



Developing a National Qualifications Framework The Experience of Hungary

Eva Gonczi

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
HIGHER EDUCATION FORUM

Strasbourg 11-12 October 2007

How the Issues of the Day Relate to Hungary?

Hungary

- did not have an NQF before the Bologna goals were set
- has continental traditions in HE
- has undergone major changes in all economic and social aspects as well as HE

Main challenges: the complexity of the tasks, sequencing the process (from piloting to full implementation), pace – 2010?

Context to Framework Developments

New and ambitious targets

- a new public service contract with higher education institutions
- respecting the diversity of institutions
- the demand for quality
- increased international competition for qualified human resources
- the promotion of effective lifelong learning strategies and methods.

Responses to New Challenges

- A tendency to move towards outcome and competence-based approaches, modularization, emphasising learners' needs as well as economic and social expectation in public and vocational education
- A similar but somewhat slower process in higher education – more scepticism – what will the process bring for the sector?
- **The Bologna trigger** - Framework development: a unique opportunity to review and possibly re-design qualifications and the whole qualification system.

Stocktaking

6

- „A proposal for a national QF in line with the overarching QF for
- EHEA has been discussed with all relevant stakeholders at the
- national level and a timetable for implementation has been agreed.”

Preparation

- A proposal for „Joining the European Higher Education Area”, 2002
- Closely linked with the introduction of the three cycle system in HE (only new programmes as of 2006)
- Co-ordination: National Bologna Committee (HE institutions, Rectors Conference, QA Agency, Ministry, employers repr., students, etc.), – Working Group for HE Qualifications Framework
- **Latest development:** HE group is also linked to a larger committee to develop a NQF for LLL .
- Discussion with stakeholders
- **Main target groups:**
 - Students
 - HE institutions
 - Industry

Discussion Papers

- Disseminated to all stakeholders (learners, education providers, government agencies, employers, business sector, trade unions, community groups, professional organizations)
- An ongoing consultation - however, very uneven response – perhaps too early, more awareness raising needed
- An international process – a study of what is available in the diversity of QFs and involvement of experts
- Advantages and challenges of adapting methodologies from countries with a fully-fledged NQF
- Timetable – implementation plan

Aims of the Framework

- Provide information for end users (employers, parents, institutions, potential students) on the conditions for obtaining an award and the actual content of a qualification;
- Support international comparability of standards with special regard to EU membership and the EHEA;
- Assist student choice by informing students about possible routes of progression also within the context of LLL;
- Give guidance to the higher education institutions in defining their own academic standards and the external evaluation bodies (e.g. Accreditation Board) in defining points of reference for conducting external evaluation.

Understanding the Concept

- Conceptual foundation of NQF (levels, outcome based level indicators, credits expressed in learning outcomes) and the relationship of the different elements – some work has been done but ...
- **Main message:** a shift from standardized content, organization and delivery of qualifications, emphasizing learning outcomes in describing units, modules and whole qualifications
- Explicit reference points - learning outcomes and competencies, levels, outcome focused level descriptors
- The regulatory function – a publicly regulated system

Issues

- How to achieve clarity and consistency to improve transparency and quality?
- How will the framework be linked to standards, internal and external reference points, national and institutional quality assurance systems?
- How to achieve public understanding of the achievements represented by different qualifications to achieve public confidence in standards?
- How to support multiple pathways and flexibility across the system (Currently an issue for the development of Second Cycle Programmes)?

Components

Cycles and Levels

Description of end of cycle achievements:

- Do these reflect our very complex HE system? (Probably not)
- A system in transition: a tool is needed to define and place qualifications between cycles
- An expert group to address the issue of qualifications that may not reach the end of a cycle (specializations)
- Legislation: formal aspects, admission requirements navigation in the system, etc.
- Implementing regulations: the framework will replace a lot of the current regulations and make the system much more transparent and flexible.

