

From the Romanian National Framework of Qualifications to the implementation of Bologna Process – Romanian realities

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Abstract— The hereby research paper presents, from a theoretical and analytical perspective, the problems related to the setting up and developing of the European qualification meta-framework that facilitates the relation and the communication among national qualification specialists, who guarantee the transfer, transparency and acknowledgement of qualifications within the European area.

At the same time, the paper presents, in detail, the specific elements of the Romanian National Framework of Qualifications as concerns: implementation, structure, characteristics, level of education and training, qualification levels. The presentation perspective is theoretical, descriptive and analytical.

Keywords— European framework of certification, national framework of certification, implementation directives, educational system, levels of the education system.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE liberalization of the educational market at European and global level, the acknowledgement of the graduates' qualifications on the labour market (with a view to achieving the European unique workforce market and guaranteeing free circulation of people in the European area, within a knowledge-based economy), the fast insertion of graduates on the labour market (cutting down the induction period at the job place for the graduates who become employees), globalisation of the higher education – seen as an essential condition for the competitiveness of national economies are some of the major preoccupations of the last decade, preoccupations that materialized, at the level of the European Union, in the occurrence of some regional instruments, such as: **The European Qualification Framework** (whose purpose is the facilitation of employment or of study enrolling in other European country by harmonising the national qualification systems), **Europass** (substantiates the acknowledgement process of qualifications and competences throughout Europe), **The European System of Transferable Credits** (it creates a common basis for the formal acknowledgement of the study periods).

II. THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK - ARGUMENTATION, POLITICAL SUBSTANTIATION.

The development and the implementation of EQF are aimed at the continuous learning process which implies the

reconsideration of the education systems, professional training and learning in Europe. The operational target is the correlation of qualifications by means of the national frameworks, with the results of learning specific to the EQF levels.

Why the European Qualifications Framework? Here are several answers which turn into some problems and challenges that impose/give arguments for the existence of EQF that it attempts at answering:

- the process of lifelong learning represents a necessity in Europe, characterised by scientific, technological, economic and social rapid changes;
- the urgent need of continuous updating of knowledge, general skills and competences;
- the necessity of lifelong learning;
- the existence of institutional barriers within EU, a fact that limits the efficient use of knowledge and competences already acquired, fails to recognise the acquired competences in another country or in another type of institution;
- lack of transparency of qualifications;
- the reluctant attitude towards recognition of 'foreign' qualifications;
- lack of international agreements that should make it easier for the citizens to have their qualifications recognised, qualifications gained in different learning contexts or in different educational institutions;
- the current tendency of considering the knowledge acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts (for example during working activity) to be inferior to the knowledge acquired in the formal education context.
- starting from the above-mentioned arguments, the European Qualifications Framework is conceived and described as a meta-framework that facilitates the relations and the communication between frameworks and national and sectoral systems. Its role is to facilitate the transfer, transparency and recognition of qualifications – understood as results of assessed learning and certified by an authorised system at national and sectoral level.

We hereby present a short overview of the important moments that played an important role in the setting-up of EQF.

Even since 2003, the drawing up and implementation of a European Qualifications Framework was required by the decision-makers in the political field at European level, but also by the employers. Its purpose is the consolidation of the

relationships between the national frameworks, as well as supporting lifelong learning. As we find out from the official papers, The Interim Report of the Council (for Education) and of the Commission (February 2004) regarding the implementation of the Work Programme 'Education and Professional Training 2010' regards it as a priority to draw up a European Qualifications Framework, as a common reference which facilitates and promote transparency, transfer and recognition of qualifications and competences at European level. In the Maastricht News Release (December 14, 2004) regarding the future priorities of the European cooperation consolidated in the field of professional training(VET), the ministers responsible for VET in the participating countries, the European social partners and the Commission agreed to give priority to drawing up a European Qualifications Framework in order to support the facilitation of transfer possibilities and recognition of qualifications in the VET system and of the general Education (secondary and higher education).

The documents approved of during the inter-ministerial conference at Bergen (May 2005) for the higher education (phase of the Bologna project) support the adoption of " The European Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education".

III. NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS OF EQF: COMMON ANALYSIS POINTS FOR THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

The minute analysis of the specific of the National Frameworks in the countries of Europe led to the following common ideas for the European area.

- Lifelong learning represents a necessity;
- The particularities of the Qualifications Framework at the level of the participating countries are active endeavours starting with 2006;
- The thing they all have in common is the desire to debate on the topic of the increasing complexity of modern systems of education, training and learning.

- The main purpose of the Certification National Frameworks is to clarify (for pupils and students, parents, education providers, economic entrepreneurs and decision-makers) the main routes in order to gain a certain qualification, how to advance in a professional route, at what extent a transfer of learning results is possible and on what grounds the decisions regarding the acknowledgment of qualifications are made.

- The Qualifications Frameworks are also used in order to ensure quality, and, consequently, the development at local, regional, sectoral and national level.

- There is noticed the necessity of communication between the qualifications frameworks in other countries. This is due to the fact that the freedom of movement of those who work and those who learn is increasing, which makes it possible that the citizens benefit from education and professional training in different countries.

- We can see that most of the European countries take in the idea of the eight-level structure (each level is based on level descriptors, competences)

Generally, the European countries try to accomplish a correlation between their own qualifications systems – starting with the peculiarities of national educational and professional training systems – The European Qualifications Framework.

A. Level definition descriptors for the range of qualifications

As we can notice from the below table, the eight levels cover the entire range of qualifications, from those obtained at the end of the mandatory education to those granted at the highest university and professional level or within the professional education and training. As it can be noticed (see Table 1 Level definition descriptors established by the European Competency Framework), each of the 8 levels is defined by a set of descriptors.

What are descriptors? What is their role? These descriptors indicate the learning results relevant for the qualifications at the respective level in any qualification system, as it results from the below: (cf. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture)

Table 1. Level definition descriptors established by CEC

| | | KNOWLEDGE | ABILITIES | COMPETENCES |
|---------|---|---|--|--|
| | | Within CEC, knowledge is described as being theoretical and/or factual. | Within CEC, abilities are described as being cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments). | Within CEC, a competence is described from the point of view of responsibility and autonomy. |
| LEVEL 1 | The learning results corresponding to Level 1 are: | Basic general knowledge | Basic abilities required to carry out simple tasks | Work or study under direct surveillance in a structured context |

| | | | | |
|---------|---|--|---|--|
| LEVEL 2 | The learning results corresponding to Level 2 are: | Factual basic knowledge in a work or study field | Basic cognitive and practical abilities, required for the use of the relevant information with a view to carrying out tasks and sorting out routing issues by using simple rules and instruments | Work or study under surveillance, with a certain level of autonomy |
| LEVEL 3 | The learning results corresponding to Level 3 are: | Factual knowledge, knowledge of some general principles, processes and concepts in a work or study field | A range of basic cognitive and practical abilities, required for the carrying out of tasks and problem solving, by selecting and application of basic methods, instruments, materials and information | Undertaking responsibility for the carrying out of tasks in a work or study field Adaptation of one's own behaviour to the circumstances with a view to sorting out issues |
| LEVEL 4 | The learning results corresponding to Level 4 are: | Factual and theoretical knowledge in wide contexts, in a work or study field | A range of cognitive and practical abilities required to find solutions for specific problems, in a work or study field | Autosuggestion with the help of some indications, generally predictable within work or study situations, but which can change Surveillance of routine activity of other people, undertaking a certain responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities |
| LEVEL 5 | The learning results corresponding to Level 5 are: | Comprehensive factual and theoretical knowledge, specialized in a work or study field and becoming aware of the limits of the respective knowledge | A vast range of cognitive and practical abilities required for the development of creative solutions for abstract problems | Management and surveillance in work or study situations, where changes are unpredictable Revision and development of one's own performances and of others |

