Key Competences and New Literacy:
From Slogans to School Reality

Competences / -ies and Literacies:
finding our way through the maze

In cooperation with

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21 Century Skills: no one-size-fits-all classification

Terms overlap and are used interchangeably:

- 21 century skills
- key competences
- transferable skills
- transversal skills
- cross-curricular skills
- cross-disciplinary skills
- interdisciplinary skills
- noncognitive skills
- soft skills
- applied skills

- skills
- competences (competence)
- competencies (competency)
- literacies
- capacities, abilities
- +
- awareness

'**Competence**' generally refers to **functional** areas,
'**competency**' to **behavioural** areas
but usage is inconsistent

Delamare Le Deist, Winterton 2005

Competence a 'useful term, **bridging the gap between education and job requirements**'

Boon and van der Klink, 2002, p. 6

"New **literacies** refer to **competencies** in **skills** using the Internet…"

What is competence? Three clauses are repeated

OECD, Education-2030: *'a competence'* is **the ability to mobilize** knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, alongside a reflective approach to the process of learning, **in order to engage with and act in the world**'; to address competently diverse challenges and demands **in a particular context**. Competency is developed through action and in an iterative process.

Competence is (1) the **aggregate of** relevant **knowledge, skills and attitudes** that (2) **ensure the ability (3) to operate productively** (3) **in a particular area of activity or field**. Competence can be categorized as (A) general competences or (B) subject field competences = literacies.

National Curriculum for Basic Schools, Estonia (2011)

Transversal competence refers to **an entity** consisting of **knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and will**. Competence also means (1) **an ability (2) to apply** knowledge and skills (3) **in a given situation**.
National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, Finland (2014)

Situation A

Situation B

(1) Knowledge, skills, attitudes   (2) are mobilized   (3) in a particular situation

What is the list of key competences?

The 'European Framework of Key Competences' (2006):

1) communication in mother tongue and in foreign languages,
2) mathematical competence,
3) basic competences in science and technology,
4) horizontal skills required across schooling, such as digital competence,
5) learning to learn;
6) social and civic competences;
7) initiative and entrepreneurship;
8) cultural awareness and expression.

being reviewed in 2016-2017

to better reflect recent developments in areas such as multilingualism, cultural diversity and varied ways of communicating, migration, citizenship, and sustainability issues

UNESCO competencies for sustainable development

Include a range of cognitive, social and emotional capacities such as:

- **anticipatory**: the ability to understand and evaluate multiple futures (possible, probable and desirable), to create own visions for the future, to assess the consequences of actions and to deal with risks and changes;

- **normative**: the ability to understand and reflect on the norms and values that underlie one's actions – in a context of conflicts of interest and contradictions;

- **strategic**: the ability to collectively develop and implement actions and further sustainability at the local level and further afield;

- **collaboration**: the ability to learn from others, to understand the needs, perspectives and actions of others, to deal with confidence in the group and to facilitate collaborative and participatory problem-solving;

- **critical thinking**: the ability to question norms, practices and opinions, to reflect on one's own values, perceptions and actions and to take a position in the sustainability discourse;

- **self-awareness**: the ability to reflect on one's own role in the local community and (global) society: perceptions and actions to take a position in the sustainability discourse;

- **integrative problem-solving**: the ability to apply different problem-solving frameworks to complex sustainability problems and develop viable solution options.

UNESCO The 2014—2021 work programme

How to group competences?

A model of 17 skills and 4 base competencies for graduates
to achieve high performance in the workplace

Managing self: constantly developing practices and internalising routines for maximising one's ability to deal with the uncertainty of an ever-changing environment

Learning; Personal organisation/Time management; Personal strengths; Problem solving/Analytic

Communicating: interacting effectively with a variety of individuals and groups to facilitate the gathering, integrating and conveying of information in many forms (e.g. verbal, written)

Interpersonal; Listening; Oral and written communication

Managing people and tasks: accomplishing the tasks at hand by planning, organising, coordinating and controlling both resources and people

