

# A Paradigm of Quality Assurance: Beyond globalizing forces vs. national goals

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# Background

Assessing learning outcomes-major factor in determining QA in HE  
globally standardized versus keep specific to national needs

In Japan



MEXT proposed a set of expected learning outcomes that students are expected to acquire

AHELO

Is AHELO challenging?

“difficulty of implementing global standards has contributed to an emphasis on national needs and goals

- disciplinary skills & knowledge
- “generic skills “
  - ✓ across academic disciplines
  - ✓ across nations
  - globally standardized

- whether the persistence of national needs is hindering the implementation of global standards in generic skills
- attempted to validate the explanation of AHELO’s limitations offered by the traditional dichotomy paradigm (global standardization vs. national needs)

## Purpose of the study

- 1.How are generic skills defined?
- 2.How are generic skills cultivated?

## Research methodology

- Interview-based (semi-structured)qualitative research method.
- 10 academic fields 61deans who have involved in departmental curriculum development

Code	Academic Fields	Number of Participants
1	Humanities	10
2	Social science	14
3	Science	7
4	Engineering	8
5	Agriculture	2
6	Health	7
7	Home economics	4
8	Education	3
9	Art	2
10	Multidisciplinary	4
Total		61

# Results

- familiar to AHELO: 1%
- have heard of the term “generic skills”: 16.2%
- aware of the generic skills proposed by MEXT : 14.5%
- discussed about kinds of “generic skills” among faculties : 89%

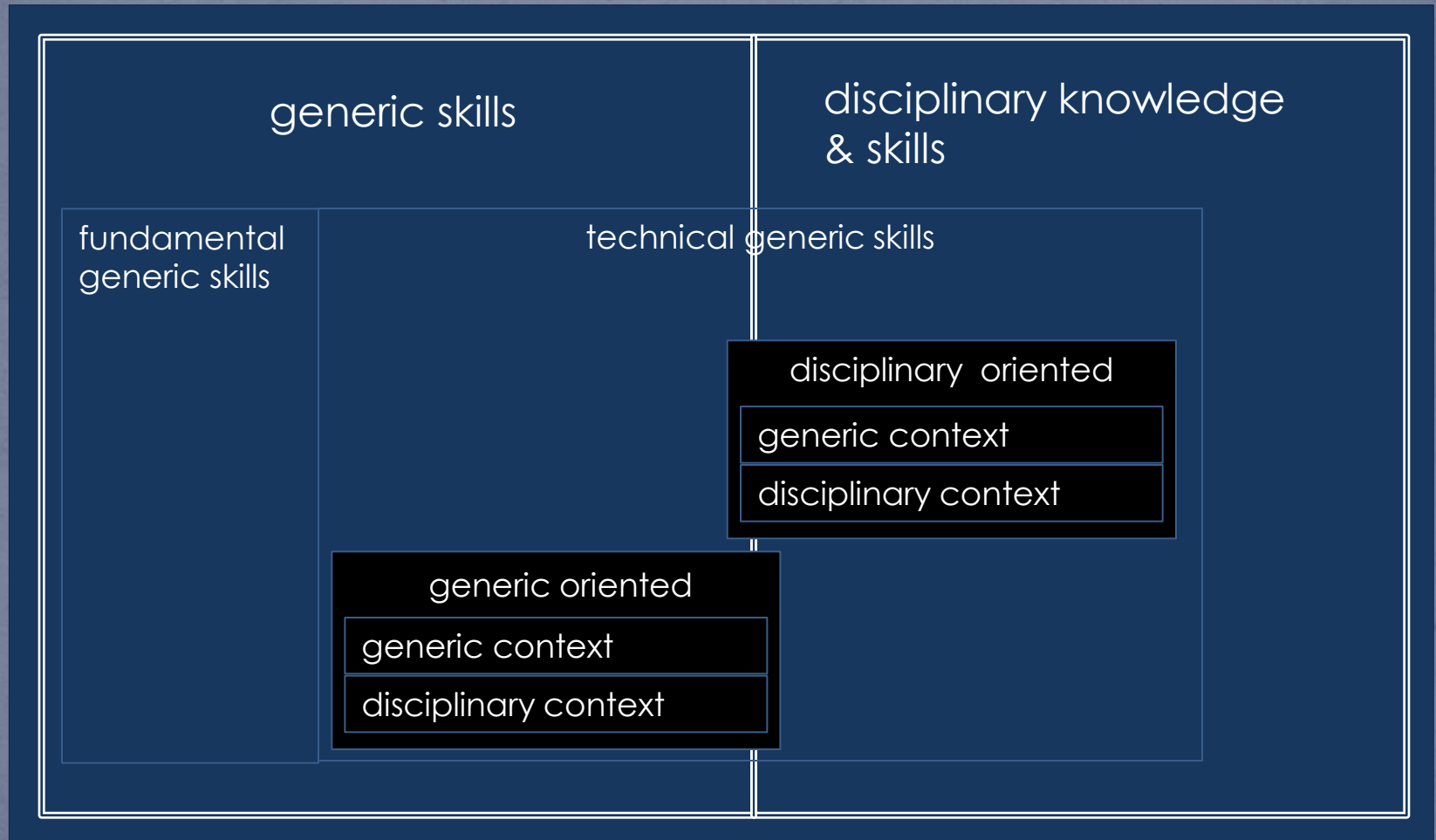
The results indicated that

- In many departments kinds of generic skills are recognized as important skills
- majority of the academic deans were unaware of global standardized assessment or national policies related to generic skills.