| | | | | |
|---------|---|--|--|--|
| LEVEL 6 | The learning results corresponding to Level 6 are: | Advanced knowledge in a work or study field, which involves the critical understanding of theories and principles | Advanced abilities, which prove control and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems, in a specialised work or study field | Management of complex technical or professional activities or projects, by undertaking responsibility of decision-making in unpredictable work or study situations. Undertaking responsibility for the management of professional development of individuals or groups |
| LEVEL 7 | The learning results corresponding to Level 7 are: | Highly specialised knowledge, some of which being situated in the vanguard of knowledge level in a work or study field, as a basis of an original thinking and/or research | Specialised abilities for the solving of the problems related to research and/or innovation, for the development of new knowledge and procedures and for the integration of the knowledge from various domains | Management and transformation of work or study situations that are complex, unpredictable and which require new strategic approaches. Undertaking responsibility with a view to contributing to the professional knowledge and practices and/or for the revision of the strategic performance of teams |
| LEVEL 8 | The learning results corresponding to Level 8 are: | Knowledge at the highest level in a work or study field and knowledge at the border between various domains | The most advanced and specialised abilities and techniques, including the synthesis and evaluation ability, required for the solving of research and/or innovation critical problems and for the extension and redefinition of the existing knowledge or of professional practices | Proving a high level of authority, innovation, autonomy, scientific and professional integrity and sustained commitment for the development of new ideas or processes that are in the vanguard of a work or study situation, including research |

(according to, http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture)

IV. ROMANIA: NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONNS FRAMEWORK APPROACH, PARTICULARITIES:

Romania as well decided on drawing up a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), correlated with EQF (European Qualifications Framework), being ready to voluntarily implement it. Our country drew up an NQF which is based on the following fundamental ideas:

Correlation of NQF with EFQ, based on a consensus with the important social partners;

Compliance with the terminology of the European Qualifications Framework

Romania's participation in all the relevant European events.

Drawing up a coherent methodological framework (for the elaboration, validation and certification of qualifications)

Clearly defining responsibilities and ensuring full cooperation on the part of the social.

B. The Romanian NQF content: characteristics, particularities

During the various participations in international conferences, Romania expressed its wish to implement an NQF correlated with EQF; taking into account the already existing realities in our educational system, the following frame-ideas were outlined, ideas which define NQF in Romania:

Basically, the reference national levels are eight – Technical Vocational Education: 1-5; Higher Education: 6-8; (see 3.2. Education and training formal system in Romania)

Each level was defined by means of a set of descriptors which indicate the learning results that are relevant for gaining the qualification;

Transparent and coherent national qualifications are correlated with the reference European levels, drawn up and introduced in the National Register of Qualifications;

The principles of ensuring quality in education and training are definite.

As for the domain of qualifications, we outline the following general ideas:

Qualifications are described in terms of learning results;

The qualification is described by means of competences, and the competence is made up of a coherent set of learning results;

Key competences are based on eight domains of key competences;

The qualification is requested in order to ensure the employment degree in the long run, as well as career progress;

Different sets of qualifications achieved:

both by means of IVET and CVT

only by means of CVT

Apart from all the above-mentioned, we can add the fact that the lifelong learning approach is carried out by means of the introduction of the credits system. Thus, the vertical progression and the horizontal mobility will be facilitated by the recognition of the credits gained in different learning systems.

The Romanian institutions whose mission is to apply this legislative-normative framework are (apart the Ministry of

Education, Research, Youth and Sport – MECS and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Protection - MMFPS):

- Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Secondary Education (ARACIP, <http://aracip.edu.ro/>)

- Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS, <http://www.aracis.ro>)

- National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership with the Economic and Social Environment (ACPART, <http://www.apart.ro>)

The National Council for Adults' Professional Training (CNFPA, <http://www.cnfpa.ro>)

C. Education and training formal system in Romania

The training and education system in Romania involves, as we have previously stated (and, as a matter of fact, as in almost all European countries) an eight-level structure (see Table 2 The Education and Training System in Romania). As it can be noticed, each level is based on a set of descriptors that indicate the learning results for/in order to obtain a qualification.