Coordinating; Decision-making; Leadership/Influence; Managing conflict; Planning and organising

Mobilising innovation and change: conceptualising and setting in motion ways of initiating and managing change that involve significant departures from the current mode

Ability to conceptualise; Creativity/Innovation/Change; Risk-taking; Visioning
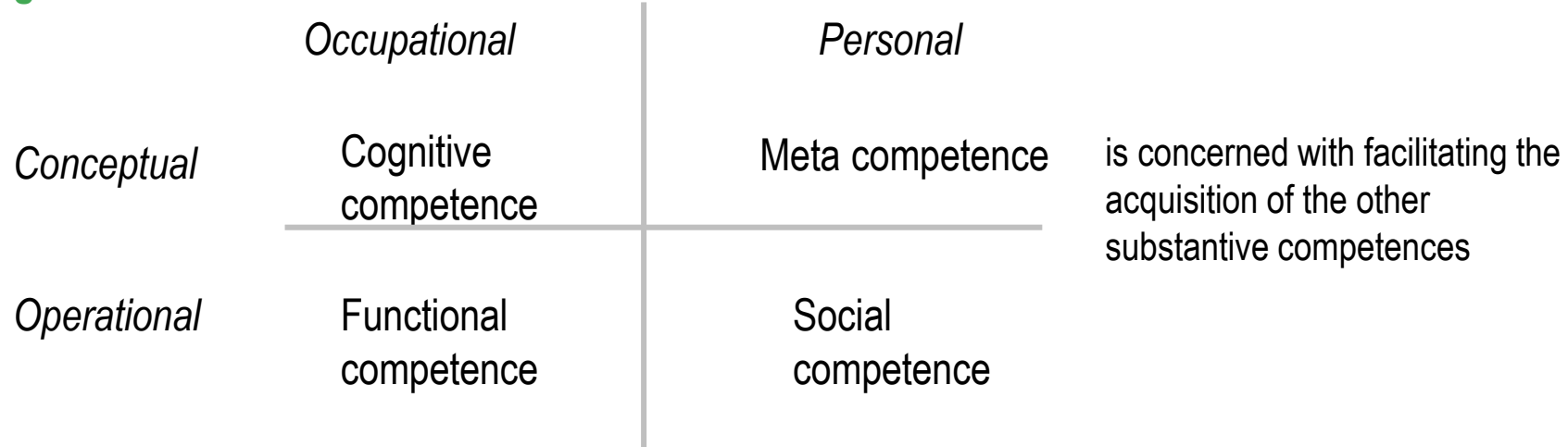
How to group competences?

savoir (*compétences théoriques*)
Knowledge

	Occupational	Personal	
Conceptual	Cognitive competence	Meta competence	is concerned with facilitating the acquisition of the other substantive competences
Operational	Functional competence	Social competence	

savoir-faire (*compétences pratiques*, i.e. functional competences)
Skills

savoir-être (*compétences*, i.e. behavioural competencies)
Attitudes

DeSeCo broad categories of competencies + DeSeCo 2.0

The competency "Interacting with heterogeneous groups" will require:
- The ability to relate well to others
- The ability to cooperate
- The ability to manage and resolve conflicts

The competency "using tools interactively" will require:
 The ability to use language, symbols and text interactively
 The ability to use knowledge and information interactively
 The ability to use technology interactively

The competency "acting autonomously" will require:
 The ability to act within the big picture
 The ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects
 The ability to assert rights, interests, limits and needs

