

Bologna process seminar on Qualifications' frameworks

“Recognition and Qualifications' frameworks”

Conclusions of the Discussion group

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1. The role of recognition is essential with a view of reaching the goals of Bologna process. This role has changed from just a procedure for acknowledgement of diplomas to evaluation of a foreign qualification to aimed at finding its right path in the host country's education or employment system.

2. To properly place a foreign qualification in another country's system, the focus of credential evaluation shifts from input characteristics, which may vary in different countries and higher education institutions, towards learning outcomes and competencies earned.

3. While the main accent at learning outcomes rather than duration of studies and other input characteristics was fully acknowledged in the Lisbon Recognition Convention and especially in its subsidiary texts, until recently there were very few attempts in Europe to start describing qualifications in terms of learning outcomes. For this reason, so far credential evaluators could only attempt to estimate the learning outcomes knowing the duration and contents of programme. The two main present transparency tools are ECTS, which allows to replace study time with workload and Diploma supplement, which, among other useful characteristics of the qualification, requires indication of the rights that the qualification gives to the holder for further studies or employment in that country where the qualification has been issued.

4. The new initiatives such as JQI, Tuning, national qualifications' frameworks, leading to a description of the level, workload, learning outcomes and profiles of qualifications stimulate recognition and they should be further promoted.

It is however recommended that the different efforts and especially the cross border ones are in some way coordinated to avoid different definitions of the same issues or creation of different jargon that may lead to confusion.

5. The outcomes of the new initiatives could and should be mounted into the Diploma supplement. Amending diploma supplement rather than attempts to replace it with results of the new initiatives is also justified by the proven usefulness of the Diploma Supplement and longstanding and costly efforts to introduce it in many European countries.

6. National qualifications' frameworks are powerful transparency tools; therefore development of such qualification frameworks in all the Bologna process countries could be encouraged by the Berlin ministerial meeting.

7. The examples of already existing National qualifications' frameworks, however, demonstrate how different these frameworks can be in different educational systems.

An overarching EHEA qualifications' framework should therefore be created to:

- provide an overall model for and guide all the national frameworks,
- serve as a device for translation of the information about qualifications from one national system to another.

8. It seems feasible to start creation of the European qualifications' framework now, even if minority of European countries have elaborated their qualifications' frameworks at present. It is expected that work at a European qualifications framework should, clarify many issues, stimulate development of national qualifications' frameworks.

9. Due to the wide diversity of European higher education systems, a need to assign levels to credits has become evident. When elaborating the eventual European qualifications' framework, this issue should be taken on board.

10. The cooperation between qualifications' networks, quality assurance and recognition in the long run could work according to the following scheme:

National Qualifications' Frameworks

describe qualifications in terms of level, workload and learning outcomes,

Quality assurance mechanisms

confirm that the programs provide education that, if completed, will lead to these learning outcomes. Ultimately, the recognition authorities will assess person's qualifications in order to verify that an individual has attained the stipulated learning outcomes.

European Qualifications' framework

- provides an overall model for and guides the national frameworks,
- is used to translate information between national QF

11. As a result, ***Credentials' evaluators***

- easily find information on level and quality of the foreign qualification
- use European qualifications' framework to interpret the orientation, profile and main learning outcomes of the foreign qualification
- **devote most of their effort to find the right path for the foreign qualification in host country's education and/or employment system.**