For the Romanian formal system, the structure is as follows:

- grade I-VIII represents level I, namely preschool, pre-primary and gymnasium education;

- grade IX-X represents level II, namely general high school lower secondary education;

- grade XI represents level III, namely completion year;

- grade XII/XIII represents level IV, namely general high upper secondary;

- post high school represents level V, namely post-high school education;

- academic degree – represents level VI, namely higher education bachelor;

- master – represents level VII, namely higher education master;

- PhD – level VIII, namely doctoral studies.

The detailed picture, according to age, grade, education level, qualification level, etc. – offers a clear and illustrative image in this respect.

Table 2. The education and training system in Romania

| <i>D. Age</i> | <i>Grade/ Group</i> | EDUCATION LEVEL | | | <i>Qualific. level</i> | <i>Reference level</i> | |
|---------------|---------------------|--|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| >19 | | Higher education long duration | | Higher education doctoral studies (PhD) | 5 | 8 | |
| | | | | Higher education master | | 7 | |
| | | Higher education short duration | | Higher education bachelor | 4 | 6 | |
| | | Post high school education (Tertiary education – non university) | | | | 3+ <i>E. TVET</i> | 5 TVET |
| 18 | XIII | | | | | | |
| 17 | XII | General high school (upper | Art, sport and theological | Technical high school | Technical high school (US) | 3 TVET | 4 TVET |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|--------|--|---|----------------------------|------------------------|--------|--------|
| 16 | XI | secondary - US) | High school (US) | (US) | Completion year | 2 TVET | 3 TVET |
| 15 | X | General high school (lower secondary - LS) | Art, sport and theological High school (LS) | Technical high school (LS) | Arts and trades school | 1 TVET | 2 TVET |
| 14 | IX | | | | | | |
| 13 | VIII | GYMNASIUM EDUCATION | | | | | 1 |
| 12 | VII | | | | | | |
| 11 | VI | | | | | | |
| 10 | V | | | | | | |
| 9 | IV | Primary Education | | | | - | |
| 8 | III | | | | | | |
| 7 | II | | | | | | |
| 6 | I | | | | | | |
| 5 | High | Pre-school education | | | | | - |
| 4 | Medium | | | | | | |
| 3 | Low | | | | | | |

V. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND THE EDUCATION REFORMATION IN ROMANIA

The generous objective of developing a *Europe of Knowledge* and of promoting international acknowledgement of diplomas and of qualifications, sustained by the Lisbon Convention (1997) is taken over and developed within the Bologna Declaration, whose outcome was the starting off of an ample process of restructuration of higher education institutions with a view to their harmonizing at European level.

In this respect, within the seminar *A Contribution of the European Council to the European Higher Education System, organised between April 11 and 12, 2002 by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, there were stipulated some recommendations for the higher education institutions:*

- “Continuation of discussions regarding the results of learning and the competencies, in order to shift the focus from the formal aspects of the acknowledgement procedures, such as the duration of studies, title of courses, to the procedures based on the results of learning.
- Continuation of promoting institutional cooperation regarding common diplomas and other forms of automatic acknowledgement, such as trust stimulating measures, leading to a wider acceptance of mutual acknowledgement.
- Examination of the information regarding the acknowledgement procedures offered to institutions, in order to guarantee the accurate information of students and of all the persons who are interested in it.
- Examination of the way in which this information is offered, with a view to guaranteeing the access to information, in a transparent and effective way.
- Ensuring the appropriate internal structures, to have the certainty that the acknowledgement procedures are carried out in a transparent and effective way.
- Developing the appropriate human resources and of personal personnel, with a view to answering challenges, especially the guarantee that all personnel categories

(academic and administrative) are aware of the positive European practices from this field.

• Inclusion of procedures and of the acknowledgement of the problems related to the internal procedures of quality assurance, with a view to carrying on the progress in this field, for the benefit of institutions, of their personnel and of the students” (acc. to http://www.see-educoop.net/education_in/pdf/bologna-seminar-lisboa-apr02-oth-rmn-t02.pdf).

