FROM THE EUROPEAN TO THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT:
Establishing a qualifications framework which allows the assessment of competences acquired by the beneficiaries is a component of the European Union's economic and social development strategy which seeks to improve the efficiency of education and research so as to meet the demands of the labour market. This study looks at the difficulties encountered in the creation of national qualification frameworks (with an accent on the Romanian case) and in their harmonisation within a common European framework.

KEY-WORDS:
Qualifications, higher education, competences, descriptors, frameworks, national, European.

1. Complexity of the qualifications framework

In the sixth issue of this publication[1], we analysed the European implications of the development and evaluation of competences included in the descriptor 7 from the National Qualifications Framework of Romanian higher education (NQF)[2]. More exactly, we started from the contents of this item, as formulated in the Romanian Framework: *"7. Social interaction"*. We ignored the fact that in the frameworks of other European countries it might be worded differently or placed under a

[1] P. Gh. Bârlea, 2009, pp. 11-26.
[2] Cf. *Methodology for the Creation of the National Qualifications Framework of Higher Education. An Implementation Guide*, 2009. Co-ordinator: Sorin Eugen Zaharia. Mention must be made that this paper is the result of several years of research, within at least two European projects, by a large team of authors who joined the co-ordinator: (in alphabetical order) Gheorghe BARBU, Petre Gheorghe BÂRLEA, Toma Leonida DRAGOMIR, Mihai KORKA, Mariana Ionela MOCANU, Bogdan Costin MURGESCU, Ioan NEACŞU, Dan POTOLEA, Stelian TOMA, with the participation of Margareta Simona IVAN and of Iuliana Marinela TRAŞCĂ. Henceforth, the paper will be called *Methodology…*

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different number, since what interested us was the basic idea: a higher education graduate, irrespective of his level on the L-M-D scale, has got to prove this competence as well, among others. It is part and parcel of the set of transversal competences, that is of the so-called "role-competences"[3], and such competence involves oral and written communication skills, not only in the mother tongue but also in foreign languages, as well as a capacity of professional interaction, the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity and multiculturalism, openness, acceptance of all challenges which imply a favourable attitude towards lifelong learning, etc.[4] It thus became clear that, no matter the code number it received in the national qualifications framework of different countries, we were dealing with an extremely complex concept.

2. The role of the Common Framework in the European Union's strategies of economic and social development

Such a comprehensive area under one single item of the grid clearly demonstrates that it is closely interconnected with the remaining items, with which it forms a system. The different ways in which the system of competence description is created in each of the countries signatory of the Declaration of Bologna have a great impact on the clarity and efficiency of the final version of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The latter will have its own impact on the process of optimisation and harmonisation of the European system of higher education, a process meant to help attain the ambitious goal in the Lisbon Agenda: turning Europe into the "world's most competitive economy", and whose fundamental strategic element is "building a society based on knowledge and innovation"[5].

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[3] In the Romanian version of the Framework, for the stage *Licenţă* (Bachelor's Degree) it is phrased as follows: "To become familiar with the roles and activities typical of team-work and of task distribution at subordinated levels", with further developments adapted, quantitatively and qualitatively, to the stages of *Master* and *Doctoral studies*, cf. *Methodology…,* p. 14.

[4] In the documents elaborated by the specialist commission of the European Parliament, this competence includes the following components: 1.*Communication in the mother tongue; 2. Communication in foreign languages; 3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; 4. Digital competence; 5. Learning to learn; 6.Social and civic competences; 7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; 8. Cultural awareness and expression.*

[5] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 december 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning.
(2006/962/EC) Communication from the Comission to the Council and the European Parliament. Common Action for Growth and Employment: The Community Lisabon Programme, (SEC) (2005) 981. Cf.
http://europa.eu/scodplus/glossary/lisbon_strategy_engl.htm. Henceforth, we will refer to this document as the *Recommendation E. P.*

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In the following, we intend to present a complete picture of the Qualifications Framework of the Romanian higher education, in the view of the specialist team of which the author of this study is a member[6]. A double perspective will characterise our analysis: a) a perspective generated by the reference to the documents which underpin the European Qualifications Framework of higher education (EQF) and b) a perspective generated by the reference to the frameworks created in some European countries (NQF).[7]

3. Terminological issues

The key concepts of the European/national qualifications framework were defined after long debates and analyses in specialist circles.

Qualification is the most concrete and visible concept in the strategy for the creation of the competence framework, since it represents, in the sense our team attributed to it, an official recognition of the individual's learning results:

"[...] the formal result of an evaluation and validation process which is obtained when a competent body establishes that an individual has obtained results following a process of learning at given standards."[8]

Therefore, "qualification" means individual results *recognised at an official level* by both trainers and beneficiaries in the labour market, and expressed through *documentation* (diploma, certificate, attestation etc.) representing the individual's right to be integrated in a socio-professional category and included in the process of permanent education, if that category is itself organised according to official standards (labour legislation, professional statutes, ongoing education systems, etc.).

Learning outcome is the most direct hyponym for *qualification*, since it represents the backbone of the specific difference in defining the concept of qualification" by the Aristotelian logic (in which genus proximus is "the process of evaluation and validation".) In the two types of documents referred to herein – *The European Union*

[6] The entire *Methodology for the Creation of the National Qualifications Framework of Romanian Higher Education*, including the framework, created by the twelve co-authors, was formalized by Minister Order no. 4430, published in *Monitorul Oficial* 177(XXI), nr. 545/ 05.08.2009, pp. 23-42.

[7] Including the Republic of Malta.