Credits and Workload

- Credit ranges compatible with EHEA framework
- A process of (re)defining individual qualifications and the programmes leading up to them in modules, units, and whole programmes
- The length of existing first and second cycle qualifications and its implications for the qualifications framework – some will need modifications.

Profile

- **Approach:** no distinction between academic and professional tracks in the first and second cycle on the national level. It is understood that programmes may have different orientation and expressed in the subject benchmarks, which is also reflected by credit ranges (e.g. programmes with a professional bias may have more credits allocated for practical training elements).
- **Short cycle:** linked to the first cycle but „officially” not yet part of the framework as yet.

Level Descriptors

- Based on the Dublin Descriptors but more detailed:
- Main types of LOs
 - Type 1 a list of general level specific descriptors characteristic of students' **knowledge and understanding** on the given level.
 - Type 2: **Application of knowledge:** a set of descriptors of how one can apply the acquired knowledge and understanding in various contexts.
 - Type 3 describes more **general competencies** that can be expected of a typical student at the given level including communications, skills, learning skills, critical assessment and decision making.

Implementation

Preparation	Discussion paper on purposes National Consultation and consensus building	NBB Working Group Rectors' Conference
Design	Design and adoption of cycle descriptors + other components for 1st and 2nd cycle	National and int. experts All stakeholders
Piloting	A selection of new First Cycle degrees, Criteria for linking qualifications to the NQF	Subject Specific Working Groups + QA Agency
Development of Award Types	Specializations (within and between cycles)	NBB Working Group + subject specific groups



Implementation

Develop and Adopt Subject Benchmark Statements	Designing LOs for all Subjects for First Cycle Degrees	NBB Working Group + subject specific groups + QA Agency
Legal Framework, Link Qualifications to the Framework	Design Ministerial Decree for Qualification Standards/ Requirements Register	Ministry + NBB + Rectors' Conference + QA Agency
Self-Certification of Compatibility	Discuss and adopt criteria, conduct process, write report	Ministry, NBB + QA Agency

However....

There is still a long way!

- All programmes (units, modules) leading to the new degrees, should be (re)designed to be linked to the framework...
- ...along with credit transfer and accumulation systems
- Curriculum design, approaches to teaching, learning and student assessment should also reflect the new approach
- Internal and external quality assurance processes should be linked to the framework with efforts to avoid reductionism
- The need for a critical debate in the implementation process.

„Mini” Tuning Project

- Two main components:
- Analysis of the existing first cycle degrees in 7 subject areas
- Focus is on the development of new 2nd cycle degrees
- Three phases:
 - a review and critical analysis of the outcome requirements of existing first cycle degrees
 - recommendations from international best practice
 - involvement of labour market representatives

The role of the project in implementing NQF

European level

EHEA cycle descriptors (Dublin descriptors)

National level

the generic descriptors for each cycle/level defined in terms of learning outcomes, competencies and credit ranges in the national qualifications framework