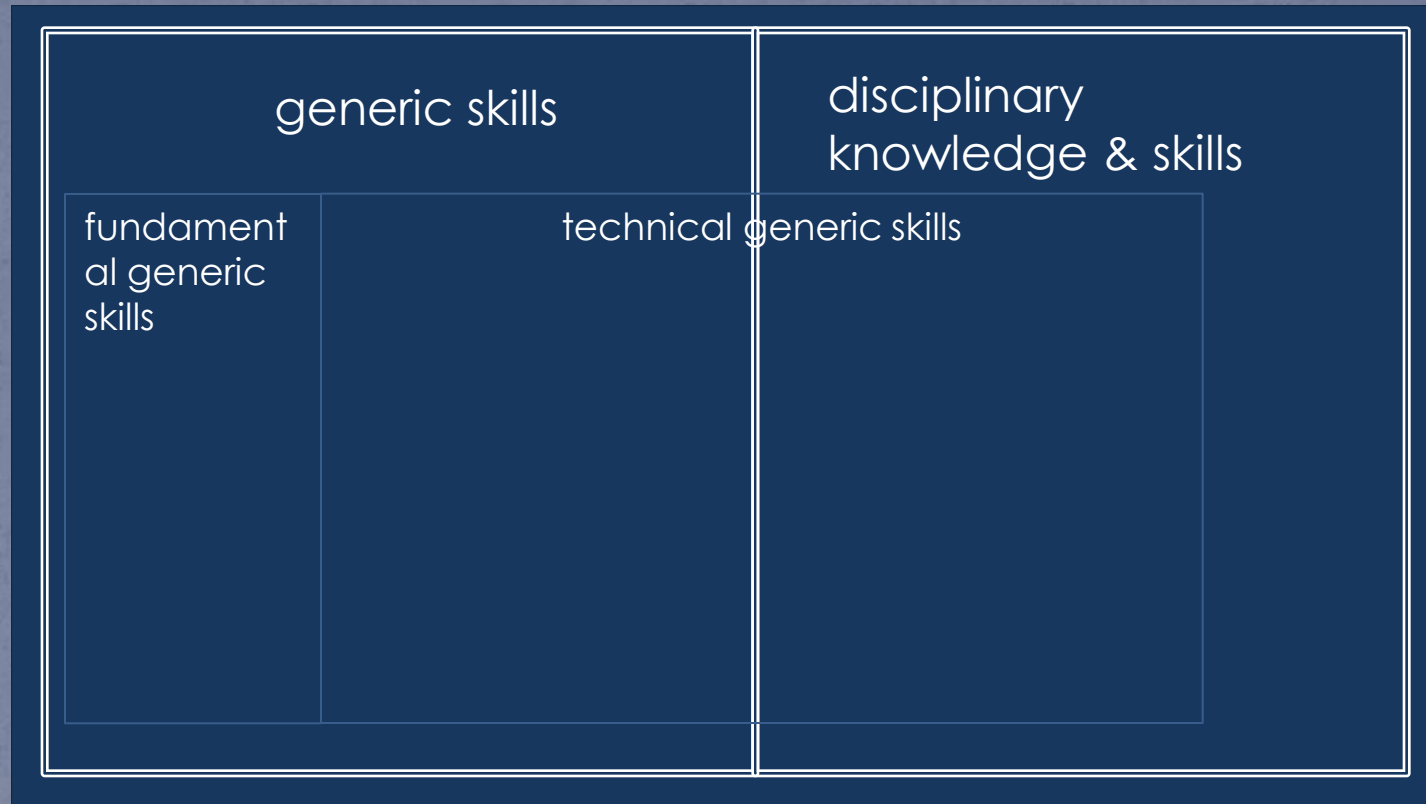
The independent variables of global standards or national goals could not explain other variables such as concepts or the curriculum reflection of generic skills.

## [New conceptual framework]

Deans' perceptions of how generic skills are located in learning outcomes dictate how generic skills are defined and how they are cultivated.



