

Using Learning Outcomes The Hungarian Case

Policies and Programmes

Edinburgh, 1-2 July, 2004

The European Dimensions

The Bologna Process

- A strong impetus for higher education reform
- A Commitment to create *‘the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world’*.
- A joint effort to create the **European Higher Education Area by 2010.**

Priorities in the Berlin Communiqué:

‘Ministers emphasise the importance of all elements of the Bologna Process for establishing the European Higher Education Area and stress the need to intensify the efforts at institutional, national and European level. However, to give the Process further momentum, they commit themselves to intermediate priorities for the next two years. They will strengthen their efforts to promote effective quality assurance systems, recognition systems of degrees and period of study.’ (para.2)

How Learning Outcomes may contribute to the Bologna Process?

Challenges for Hungary

Hungarian “Universitas” Programme

Hungarian higher education faces a significant transformation process. The changes will affect **several areas**: the course structure, the research activity, the role of the state in higher education, including the structure of state funding, and the management of the institutions. The planned changes are also aimed at supporting lifelong learning and a closer co-operation between higher education and the economy.

The main aim: Hungary must shortly have a system of higher education that by making the best use of its resources will be able to contribute to the country's effective integration into the community of developed countries, and at the same time will also serve the construction of a knowledge-based society.

The objectives of the planned reform are:

- to create a framework for a modern course structure that will also be able to better react to demands of the labour market;
- to provide higher education institutions with sufficient public funding taking into account budgetary constraints and democratic (equal) access rights;
- to create more favourable conditions for private involvement in funding higher education;
- to endow institutions with sufficient flexibility to make use of the rapidly expanding service market more effectively;
- to create the conditions for the development and the support of excellence and the possibility of long-term planning for such support;

Objectives Continued:

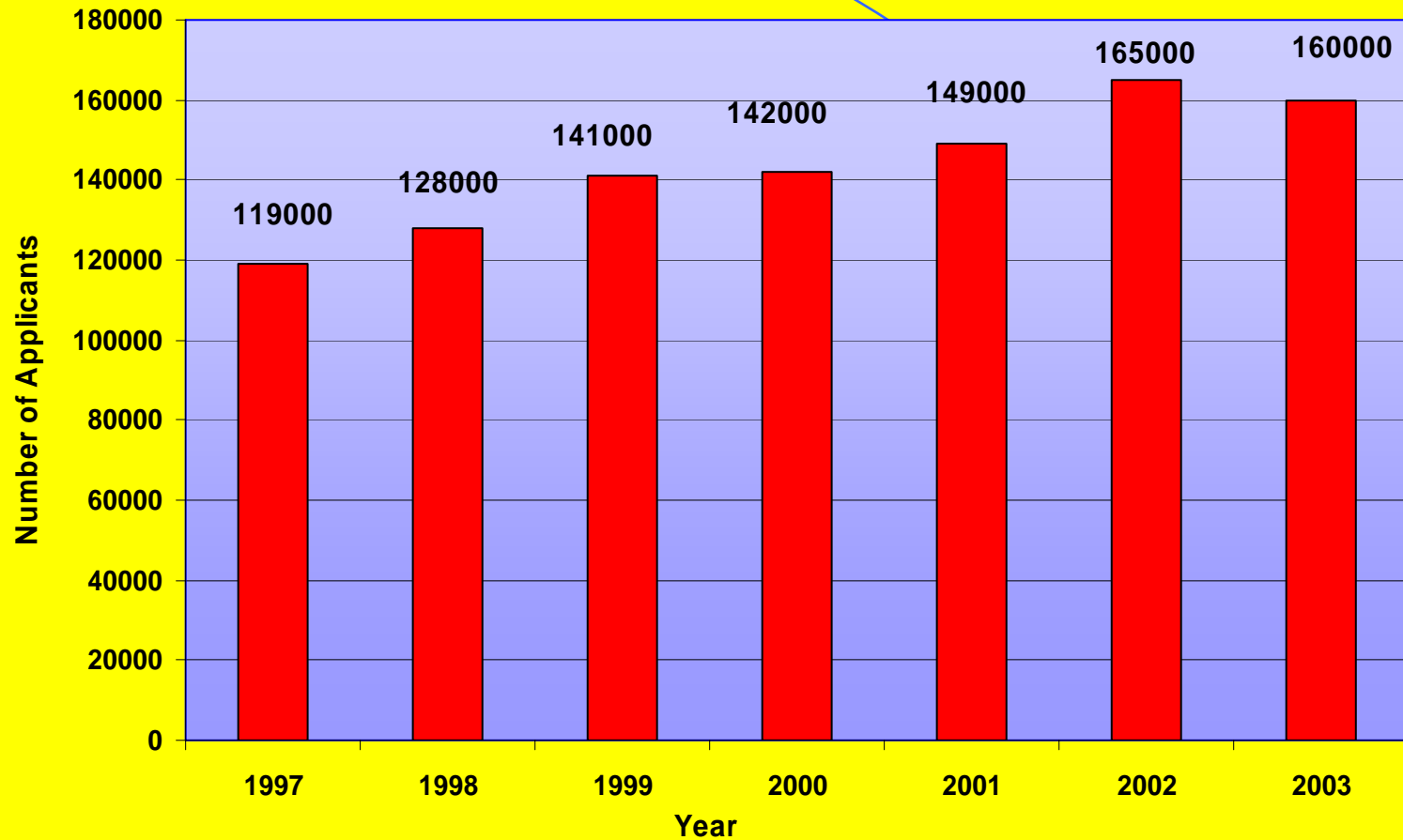
- In order to achieve the above to make institutional management structure capable of reacting to both the variable needs of the given institution and the expectations of the society. To this end effective decision making and advanced administration and financial management capacity are required;
- to create a funding system that makes the accounting of public money effective and transparent;
- to increase the research sources of higher education institutions and improve their independent, transparent use.