Subject Area, discipline level

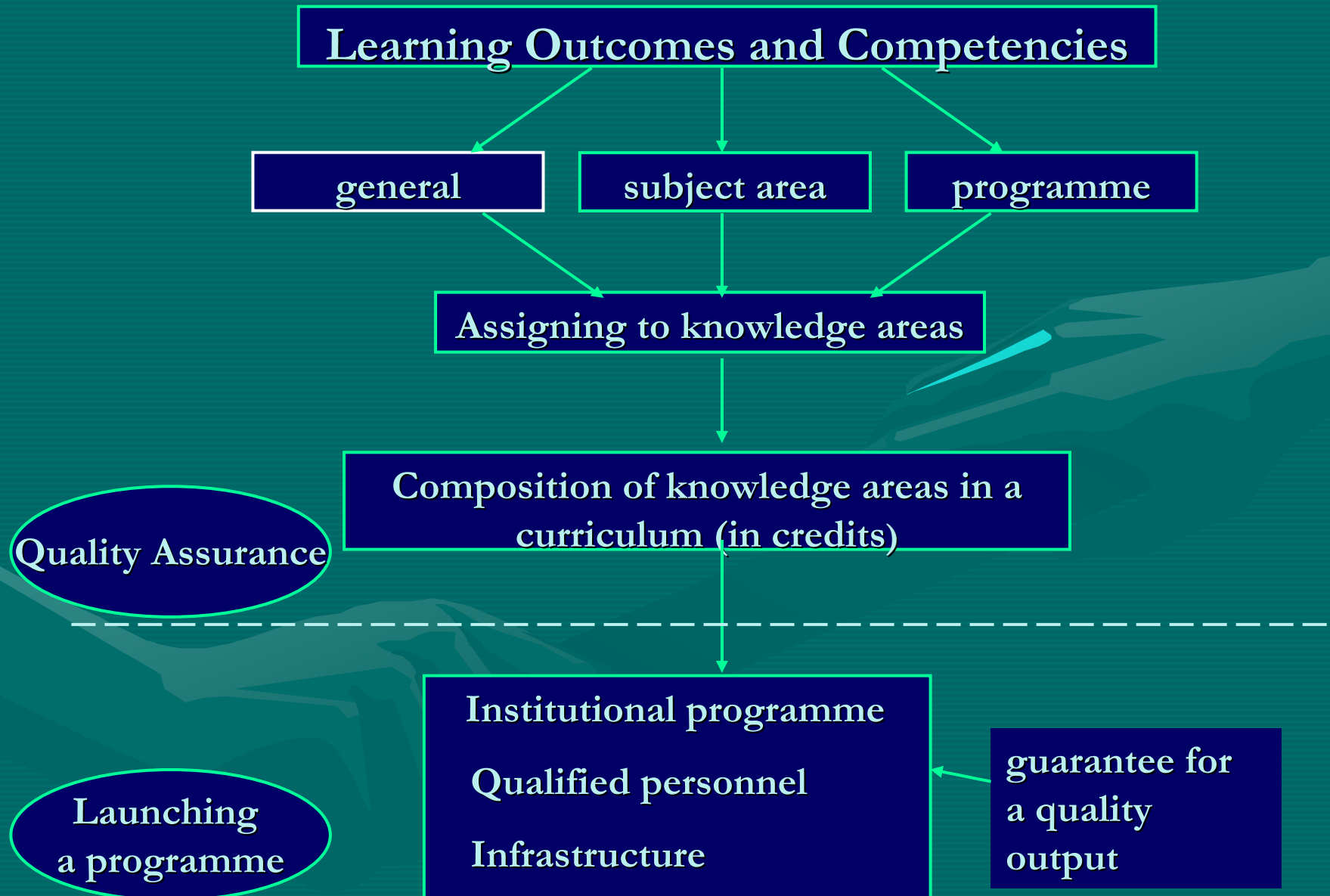
qualification statements expressed in learning outcomes for the different study areas

Programme level

learning outcomes for the individual qualifications

learning outcomes for the given programme component (module, unit, etc.)

Towards a HE Qualifications Framework – the Institutions



Learning Outcomes in Hungarian Higher Education

- A relatively new philosophy, recognized as a building block of a new vision of HE – but only sporadic use
- Very closely linked with autonomy and accountability issues
- Require new institutional structures, organizations, planning mechanisms
- „Trainer training”
- Further incentives: e.g. Joint degrees
- Implementation calls for close co-operation between the institutions and the QA Agency in developing new evaluation criteria.

Higher Education and Other Sectors

The EQF Proposal

- Government decision to design and implement a NQF for Lifelong Learning
- Learning outcomes are becoming in the focus of attention (not least as a result of international frames of reference)
- Huge differences between the sectors, HE will benefit a lot from co-operating with other sectors (e.g. in the recognition of prior learning)

Ways Forward

- We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