## How are generic skills defined (RQ#1)



### Fundamental generic skills:

conceptual outcomes such as values and beliefs that are hardly measurable in and of themselves

e.g., humanism, internationalism, spirit of dedication, a sense of vocation

### Technical generic skills:

categorized in the curriculum as technically added skills

e.g., communication skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork

## Types of generic skills

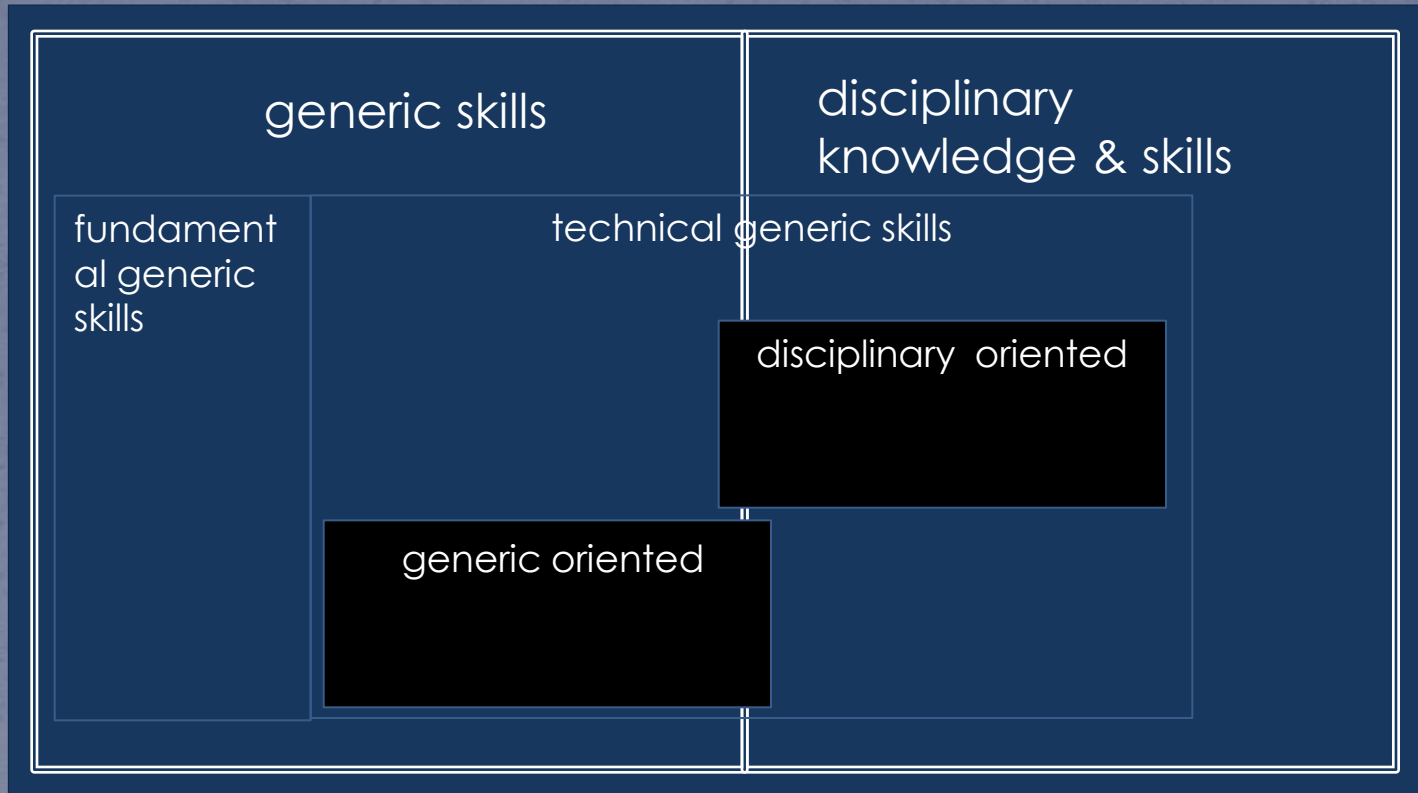
Code	Types of Generic Skills	Definitions	N
1	GS Type 1	Fundamental GSs	2
2	GS Type 2	Both fundamental and technical GSs that are not interactive with each other	7
3	GS Type 3	Technical GSs	43
4	GS Type 4	Both fundamental and technical GSs that are interactive with each other	9

[GS type1]: departments emphasize only fundamental generic skills

[GS type2]: departments emphasize both fundamental and technical generic skills that are not interactive with each other

[GS type3]: departments emphasize only technical generic skills

[GS type4]: departments emphasize both fundamental and technical generic skills that are interactive with each other



Generic oriented: technical generic skills that focus on the application of generic contents  
 e.g., general sense of ethics, communication skills, writing

Disciplinary oriented: technical generic skills focus on the application of disciplinary contents  
 e.g., sense of medical ethics, medical communication skills, academic writing in psychology



## Patterns of technical generic skills orientations

Code	Technical GS Orientations	Definitions	N
0	Inconsistent	Departments' perceptions about technical GS contents are inconsistent and unclear	1
1	Generic-Oriented	Technical GSs focus on the application of generic contents	14
2	Disciplinary-Oriented	Technical GSs focus on the application of disciplinary contents	34
3	Generic- and Disciplinary-Oriented	Technical GSs focus on the application of both generic and disciplinary contents	6
4	Generic-oriented=Disciplinary-oriented	There is no boundary between non disciplinary (generic) and disciplinary contents	2

[Inconsistent]: departments' perceptions on technical generic skills contents are inconsistent and unclear