The adoption and implementation of the Bologna Process in Romania was achieved even from the moment of its launch, in 1999. Ever since till now, a complex legislative framework has been adopted, which should allow the national education system to be put in line with the requirements of various initiatives at European level, as follows:

- **Law no. 288/2004** regarding the organisation of the higher education on 3 study cycles (Bachelor – 3/4 years, Masters – 1/2 years, PhD – 3 years). As a result of this legislative decision, starting the academic year 2005-2006 we effectively started the organisation of the higher education on the 3 study cycles, and in 2008, there graduated the first promotion of Bachelor study students according to the principles of the Bologna Process; starting with the 2008-2009 academic year, the first candidates participated in the entrance examination for the Masters study cycle as university studies.
- **O.M no. 3235/2005** regarding the setting up of some “career counselling and orientation centres, to support the students take appropriate decisions in the structuring of their own training route”.
- **O.M no. 3617/2005** regarding the general application of ECTS, namely the allocation of credits according to the methodology of the European System of Transferable Credits in the whole Romanian higher education system for the stimulation of the students’ mobility.
- **O.M. no. 3714/2005** regarding the introduction of the Diploma Supplement for the certification of the graduation of a university study cycle. This document is drawn up both in

Romanian, and in English and describes the type, the level, the content, the institutional context, the status of the university studies graduated by the titular, as well as the results obtained.

- **G.D. no. 567/2005** regarding the organisation and the development of university PhD studies.

- **G.D. no. 404/2006** regarding the organisation of Masters studies.

- **G.D. no. 1175/2006** regarding the organisation of Bachelor university studies on study fields, in accordance with the Bologna Process principles and, at the same time, the approval of the **15 general study fields** and of their corresponding specializations, applicable to all higher education institutions, both state-owned and private.

To this law, we add law 87/2006, by means of which GO no. 75/2005 was adopted regarding **the assurance of the quality of education, a problem deeply discussed upon and approached** trans-sectorally, being applicable at the level of all institutions that offer education in Romania. The main objectives of this ordinance are (according to Art. 6):

a) the improvement of the quality of education by establishing and implementing institutional and procedural mechanisms of evaluation, assurance, control and improvement of quality;

b) the development and the dissemination of systematic, coherent and credible information, that can easily be accessed by the public, related to the quality of education, offered by various organisations that are present on the educational market in Romania;

c) the protection of the education beneficiaries;

d) the development of a culture of quality at the level of the organisation that provides education;

e) the substantiation of sectoral policies and strategies in the field of education.

As a consequence of this law, the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education was set up, an institution with competences in the field of accreditation, academic evaluation and quality assurance.

The reformation of the Romanian educational system and the increase of its quality go beyond the slogan stage and become possible, between 2007 and 2013, the reformation action being also supported by means of numerous structural fund investments, directly or indirectly, by three financing programs:

1. Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development (POS DRU) – a program whose first two axes aim at the modernisation of the Romanian educational system by initial and in-service professional training;

2. Sectoral Operational Programme “Increase of Economic Competitiveness” (POS CCE) – destined to the higher education and aims at the research and education activities at this level;

3. Regional Operational Programme (Regio) – a program by means of which education institutions can obtain modern equipments and infrastructure.

Even if, theoretically, the adoption of the provisions of the Bologna Treaty in the educational system of Romania offered the higher education institutions a series of opportunities (such as: the alignment to the European system of transferable credits, alignment to the Europass documents by means of the diploma supplement, the focusing of the educational process on the student, the prescription of a set of generic acquisitions that the graduate should acquire at the end of each cycle of academic studies), in practice, the process faced a series of problems. These refer to the following aspects (see: Singer, M., Sarivan, L., Novak, C., Bercu, N., Velea S., 2006).