Challenges: Issues of quantity and quality

- levels of participation in higher education
- the content and the quality of learning

Main challenge: expansion of the past few years

Number of Applicants to Higher Education 1997-2003



Background Studies in Support of Programme Design

Conclusions of the Analysis

Qualification systems are important for determining selection, the setting of standards and empowering students

One of the causes of the weaknesses in the system is the divided system itself, that is, having totally separate academic and vocational tracks leading to separate qualifications.

Weaknesses of the divided system:

- inherited assumptions that the economy requires the separation of mental and manual labour, which provides the justification for academic/vocational division
- the system is dominated by selection – the problem is to increase both the quantity and quality of participation
- it is inflexible in that it separates students into different academic and vocational tracks and hinders movements and transfer between them
- it hinders innovative combinations that can link theoretical and applied studies.
- It exaggerates the differences between high and low prestige institutions and programmes and reinforces the process of educational stratification

Recommendation:

- Review the education system as a whole (public and vocational, lifelong learning)
- Re-examine the divide between vocational and academic needs and create a unified system of qualifications that will gradually bridge the division between education and training.
- The implication of a unified system of qualifications should be considered at the level of curriculum practice.

Important Aspects

- Whether the curriculum that was established when at most 10% continued in education, is appropriate when at least 35-40% are expected to continue at least for three years after 18.
- Whether existing participation on the basis of existing curricula, even when it is possible, would provide students with the kind of skills and knowledge that are necessary in the likely circumstances of the twenty first century.
- Learner independence – the empowerment of students
- New methods of student assessment are required

Implications for the curriculum

A unified curriculum will not separate the preparation of students for employment from the wider role of preparing them to become citizens in a democratic society.

- Instead of having separate academic and vocational courses, the curriculum should consist of a range of theoretical and applied modules within a single system of bachelors. Students will be able to choose from a number of routes or pathways
- A move towards a more integrative form of specialization with the possibility of developing new connective skills and understanding and the ability to innovate and to apply and use learning in different contexts.
- A shift from teaching to learning

National Qualification Framework

Criteria:

„Within such frameworks, degrees should have different defined outcomes. First and second cycle degrees should have different orientations and various profiles in order to accommodate a diversity of individual, academic and labour market needs. First cycle degrees should give access, in the sense of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, to second cycle programmes. Second cycle degrees should give access to doctoral studies.”

(Berlin Communiqué 2003, page 4.)

2003 - with the adoption of the two cycle system a decision was made in Hungary to design and introduce a Qualification Framework.

Aims of the qualification framework

The Qualification Framework is intended to be a **point of reference**, though also with a formal purpose. The framework will serve also as a tool for the academic community to describe the main features of a degree in the given study area. It lays down the **general criteria of competencies** required for obtaining a higher education award in each cycle against which those that wish to hold such an award will have to demonstrate their **achievements**. The framework may serve different functions. It is primarily an important frame of reference for higher education institutions, when a new degree programme is being planned and designed. The main purposes are:

- 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 accession 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.