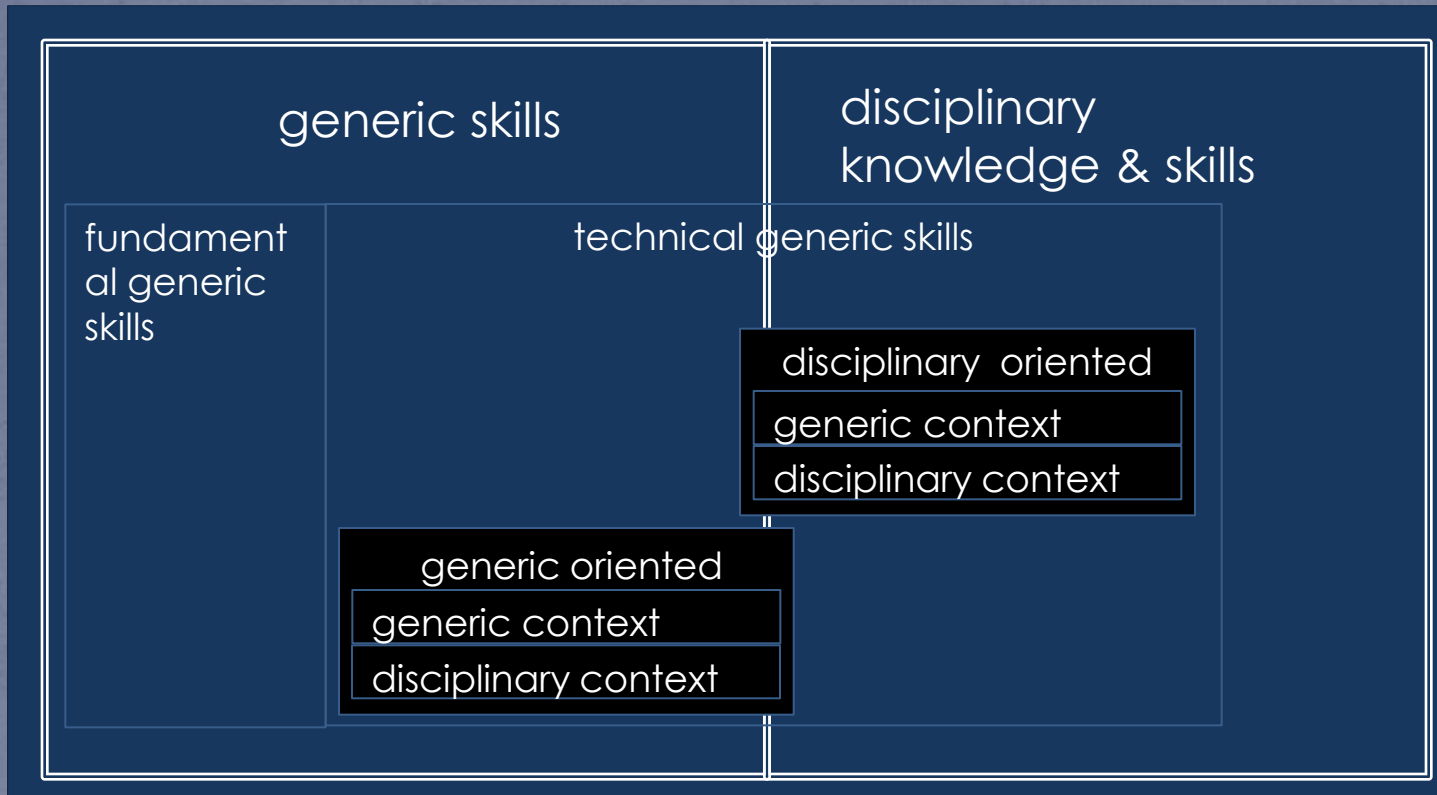
[Generic-Oriented]: departments' technical generic skills focus on the application of generic contents

[Disciplinary-oriented]: departments' technical generic skills focus on the application of disciplinary contents

[Generic-and-disciplinary-oriented]: departments' generic- and disciplinary-oriented technical generic skills focus on the application of both generic and disciplinary contents

[Generic-oriented=Disciplinary-oriented]: no boundary exists between non disciplinary (generic) and disciplinary contents

## How the academic deans perceive generic skills as being cultivated (RQ#2)



Generic context: technical generic skills are cultivated in generic context  
e.g.; communication skills

Disciplinary context: technical generic skills are cultivated in disciplinary context  
e.g., communication skills in the context of engineering

## Patterns of technical generic skills cultivating context

Cultivating Contexts	Definitions	N
Inconsistent	Departments' perceptions regarding technical GS cultivation are inconsistent and unclear	1
Generic context	Technical GSs are cultivated in non disciplinary (generic) contexts	6
Disciplinary contexts	Technical GSs are cultivated in disciplinary contexts	33
Generic and Disciplinary contexts	Technical GSs are cultivated in both disciplinary and non disciplinary (generic) contexts	15
Generic contexts = Disciplinary contexts	There is no boundary between non-disciplinary (generic) contexts and disciplinary contexts	2

[Inconsistent]: departments' perceptions on generic skill cultivation are inconsistent and unclear

