Rational and Challenges of Competency-Based Education and Training: The “Wickedness” of the Problem.

Jacob L. Oyugi
School of Management and Entrepreneurship, Kyambogo University, Kampala – Uganda, P.O Box 1, Kyambogo-Uganda
jacoyugi@yahoo.com or joyugi@kyu.ac.ug

Abstract
Our students will continue to be confronted with many environment and sustainability issues during their lifetimes because they are unpredictable, serious and complex by nature. These issues challenge not just our technologies but our universities and educational institutions, values and way of living and interaction. Competency-based education and green skills for work and life in post-2015 Africa will involve dealing with very complex problems. These problems go beyond the capacity of any one organization to understand and respond to, and there is often disagreement about the causes of the problems and the best way to tackle them. These problems are called ‘wicked’ problems. These wicked problems quite often have become policy issues. There are numerous examples of wicked policy issues such as climate change, environment degradation, and sustainable development. Usually, part of the solution to wicked problems involve changing the behaviour of groups of citizens or all citizens. Other key ingredients in solving or at least managing complex problems include successfully working across both internal and external organizational boundaries and engaging citizens and stakeholders in policy making and implementation. Wicked problem require innovative, comprehensive solutions that can be modified in the light of experience and on-the-ground feedback. All the above can pose challenges to competency-based education approaches and their implementation. This discussion paper explores the characteristics of wicked problems and challenges they pose for competency-based education approaches. Although developing effective ways to tackle wicked problems is an evolving art, this paper contributes by identifying some of the rationale that seem to be required. The first part of this paper introduces the concepts of competency-based education and the wicked problems. The second part of the paper discusses the characteristics/challenges of wicked problems in the context of competency-based education. The third part suggests possible strategies/rationale for taming wicked problems. The last part draws conclusions and finally proposes the way forward.

Keywords: Competency, Education, Wicked problems, policy, Environment, Social welfare, Strategies, Sustainable development