Use tools interactively

Interact in heterogeneous groups

Act autonomously
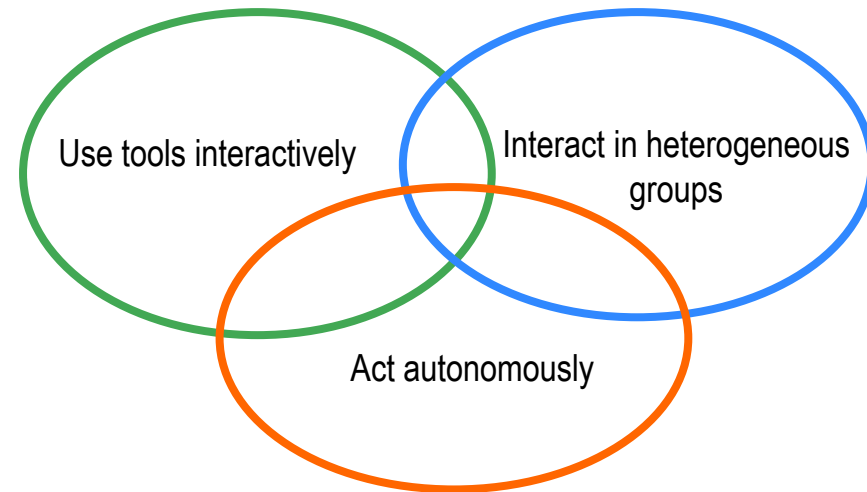
DeSeCo 2.0: the OECD Learning Compass 2030 articulates
three cross-cutting, inter-related and transformative competencies across the DeSeCo competencies:

- Creating new value
- Taking responsibility
- Coping with tensions, dilemmas, trade-offs, contradictions, ambiguity, etc.

Competences: our list and grouping

How to choose competences (limit the list):

(A) **Related to thinking:**
- Critical thinking + problem-solving + critical literacy
- Creative thinking – creativity (innovation)?

(B) **Related to interaction with others:**
- Cooperation (collaboration)
- Communication

+ emotional intelligence
mixing with others – leading others

(C) **Related to self-management, autonomous action:**
- Self-regulation, planning…
- Motivation (turning external into internal)
- Adaptability
- Learning to learn, life-long learning

What is new literacy?

Common elements that apply to nearly all of the current perspectives of new literacies research:

(1) The Internet and other ICTs **require new social practices, skills, strategies, and dispositions** for their effective use;

(2) new literacies are **central to full civic, economic, and personal participation** in a global community;

(3) new literacies **rapidly change as defining technologies change**;

(4) new literacies are **multiple, multimodal, and multifaceted**; thus, they benefit from multiple lenses seeking to understand how to better support our students in a digital age.

International Reading Association, 2009

Questions for:

Sociology,
Governance,
Political Science,
S&T

Psychology,
Education

literacy	illiteracy
participation	exclusion

What is substantively "new" about new literacies?

New literacies are *new* by virtue of **comprising "new technical stuff"** and **"new ethos stuff"**.

Literacies are "socially recognized ways of generating, communicating and negotiating meaningful content through the medium of encoded texts within contexts of participation in Discourses (or, as members of Discourses)".

Literacies call us **to generate and communicate meanings** and to invite others **to make meaning from our texts** in turn.

Questions for:

Sociology,
Communication,
Sociolinguistics

Lankshear and Knobel 2006a: 64

Evolution of literacy: understand – act

Ability to read, write and compute	Ability to understand 'text' as a sign system representing a specific domain, and act accordingly
In any context	(Social) context bound

Multiliteracy

Multiliteracy is the competence to interpret, produce and make a value judgement across a variety of different texts, which will help the pupils to understand diverse modes of cultural communication and to build their personal identity.

Multiliteracy is based on a broad definition of text.
Text refers to knowledge presented by systems of verbal, visual, auditive, numeric and kinaesthetic symbols and their combinations. …

Multiliteracy means abilities to obtain, combine, modify, produce, present and evaluate information in different modes, in different contexts and situations, and by using various tools.

National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, Finland (2014)

Literacy: stages or continuity

Three distinct 'levels':

?

1. **Functional literacy**: Skills that allow an individual to understand written and oral information in a particular domain and to act correctly.

School

2. **Conceptual literacy**: Skills and competencies that people develop over their lifetimes to seek out, comprehend, evaluate, and use information to make informed choices and increase quality of life.

Lifetime

3. **Literacy as empowerment**: Strengthening active citizenship by bringing together a commitment to citizenship and involving individuals in: understanding their rights as consumers, clients, patients; acting as an informed consumers, and acting individually or collectively through voting, advocacy or membership of social movements.