[Generic-Oriented]: departments' technical generic skills are cultivated in non disciplinary

[Disciplinary-oriented]: departments' technical generic skills are cultivated in disciplinary contexts

[Generic-and-disciplinary-oriented]: departments' technical generic skills are cultivated in both disciplinary and non disciplinary (generic) contexts

[Generic-oriented=Disciplinary-oriented]: departments perceive no boundary between non disciplinary (generic) contexts and disciplinary contexts for generic skill cultivation

## How the academic deans identify future targets of human resources for their graduates

HR* Code	Targeted Human Resources	Definitions	N
1	Broad and Unclear	Departments do not target specific job categories or fields	27
2	Broad and Clear	Departments target either job categories or fields	13
3	Specific	Departments target specific job categories and fields	21

\*HR Code refers to "Human Resources" code

[Broad and unclear]: departments do not target either specific job categories or fields

[Broad and clear]: departments target either job categories or fields

[Specific]: departments target specific job categories and fields

## How academic deans perceive the expected generic skills that their departments reflect in the curriculum

CR* Code	Reflection on Generic Skills in Curriculum	Definitions	N
1	Not reflected	Departments do not reflect expected GSs in the curriculum at all	15
2	Conceptually considered, but not reflected in individual courses	Departments can explain how expected GSs should be linked with characteristics of the overall curriculum at the conceptual level, but do not reflect them in individual courses	19
3	Reflected in individual courses	Departments reflect expected GSs in individual courses with clear goals	27

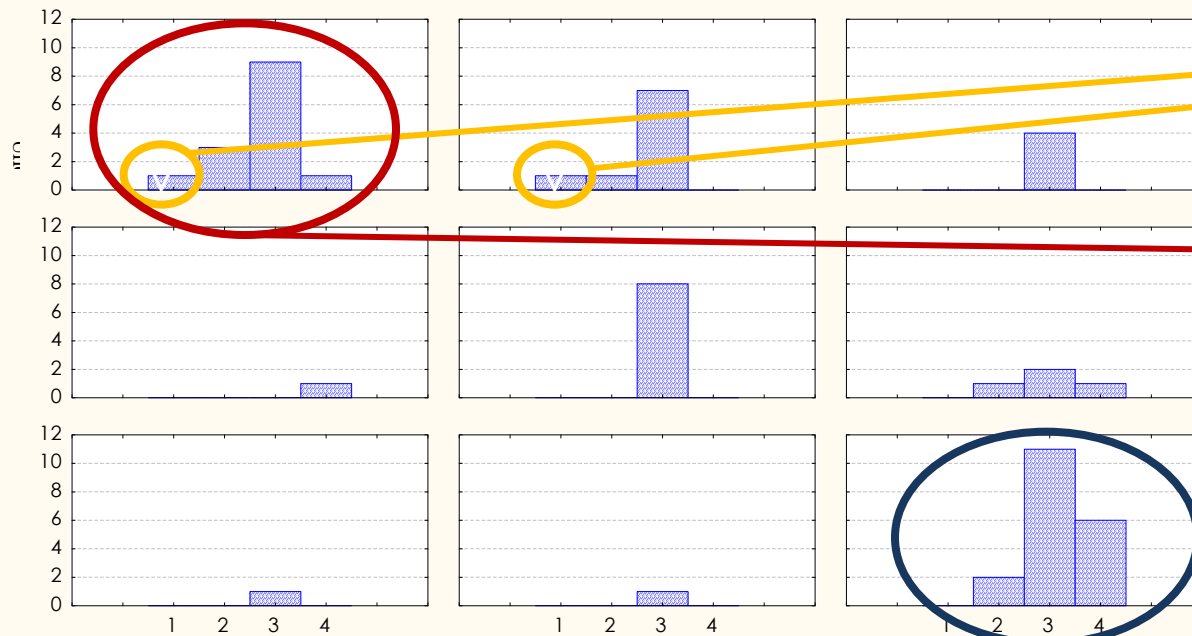
\*CR Code refers to "Curriculum Reflection" code

[Not reflected]: departments do not reflect expected generic skills in the curriculum at all.

[Conceptually considered, but not reflected in individual courses]: departments can explain how expected generic skills should be linked with characteristics of the overall curriculum at the conceptual level, but these skills are not reflected in individual courses

[Reflected in individual courses]: departments reflect expected generic skills in individual courses with clear goals

# [Relationship among Targeted Human Resources, Curriculum Reflection, and Generic Skill Types]



## GS Types

- 1: Fundamental
- 2: Fundamental & Technical not interactive
- 3: Technical
- 4: Fundamental & Technical interactive

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- 1: Fundamental
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- 4: Fundamentals & Technical interactive

