

Summary

The concept of competence in the light of Seneca's problem

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Ever since its existence, school has suffered from Seneca's critical dictum that we do not learn for life, but for school (*non vitae sed scholae discimus*). Time and again, school has been accused of failing to prepare new generations for their lives as adults. Aligning curricula and teaching to competencies raises the expectation that Seneca's Problem (as we will call it) can be solved and that school will finally prepare us for life in a modern society. Two aspects of Seneca's Problem can be differentiated: a formal and a content aspect. The formal aspect relates to the transfer of what has been learned in school to out-of-school situations. The content aspect relates to the school's understanding of education and its selection of learning objectives. This article shows how both aspects of Seneca's Problem should be solved with the concept of competence. By referring to the theory of situated learning it also shows how unlikely it is that Seneca's Problem will be solved easily.

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