Lifetime

Levels of health literacy

- **Functional literacy**: Skills that allow an individual to read consent forms, medicine labels, and health care information and to understand written and oral information given by physicians, nurses, pharmacists, or other health care professionals and to act on directions by taking medication correctly, adhering to self-care at home, and keeping appointment schedules.

- **Conceptual literacy**: The wide range of skills, and competencies that people develop over their lifetimes to seek out, comprehend, evaluate, and use health information and concepts to make informed choices, reduce health risks, and increase quality of life.

- **Health literacy as empowerment**: Strengthening active citizenship for health by bringing together a commitment to citizenship with health promotion and prevention efforts and involving individuals in: understanding their rights as patients and their ability to navigate through the health care system; acting as an informed consumers about the health risks of products and services and about options in health care providers, and acting individually or collectively to improve health through the political system through voting, advocacy or membership of social movements.

World Health Organization, 2009

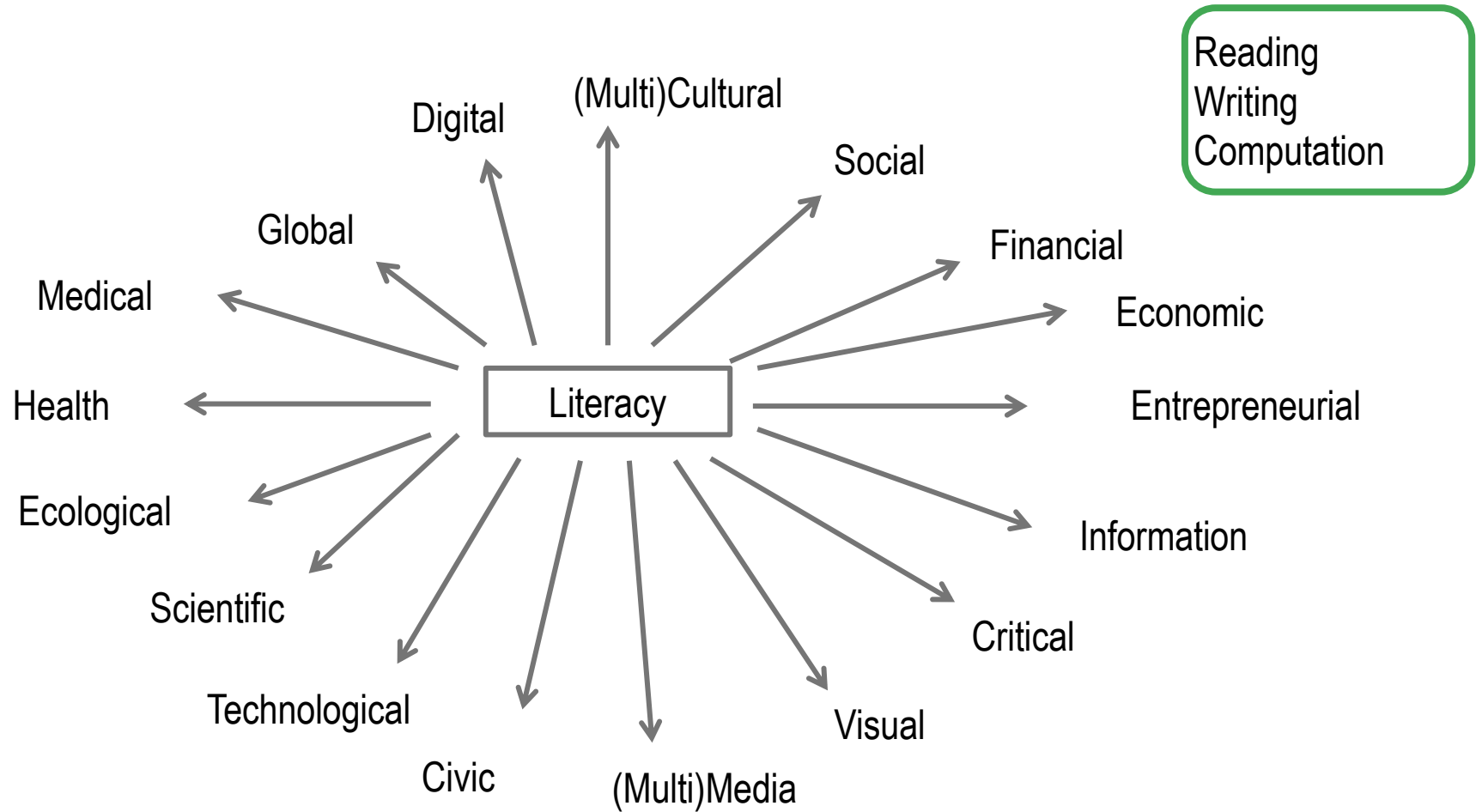# Threshold concepts for defining levels of literacy

