self-presentation, self-marketing, self-responsibility

tertiarisation

- social competences, contextual problem-solving abilities and reflexivity

informatisation/
knowledge society

- IT skills, abstract and analytic thinking, creativity

Changes in society and economy and their implications for qualification demands, cont.

blurring of boundaries of work with respect to job content
(“sachliche Entgrenzung von Arbeit”: cross-functional work organisation instead of occupation-specific division of labour)

→ cross-curricular, interdisciplinary and communication competences

blurring of social boundaries of work (“soziale Entgrenzung von Arbeit”: flat hierarchies and self-control instead of strong hierarchies and external control)

→ ability for cooperation, self-organisation and self-direction

blurring of boundaries of work with respect to time and space (“raum-zeitliche Entgrenzung von Arbeit”: internationalisation, globalisation, flexibilisation)

→ intercultural competencies, flexibility, mobility, foreign language skills, ability to coordinate

Key competencies and subject-specific/task-specific competences: Can key competences open the door to wisdom?

Results of research in cognitive psychology: Experts and novices differ first and foremost in their declarative knowledge ("know what") and their procedural knowledge ("know-how"), general abilities (e. g. intellectual abilities, learning strategies) play a less important role. An expert is characterised by a broad, well structured, integrated, and flexible base of knowledge, acquired over a long time (and through intense exercise) (Weinert 1998: 28)

- Key competences do not substitute for domain-specific competences: "Generally, key competencies cannot adequately compensate for a lack of content-specific competencies." (Weinert 2001b: 53)
- Designing educational processes: no trade-off between key competences and subject-specific competences
- Action competence = factual/technical competence + social competence + methodical competence + personal competence

“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks!” (“Was Hänschen nicht lernt, lernt Hans nimmermehr!”)

Can educational institutions contribute to the development of key competences?

No

The basis of many key competences (esp. social and self-competence) is established in early childhood and outside formal learning processes (during primary socialisation).

Yes

- acquisition of key competences later in life is, at least to a certain extent, possible
- necessity of renewing and cultivating competences in order not to forget them („Was Hänschen lernt, hat Hans später vergessen!”)
- some competences cannot be acquired in childhood („Einiges kann Hänschen erst als Hans lernen!”)

“Skilling me softly ...” – Approaches to fostering key competences in educational settings

I. Additive approaches

de-contextualised training/instruction in separate courses/seminars (e.g. communication training) outside the subject curriculum

Additive approaches: Is it possible to teach key competences in an isolated, decontextualised way?

Yes

Some key competences can be directly taught, especially factual/technical competences (e. g. foreign languages, IT skills), but also some social competencies (e. g. presentation skills)

But

„Werden Strategien .. losgelöst von den relevanten Inhaltsbereichen gelehrt, verkommen sie schnell zur lästigen Pflichtübung oder erleiden das Schicksal gut gemeinter Ratschläge: Wenn sie gebraucht werden, sind sie längst vergessen.“ (Stern 2004: 607)

Additive approaches: Is it possible to teach key competences in an isolated, decontextualised way?

No

- Key competences are largely a result of implicit learning processes (Weinert 1998: 35)
- Key competences are largely subject-bound and cannot be developed independently of the study of a particular subject
 - ☞ "Wenn Kinder als Übung zur Sozialkompetenz gemeinsam frühstücken, dann lernen sie dabei nicht, wie man einem anderen Kind eine Mathematikaufgabe erklärt. Der Inhalt ist eben nicht egal." (Elsbeth Stern im "Zeit"-Interview vom 26.06.2003)
 - ☞ "Lernen verhält sich wie Stricken: Stricken ohne Wolle führt genauso wenig zu befriedigenden Ergebnissen wie Stricken ohne Strickmuster. In diesem Sinne ist der Erwerb von Schlüsselkompetenzen aufs Engste mit dem Erwerb des Wissens selbst verbunden." (Wildt 2002: 21)

“Skilling me softly ...” – Approaches to fostering key competences in educational settings

I. Additive approaches

de-contextualised training/instruction in separate courses/seminars (e.g. communication training) outside the subject curriculum

II. Integrated approaches

implicit acquisition of key competences alongside subject content

Characteristics of integrated models (project-based education, problem-based learning, situated learning)

- student-centered
- activating
- realistic, authentic problems as context and driving force for learning
- autonomous, independent learning
- interactive learning
- multiple perspectives

Effects of integrated approaches

- “Activating learning methods are effective in both, the acquisition of discipline-specific competencies and the acquisition of generic competencies.” (Meng/Heijke 2004: 4)
- **The role of instruction:** A mixture of traditional teacher-centered and modern activating modes of learning is optimal for both: the development of subject-specific factual competences and the acquisition of key competences.
 - ☞ “The role of the teacher inside an activating learning environment should not be underestimated. Teachers combining activating learning methods with a strong role in knowledge transfer ... allow students to perform better than when just controlling the discussion process.” (Meng/Heijke 2004: 40)
 - ☞ “Vielmehr eröffnet nur die Balance zwischen Konstruktion und Instruktion Möglichkeiten zum Erwerb anwendbaren Wissens, das zu erfolgreichem Handeln führen kann.” (Gruber/Mandl/Renkl 1999)

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