1: Not Reflected

2: Conceptually considered, but not reflected in individual courses

3: Reflected to individual courses

## Curriculum Reflection

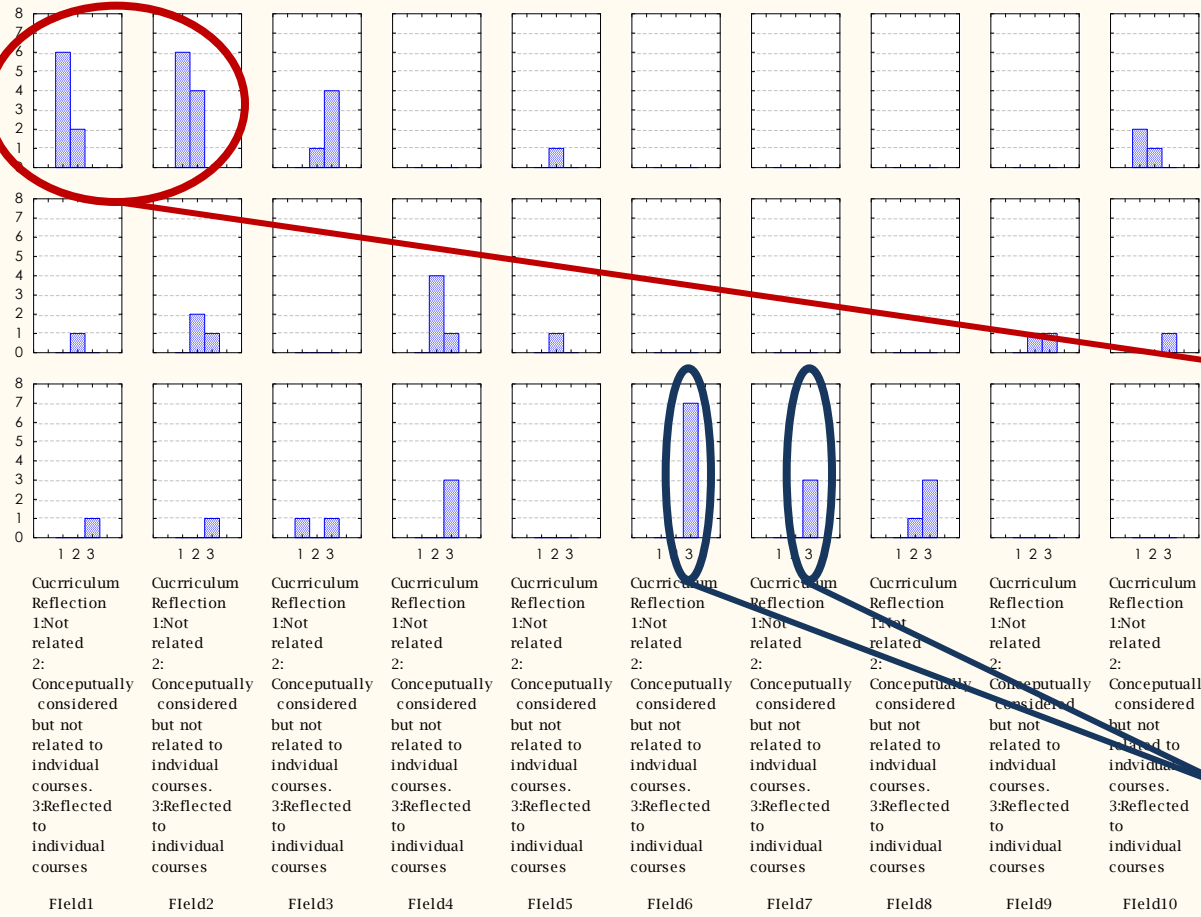
● "Fundamental GS " is observed only when targeted human resources are broad and unclear.

● When targeted human resources are broad and unclear , most departments' technical skills are not reflected to curriculum at all.

● When targeted human resources are specific, many departments emphasize both fundamental and technical generic skills that are interactive with each other ,and also, skills can be reflected to individual courses

- Most departments with clearer targeted human resources -their expected generic skills are technical, which are measurable and can reflect to individual courses .
- Most departments without clear targets that include fundamental generic skills tend not to reflect generic skills in individual courses

# [Relationship between Targeted Human Resources and Curriculum Reflection by Academic Fields]



<Mostly in humanities & social science fields>

- Departments do not have clear targets regarding the kind of human resources that they should cultivate, and do not specify any particular job categories or fields for their graduates

- Departments do not relate expected generic skills to the curriculum at all, or they know how these generic skills should be related to their overall curriculum conceptually, but do not necessarily reflect them in individual courses with clear goals