- the absence of specialists in a study field that should also have competences in the field of career orientation/counselling on the one hand, and the low share of optional subject matters within the study programs on the other hand, makes it more difficult or even blocks the activity of the Counselling centres set up at the level of each university;

- the focus, for decades in a row, of the educational process on the teacher and on the magisterial discourse makes the acceptance of the central role of the pupil/student more difficult;

- we often witness an inappropriate understanding of the credit concept and, consequently, the creation of a false conditioning relation, of the type: if a subject matter has greater importance for a study programme, then it will get a greater number of credits;

- the mere drawing up of the academic record in a bilingual variant (by mentioning the subject matters attended and the grades obtained) does not facilitate the understanding, by the employer, of the competences acquired by the graduates, nor does it allow the validation of studies based on fair criteria.

Even if for the last ten years, the universities in Romania have experienced a profound transformation process, the educational reform is not over yet. “The shift to the economy of knowledge, the digital era with its technological specific elements, our entire civic and political transition, the pressure upon an ever-growing number of persons to enter the higher education system brings new requirements to universities. Therefore, we need to promote transformations that generate a new university development. The options that we are to take must be based on the existing reality and, out of its messages, the following cannot be ignored: there are important differences between the qualifications required on the labour market and those offered at university level; students are recruited especially from the urban environment and from the most favoured social categories, which leads to significant losses of talents and to the deepening of social inequality.” (Orientări strategice pentru învățământul superior, www.tuiasi.ro/dga/planuri/orientari/orientari_strategice_pentru_invatamantul_superior.doc).

CONCLUSIONS

It is a platitude today to speak about globalization and about its outcomes, be they negative (much more often in the

environments that are worried about potential social, cultural consequences etc.), or positive (more frequent in economic environments). However, globalisation, especially in George Ritzer's analyses, is made up of two distinct processes, simultaneous and that have somehow reverse effects. Let us emphasize, once more, that these processes are components of globalisation and are objectively active, namely they go beyond the intentions or the will of some local leaders or communities. These two processes are: *globalisation* and *glocalization*. Referring to globalization, George Ritzer says: "Globalization refers to the imperialist ambitions of nations, corporations, organisations etc. This happens at the will, if not at their need, to impose themselves in various geographical areas. The main interest of the entities involved in globalization is the *increase* (hence the term *globalisation*) of their power, influence and, in many cases, profits around the world. Most of the times, globalisation was assimilated with globalization, thus ignoring the related process, as objective as this one – glocalization. The glocalization process is described as follows:

The world is becoming more and more pluralist. The theory of glocalization is highly sensitive at the differences from and between geographical areas.

1. In a glocalised world, local individuals and groups have a great capacity to adapt themselves, to innovate and to manipulate. For the glocalisation theory, individuals and groups are important creative agents.

2. Social processes are relational and accidental. Globalisation leads to various reactions – from the nationalist inflammation to the cosmopolitan enthusiasm – which offers feed-back to globalisation and transforms it; the result is glocalisation.

3. The assets and the media are *not* considered (exclusively) restrictive; they offer material that will be used in individual and group creation within glocalised areas (p. 29-30).

The European Qualification Framework, as an attempt to homogenise the educational processes from various countries, is one of the answers by which education planners try to cope with the issues raised by globalisation. In reality, it is an appropriate answer for globalisation, but which ignores the processes of glocalisation. At national level, although the outcomes of glocalisation are already visible, there have not been outlined any appropriate educational policies yet, and, at the European Union level, community institutions still seem to be mostly interested in the way in which the educational systems of the European countries are capable of developing compatibly on the coordinate of globalisation. We reiterate that this situation is due to ignoring the phenomena of glocalisation and to the assimilation of globalisation with globalisation.

In the end, we present a few ideas which may stand as conclusions:

- correlation of the national qualifications framework with the European framework. This has entailed a new perspective

and a new direction of the educational system, both from the structural point of view and as regards the purposes of the structure – reorganisation of the educational system.

- as regards the purposes, the curriculum has been reconsidered with a view to its being oriented towards transfer competences and specialised competences, able to allow the graduates to adapt more rapidly to the labour market on the one hand, and able to support their evolution and mobility in their career in the long and medium run on the other hand.

At the same time, there is also noticeable the favourable reaction of the labour market, the employers noticing a significant increase of compatibility between the academic training of graduates and their actual.

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