Threshold concepts are core ideas and processes in a discipline that students need to grasp in order to progress in their learning.
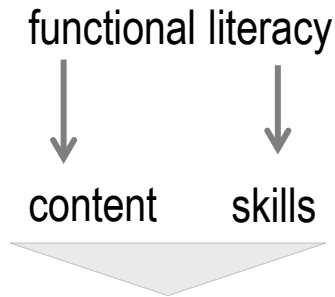
Key characteristics of threshold concepts:

1) **Transformative**: cause the learner to experience a shift in the perception of the subject;

2) **Integrative**: bring together separate concepts into a unified whole (expose the previously hidden interrelatedness of something);

3) **Irreversible**: once grasped, cannot be un-grasped (unlikely to be forgotten);

4) **Bounded**: may help define the boundaries of a particular discipline, are perhaps unique to the discipline (serve as boundary markers for the conceptual spaces that make up the disciplinary terrain);

5) **Troublesome**: conceptually difficult and/or counter-intuitive

Meyer & Land 2003,
quoted in: Townsend, Hofer, Lin Hanick, Brunetti 2016;
Hoadley, Tickle et al. 2015

Variety of literacies

(Multi)Cultural

Digital

Social

Global

Financial

Medical

Economic

Health   **Literacy**   Entrepreneurial

Ecological

Information

Scientific

Critical

Technological

Visual

Civic   (Multi)Media

Reading
Writing
Computation

How many literacies? How to group them?

functional literacy

↓ ↓

content   skills

How to choose what is necessary?

"A selection of print-mediated activities on behalf of a **'prototypical' citizen** in an **'average' structural location** with a **'standardized' lifestyle"**

A social construction

Levine 1982, in Lankshear, Knobel 2011, p. 8

Technological advances and transformations

"new technical stuff" + "new ethos stuff"

Five general areas:

(1) Consumer economics
(2) Occupational /professional knowledge
(3) Community resources
(4) Health
(5) Government and law

The Adult Performance Level Study (APL), 1975

Print mediated activities = Text in a broad sense

Literacies: our list and grouping

Literacy is domain specific – Competence is domain-free
Literacy is social – Competence is behavioural

Four general areas (minus occupational knowledge):

Literacies as contents   *Literacies as skills*

(1) Consumer economics
(2) Community resources
(3) Health
(4) Government and law

Financial + Entrepreneurial
(Multi)cultural + Global + Ecological
Medical + Health
Legal + Civic

Digital
+ Technological, if
other than digital

Competences

(A) **Related to thinking:**
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- Creative thinking – creativity (innovation)?

(B) **Related to interaction with others:**
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- Communication

> + emotional intelligence
> mixing with others – leading others

(C) **Related to self-management, autonomous action:**
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Literacies

As skills: 1) Digital + Technological, if other than digital
As contents: 2) Financial + Entrepreneurial
                 3) (Multi)cultural + Global + Ecological
                 4) Medical + Health
                 5) Legal + Civic

Questions to discuss and (dis)agree upon:

- Distinction between competences and literacies

- The list of competences and literacies for school graduates

- Grouping principles for competences and literacies

?