Main features

- The cycles to be defined are: **Bachelor**, **Master** and **Doctoral Studies**, though short cycles degrees are also taken into account.
- The framework will define **learning outcomes** to be attached to each cycle, type and programme, clearly indicating the differences between each level.
- The first level of the framework will define the different types of higher education qualifications that are acknowledged by the state and issued by the higher education institution. Generic descriptors are being applied (on the basis of the Dublin descriptors) for each type. The descriptors are of three classes:
 - The first section contains the learning outcomes of the educational process that students who wish to hold the degree will have to achieve Those are mainly for institutions and bodies planning, conducting and evaluating degree programmes
 - The second section describes more general competencies that can be expected of a typical student at the given level. This information is most important for employers.

Features Continued

- The next level will describe different types of awards in each cycle according to academic fields (mostly based on the ISCED classification). Guidelines for the preparation of the different types have been provided by the National Bologna Board, the frameworks themselves will be developed by the professional groups in each academic field.
- On the third level Institutions will adjust their own curricula to the framework and issue the Diploma Supplement that will give sufficient information on all the academic and professional competencies gained by obtaining a certain award.
- **The descriptors** that define qualification levels describe **output requirements**. It is the responsibility of the institution how the students will achieve those results. Credit values can be attached to each level. For the generic description of the different cycles the law will define the minimum credits required for gaining an award.

Guidelines for Level 2

output requirements for Bachelor programmes by academic fields

- Entry points with conditions of entry
- description and minimum credits for joint foundation courses (three types of indicators)
- the level of the qualification that can be gained in the given subject/field of study with minimum credits to be gained
- minimum credits to be gained for a specialization of the student's choice. (national minimum 5% of total credits)
- theoretical and practical studies (the minimum percentage of practical subjects)
- practical training (traineeship) outside the institution
- aims and objectives of the programme

Guidelines Continued

- A description of professional competencies to be acquired with regard to the description of the Bachelor cycle (outcomes that describe those who wish to succeed in gaining a qualification in the given subject./study field - again three main classes of descriptors)
- A list and short annotation of the core material/subject areas most relevant for the qualification - no national minimum, institutional responsibility
- foreign language requirements as a condition for stepping up at each milestone and for gaining a degree

How learning outcomes are understood in the HQF?

- A learning outcome is a written statement of what the successful student/learner is expected to be able to do/demonstrate at the end of the qualification.
- **Competencies** and skills include ‘knowing and understanding’ (theoretical knowledge of an academic field, the capacity to know and understand), ‘knowing how to act’ (practical and operational application of knowledge to certain situations), „knowing how to be” (values as an integral element of the way of perceiving and living with others and in a social context) similarly to the Tuning Project and the Dublin Descriptors.

Advantages of having a QF

- Descriptors are planned to be fairly generic.
- The QF is not meant to prescribe details in terms of the content of the curriculum (unlike the qualification requirements that are in use).
- The framework will allow the institution adequate flexibility in designing their programmes in the given study fields to be adjusted to the special features of the institution.
- It will promote innovation in the education programmes within a frame agreed by all academic and awarding bodies.
- Needs of further professional education and training will also be considered. The descriptors for the different levels may provide points of reference for placing the qualifications of short cycle programmes at a certain level of the framework
- Quality assurance - learning outcomes increase transparency and the comparability of standards between and within qualifications
- It promotes all types of mobility

Challenges

- The use of credits to quantify learning outcomes - no direct links with learning outcomes,
- Implications for curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment - a very long and time-consuming process,
- The process assumes close co-operation and consensus between all stakeholders,
- How learning outcomes link into accreditation.

Programmes and Networking

To promote co-operation among institutions focusing on projects of common concern a network will be established:

- to take on different forms of collaboration, such as exchanges of electronic mail, joint development of curriculum components, or teaching modules, preparation of teaching material, development of educational innovation, exchanges of students and teaching staff,
- Gradual grouping of partnerships into a network for the large-scale dissemination of the results of the co-operation,
- Further support is provided by the Human Resources Operative Programme of NDP.

Programme Focus

Special attention will be devoted to:

- Bachelor Programmes
- Short cycle qualifications - efforts to enhance the status and content of vocational programmes
- Teacher education (with special emphasis on the teaching of languages)
- Distance education (building on the assumption that Technology will have a major impact on communications across European educational frontiers)