The EQF and the EHEA – Issues of compatibility

Sebastião Feyo de Azevedo[*]

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Executive Summary

Two key political, academic and economical issues in the prevailing scenario of this contemporaneous global World are those of transnational co-operation and mobility of students and professionals. Co-operation and mobility require academic and professional recognition. Recognition requires TRUST. Trust requires transparency and readability of academic curricula and professional qualifications. Such is achieved through transparent qualifications frameworks (QF) and quality assurance procedures, recognised and accepted by all partners and stakeholders. In this context, an immense reform is taking place in Europe, under the codename *Bologna Process*, involving some 16 million students and well over 5600 institutions of 46 countries. The commitment is the creation of the European Higher Education Area, an essential step for preparing Europe for this current paradigm of 'coopetition' in the World.

For such purpose, an open wide view of the concept of QF (QF in *lactus sensus*) should be adopted. QF unfold and are being developed at three major levels of descriptors, related to and characterized by different levels of detail, viz. – (i) The meta frameworks, including high level descriptors of competences, of a general nature, describing global qualifications associated to degrees; (ii) The sectoral frameworks, including sectoral descriptors grouped in scientific and technological areas, with direct relations to the different professions, and mostly directed to support quality assurance and recognition systems; and (iii) Contents descriptors, characterizing main or core curricula contents and methods, which aim at giving substance to the higher level descriptors. At these different levels, such descriptors express Outcomes at both Programme and Module levels.

In parallel, but complementary, legislation has been approved within the European Union, the Directive on recognition of professional qualifications, which constitutes the legal framework for recognition and professional mobility.

In my conference I shall: (i) introduce some relevant issues of the Bologna Process, for the purpose of this conference; (ii) analyze the main characteristics of the existing frameworks and related descriptors, at the three levels identified; and (iii) in particular, discuss how such frameworks articulate between each other.

In short, my views are that Meta Frameworks represent essentially the guidelines and the 'legal crust', Sectoral Frameworks represent 'Bologna in Practice' and Curriculum Descriptors represent the basis for the 'credibility of the whole system'.

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[*] Professor and Head of the Chemical Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering, University of Porto, Portugal; National Delegate to the BFUG; National Vice-president of Ordem dos Engenheiros – Engineers Portugal; Vice-president of ENAEE-European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education; sfeyo@fe.up.pt

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