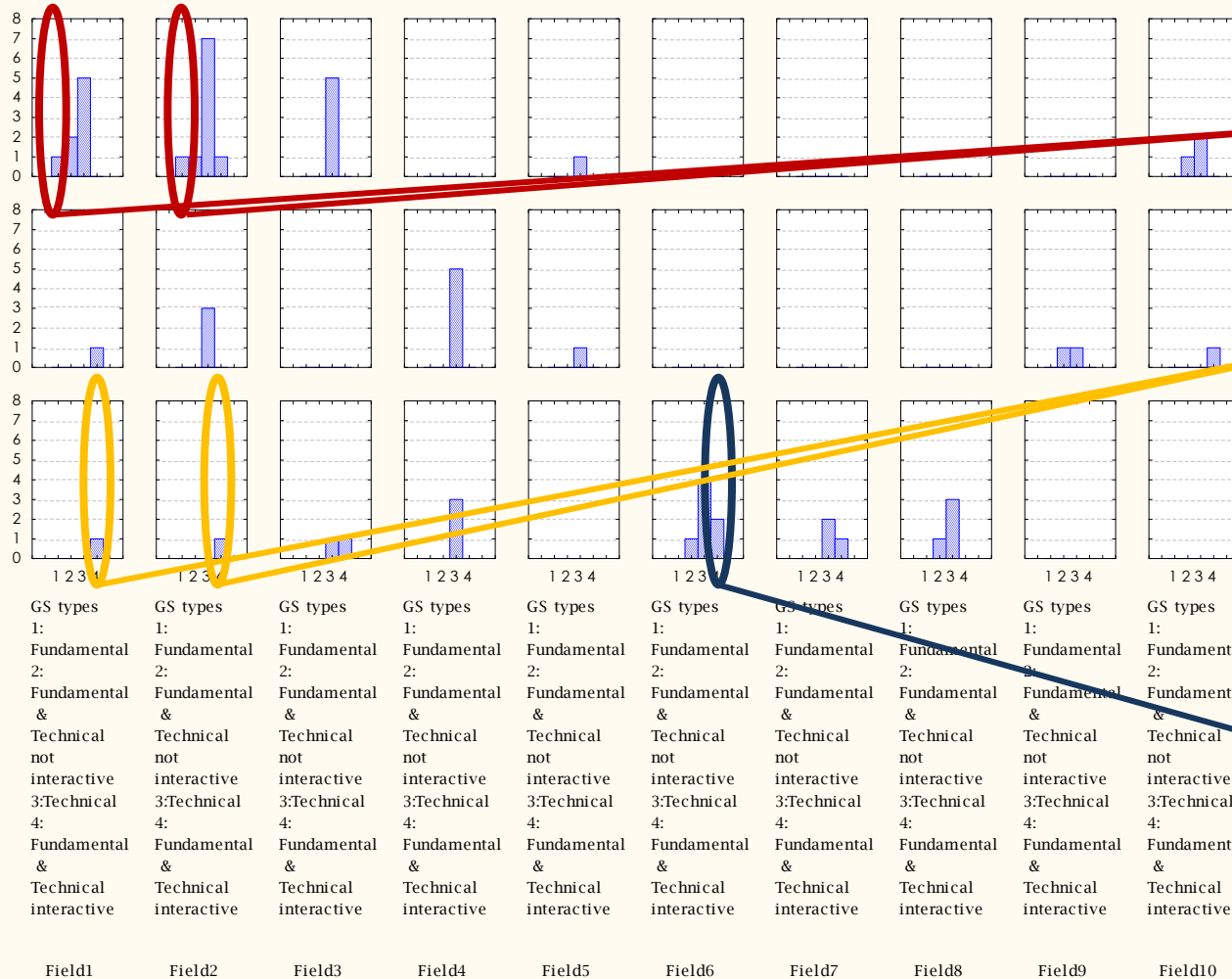
<Mostly in medical and home economics>

- Departments have specific targets for human resources - they relate their expected generic skills to individual courses.

● Whether effective curriculum reflection or not depends on whether department's human targeted resources is specific or not - not depend on academic fields

✓ Most medical & Home economics have specific targeted human resources, on the other hand, most humanities & social science fields don't have.

# [Relationship between Targeted Human Resources and GS Types by Academic Fields]



<Mostly in humanities & social science fields>

- Fundamental generic skills when the departments do not target any job categories or fields for their graduates,
- However, even departments in the same fields provide different GS types.

