

Qualifications frameworks for postgraduate education in Europe:

Tensions between global standardization and
the needs of the professional fields

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Trends in European doctoral education

- From national to international
- From curiosity driven to result oriented
- From discipline guided to multidisciplinary research
- From purely academic to also professional
- From national in scope to competitiveness, job creation, and sustainable development on a broader scale

Nerrad, M and Mimi Heggeund eds.(2008) *Toward a Global PhD?* Seattle: University of Washington Press

Outline

- Setting the scene: The Bologna process
 - Qualifications Frameworks
- The outcome based curriculum model:
Some critical comments
- Concluding remark: Walking the tightrope:
Balancing students' interests – academic traditions – profession - the needs of the labour market

New architecture of higher education

- Cycles
- Quality assurance
- Credits (transfer and accumulation)
- Life long learning
- Learning outcomes
- Qualifications frameworks

Qualifications framework: an important instrument to reach the objectives of the Bologna process

The vision

The development of national qualifications framework will provide students with clear indications of what their paths through higher education look like, what levels of knowledge and skills will qualify them for degree awards, and what their degrees mean.

Adelman, C. (2008): Learning Accountability from Bologna: A Higher Education Policy Primer. Issue Brief. Institute for Higher Education Policy, July 2008, Washington.

Bergen Communiqué (2005)

-doctoral level qualifications need to be fully aligned with the EHEA overarching framework for qualifications using the outcomes-based approach. The core component of doctoral training is the advancement of knowledge through original research. ... We urge universities to ensure that their doctoral programmes promote interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills, thus meeting the needs of the wider employment market . (p.4).

Qualifications frameworks

- European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
 - Facilitate mobility and lifelong learning (8 levels)
- Bologna Qualifications Framework
 - Dublin Descriptors (3 plus 1 level)
- National Qualifications Framework
- *Learning outcome... is a written statement of what the successful student/learner is expected to be able to do at the end of the module/course unit, or qualification.*

EHEA Framework – Third cycle

Qualifications that signify completion of **the third cycle** are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;
- have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;
- have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;
- are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas; can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;
- can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.

EQF for life long learning

| | Knowledge | Skills | Competence |
|---|--|---|---|
| The learning outcomes relevant to level 8 are: | Knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and the interface between fields | The most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice | Demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research |

Qualifications frameworks – a successful story so far?

The “deadline to have completed the implementation of NQFs for higher education by 2010 appears to have been too ambitious. Measuring success against the expectations for 2010, the picture is now less optimistic than it was in 2007 ..developing and describing learning outcomes is one of the greatest challenges that the EHEA will face over the next few years. ...It seems that there is not enough integration at national level between the qualifications framework, learning outcomes and ECTS.... In attempting to improve their practice on each individual indicator, many countries continued to pursue these action lines separately. ...

(Bologna process *Stocktaking* Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve 2009, p 7 and p. 41)

Qualifications frameworks: Towards curriculum standardization?

- Curriculum issues that used to be dealt with on an institutional or professional level have become political issues on a national and international level.
- The underlying curriculum assumption represents a critique of a content driven curriculum approach.
- Emphasis on learning outcome, employability and mobility

Critical comments

- The attempt to develop qualifications frameworks at a national and European level fits well with an outcome driven curriculum model based on a strong utilitarian ethos.
- The idea of qualifications frameworks based on measurable learning outcomes represents a turn towards an instrumental curriculum approach which stands in a sharp contrast to Humboldt's ideals.
- It represents a standardization where all qualifications of importance need to "fit within the columns". "Columnialisation"
- We may ask whether the idea of a qualifications framework takes the distinctiveness of sites of learning or epistemological constraints into account.
- A new instrumentalism or "Much Ado about Nothing"?

Karseth, Berit (2008): Qualifications frameworks for the European Higher Education Area: an new instrumentalism or 'Much Ado about Nothing'? *Learning and Teaching*; Vol. 1.(2) s. 77-101

Qualifications - whom is to decide?

- Academic tribes
- Higher education institutions
- State
- The profession
- Student market
- Industry
- Global and international actors



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EAFP European Association
of Faculties of Pharmacy