

# **Analysis of the Introduction to the Brazilian National Learning Standards Version 3**

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## HIGH LEVEL FEEDBACK

The writers should be congratulated for the quality of the third version of the Introductory Text. This is a considerable improvement on previous versions.

Above all the text is clear and concise and provides the key information related to a vision for student learning in Brazil and the contribution the National Learning Standards are to make in relation to enabling all students to acquire the fundamental knowledge, skills and dispositions (attitudes and values) for contemporary and future life and employment. The references to the legal basis for and alignment to/transition from the National Basic Education Curriculum Guidelines (DCN) and the National Education Plan are succinct and sufficient and provide a degree of continuity for educators and policy officers.

The purpose of this part of the National Learning Standards is to set a vision for and provide an overview of the standards, highlighting the priorities, contextual matters regarding policy and law and the organisational elements used as the basis for their development. The writers have met this purpose.

It should be noted, however, that the reduction in complexity achieved in the development of the current version has resulted in the absence of some information. Accordingly, several matters have been identified in this analysis that require some consideration to further improve the Introductory section of the National Learning Standards. These matters are outlined below.

### ***Early Childhood; Basic Education***

While the structural model on the final page and the information about stages provides some insight into the relationship between early childhood education and basic education (primary and secondary education) the Introductory document is primarily about basic education. The absence of detail regarding learning and teaching in early childhood requires some explanation as it is assumed that greater detail is provided elsewhere. It is recommended, therefore, that a statement is included in the Introductory section that directs readers with an interest in early childhood education to relevant other documents.

### ***Learning and Development Rights***

The relationship between the three learning and development rights (ethical principles; political principles; aesthetic principles) and the general competencies is outlined in the final paragraph of section 1.3.

However, the particular rights are broader than general competencies. Some of the rights encompass other aspects of the National Learning Standards (such as subject-specific knowledge and skills) and also conditions of learning that teachers provide and model in classrooms and the overall learning environment in schools (such as the specific rights outlined regarding ethical principles). For this reason it would be beneficial to indicate that the rights will be addressed both through the National Learning Standards and in the broader experience students have in schooling.

### ***Pedagogical foundations***

The section on pedagogical foundations is sound, particularly in relation to student learning. The text primarily deals with the capabilities a young person needs for lifelong learning. While not specifically mentioned the text highlights the importance of *metacognitive capabilities* (ie learning how to learn; understanding how one learns; how to organize one's learning etc).

The section also makes reference to teaching practice/style and assessing students' learning but provides no detail in relation to these matters. It would be beneficial to include some text on these matters with specific reference to the implications for teaching and assessment arising from national learning standards that:

- develop students' "communication" skills and also
- enable them to be "creative, analytical, critical, participative, productive and responsible" students.

Further, it would be helpful to include some examples of the kinds of teaching practices and assessment strategies that will be expected of teachers, schools and schooling authorities that "require much more than just accumulating information". Such examples might include students engaging in group activities and undertaking personal interest projects, students completing extended tasks, students demonstrating their learning through presentations etc

### ***General Competencies (Social and Personal; Cognitive; Communicative)***

The three groupings of general competencies are well presented. The diagram illustrating the interlocking competencies suggests and the accompanying text states that the three groups are interconnected. While this is possible, it would be beneficial to include some examples where such connections are apparent.

In Social and Personal Competencies it is unclear how practising "dialogue" is a competency – it would be better to expand this to be practising "social interaction through dialogue" rather than simply "dialogue".

In the Communicative Competencies, with the emphasis on students acquiring skills and knowledge in and across a broad range of literacies (multi-literacies), is it actually the case that all students will learn sign language (as implied)?

### ***The Structure of the NLS***

The diagram that illustrates the overall structure is particularly helpful in showing the key components and their relationship. The introduction of "theme units" at the end of this section requires some elaboration. While it is unnecessary to list all the theme units it would be beneficial to include some examples, particularly covering topics that are considered priorities for the government. This would assist some readers to understand the meaning of "theme" in this context and to better appreciate the kinds of connections to be made across subjects using strong and relevant themes.

### ***Terminology***

In addition to the above matters are some examples where the use of particular terms (terminology) could be reconsidered or enhanced. The following three examples are provided.

- "Guarantee" – this term is both powerful and absolute. While it is noble for a government to guarantee particular outcomes, in the context of student learning guarantees that that all students will learn all that is expected under the National Learning Standards are particularly difficult given the many factors at play – the student's ability/disability; the varying professionalism/capabilities of teachers; variation in the contribution made by schools/schooling systems in relation to resources etc. An alternative term that meets the same objective is to provide all students "access" to the same standards rather than achievement of them.
- "Knowledge Areas" – this term is used as the descriptor for the organization of learning in four areas: Languages, Mathematics, Human Sciences and Natural Sciences. Given the learning standards extend beyond knowledge (and include skills and dispositions that are both general and subject-specific), a more appropriate descriptor would be "Learning" Areas rather than "Knowledge" Areas – this would also be consistent with the terminology used by many countries.
- "Interdisciplinary approach" – the promotion of an interdisciplinary approach is mentioned early in the document without justification for such an approach. The information about interdisciplinarity provided at the end of the document is very useful and might be better placed earlier in the document.