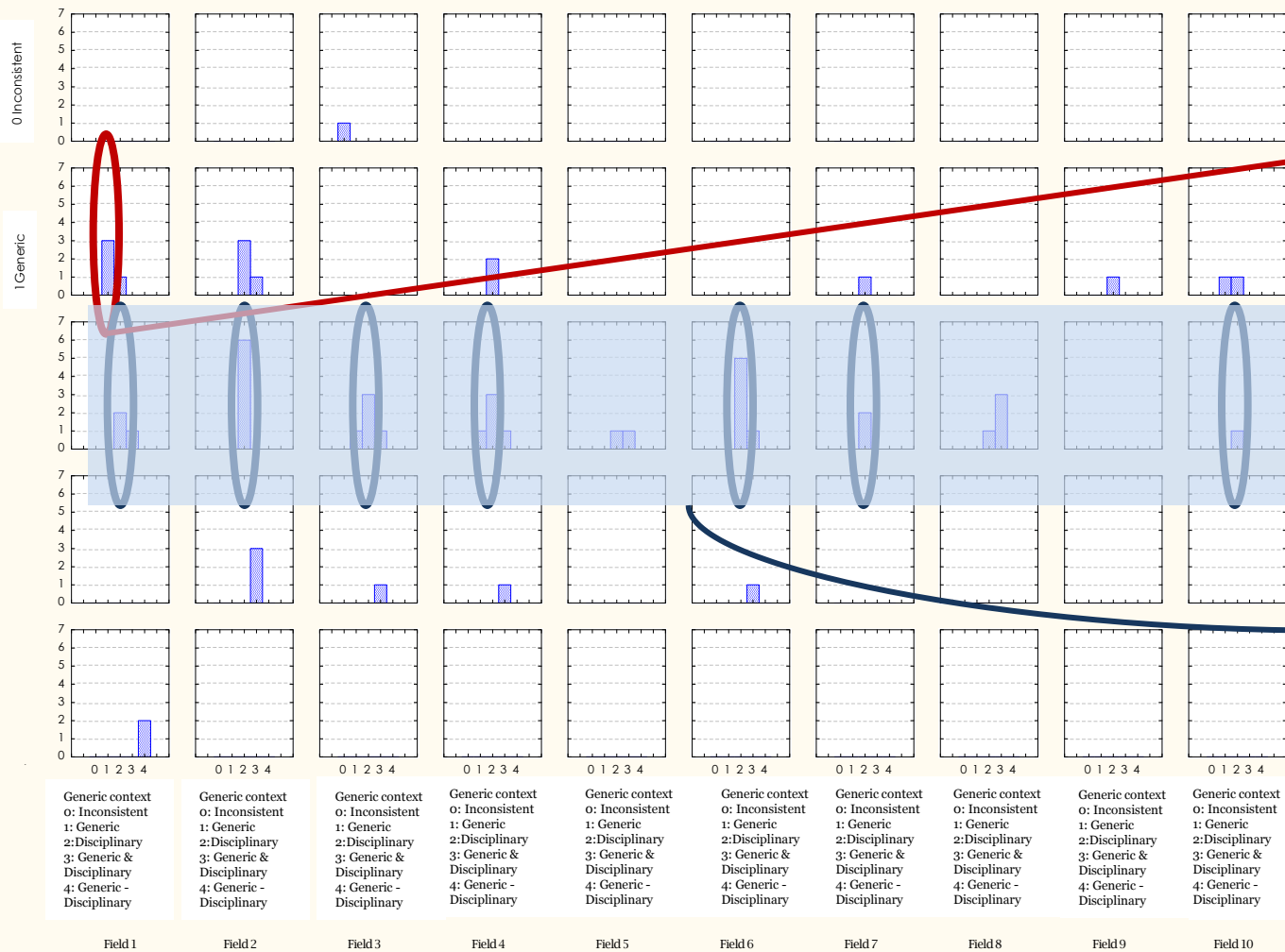
<Mostly in medical and home economics>

- All respondents target specific human resources.
- Fundamental and technical generic skills with interaction with each other

- Generic skills types depends on targeted human resources is specific or not. -not depend on academic fields.



# [Relationship between Technical GS Orientations and Cultivating Contexts



● Generic orientation – generic contexts is mostly in humanities

● Most academic fields are disciplinary orientation – disciplinary context

● Most academic fields are disciplinary orientation – disciplinary context

# Summary of results

## 1. Relationship among Targeted Human Resources, Curriculum Reflection, and Generic Skill Types

- Most departments with clearer targeted human resources -their expected generic skills are technical, which are measurable and can be reflected to individual courses .
- Most departments without clear targets that include fundamental generic skills tend not to reflect generic skills in individual courses

## 2. Relationship between Targeted Human Resources and Curriculum Reflection by Academic Fields

- Whether effective curriculum reflection or not depends on whether department's human targeted resources is specific or not -not depend on academic fields
  - ✓ Most medical & Home economics have specific targeted human resources , on the other hand, most humanities & social science fields don't have.

## 3. Relationship between Targeted Human Resources and GS Types by Academic Fields.

- Generic skills types depends on targeted human resources is specific or not.  
-not depend on academic fields.

## 4. Relationship between Technical GS Orientations and Cultivating Contexts by Academic Fields.

- Most academic fields are disciplinary orientation – disciplinary context

# The key for effective generic skills' cultivating - assessment

Specific targeted human resources – Clear relationship between fundamental and technical generic skills – Individual generic skills reflected to curriculum

Specific targeted human resources

# Is “difficulty of implementing global standards has contributed to an emphasis on national needs and goals” really the reason?

- AHELO's perception only focuses on [REDACTED]

*Patterns of Technical GS Orientations and Contexts of Cultivating GS*

	Technical GS Orientations		Contexts of Cultivating GSs
1	<b>Generic-oriented</b>	1	<b>Generic contexts</b>
2	Disciplinary-oriented	2	Disciplinary contexts
3	Generic- and Disciplinary-oriented	3	Generic and Disciplinary contexts
4	Generic-oriented = Disciplinary-oriented	4	Generic contexts = Disciplinary contexts

 not necessarily explained by the dichotomy of global standardization vs. national needs but rather by **targeted human resources**

- It is necessary for researchers to add a new paradigm in which human resources are a key indicator in the determination of targeted learning outcomes in order to explore the possibility of global standardization.
- The new paradigm will also bring insights on the QA methodologies currently being discussed, including whether accreditation should focus on institutional and programmatic levels or institutional functions.