[8] Cf. *Methodology...*, p. 8. The definition of qualification, as well as of the other key-concepts in the process of creation of the framework, was reached by referral to the definitions in the *Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council* (cf. above, n. 4) Appendix 1, *Definitions*, p. 4 and the following.

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Recommendations and the Romanian *Methodology*, the concept is defined as:

"*…that which the student can recognize, understand and do at the end of the learning process. These are described as knowledge, competences and abilities."*[9]

To put it differently, learning outcomes form a set of intellectual and physical capabilities proven at the end of a period of study, codified/expressed in the form of three more hyponyms which describe a deeper level of qualification, more precisely, the specific difference in the learning outcomes, viewed here as genus proximus, in relation to that level. Each of the three concepts which make up this set of learning outcomes lends itself to further defining analyses, following the same logical scheme.

Knowledge is the result of the acquisition of information transmitted in the process of learning. The definition given in the documentation relating to the European Qualifications Framework insist on the description of a) theoretical categories and b) practical (or rather factual) categories of knowledge[10], while the Romanian *Methodology* widens the scope of the concept and refines it: "the totality of facts, principles and theories referred to a certain area of work or study"[11]

Ability is the function-action dimension of learning outcomes, namely *"the capacity to apply and use knowledge in order to carry out tasks and to solve problems."*[12]

The definition, as it is phrased in Romanian studies devoted to the National Qualifications Framework, seems to cover only the abstract area of the concept, although semantically the term "ability" clearly includes both abstract and concrete aspects. Documentation relating to the European Qualifications Framework expressly clarifies the definition of 'ability' so as to cover both aspects, precisely because the authors have taken account of specific semantic options in various European languages, i.e. the possibility to assert semantically (contextually) one aspect to the detriment of the other. Therefore, the EQF documentation clearly states that abilities are both *cognitive*, involving logical, intuitive and creative thinking, and *practical*, involving the manual dexterity to use materials, tools and instruments in carrying out concrete tasks.

The relationship between these two aspects is sufficiently strong as to make it difficult, for instance, to place some working methods at one extreme or the other, since something of both is always involved, as is the synthetic, cognitive and operational-practical action.

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[9]Ibidem.
[10]*Recommendation E. P.., Appendix 1*, p. 4.
[11]*Methodology...*, p. 8.
[12]*Methodology…*, p. 9.

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Moreover, abilities represent more than the synthesis of the two essential components, a fact mentioned in the *Methodology...* where it is made clear that their structure includes certain types of operational structures such as adjustment skills or problem interpretation and solving capabilities etc.

4. Competence, a key-concept of the Qualifications Framework

Starting from the essential concepts described above, *competence* – the central concept of the European and of the national qualifications framework – is defined.

The concept has had a long history in the thinking of the specialists in education at all levels. The starting point was the notion of ”linguistic competence”, obviously related to the ability to use foreign languages. Older preoccupations[13] turned into theories through the syntheses published over the last decade by Jean-Paul Bronckart and his collaborators, as a result of his association , as co-ordinator, with researchers like J. Dolz şi E. Ollagnier[14]. But the notion of linguistic competence described just as well the levels of use of the mother tongue, and it was used in the general linguistics to designate the familiarity with the linguistic code of the community where the speaker belongs, i.e. with the phonological system, the grammar and the vocabulary of the respective language[15]. Research in pragmatics (especially pragmalinguistics) strengthened the position of this concept in the language, placing it opposite the concept of ”performance”, which refers to the conscientious use of language data, mastered at the level of competences, in order to obtain certain effects.

We consider that it was pragmatics that paved the way for the use of the concept in the theory and practice of teaching, in general. As the familiarity with the linguistic code is manifest in the active and individual variants of the language (which determine various levels of performance), so can any type of knowledge and skills, irrespective of the domain, be codified in the form of competences. In the 80s of last century, philosophers, logicians, pedagogues, etc., defined the relationship between action and thought[16], thus identifying the role of competence in the synthesis between theory and practice[17]. Soon after,

[13] See the generativist theories of Noam Chomsky, 1965, *Aspects of the theory of syntax*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press şi Dell Hymes, 1972, ”Models of the interaction of language and social life”, in J. Gumperz & D. Hymes (Eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics: The ethnography of communication*, New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston, pp. 35-71.
[14] Jean-Paul Bronckart & J. Dolz, 2000 şi 2005.
[15] E. Coserio, 1992, based on previous research.
[16] M. De Montmollin, 1986a and 1986.
[17] J.-M. Barbier, 1986.

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the discovery was made that this concept is of great operational value in the theory and practice of education and training, both in the young and in the adult education – in on-going education. The *Education permanente*[18] magazine prides itself on the analysis of the concept in all its aspects and on revealing ways of turning it to account from the psichological-pedagogical or didactic points of view. In the pages of this magazine[19], in collective studies or individual books[20], the concept has come to stay as an important milestone in the construction of formative strategies.

The issue of the relationship between competence and qualification was brought to attention by J. Roche şi Y. Schwartz[21]. They identified the ”dialectics” of the two aspects: the qualifications, as described above, are evaluated by means of a set of competences[22].

The definition of the latter concept and the pattern of its relationship with the qualifications, in their broad lines, were taken over and included in the programatic documents of the European Union's strategy for education at all levels.

As we said before, *competence* means the capacity – proven in various contexts – to turn to account (by selection, combination and adequate use) knowledge, abilities and other acquisitions in order to successfully solve work, learning or self development problems.

In *methodology* the syntagm ”and other acquisitions” is added, which refers to ”values” and ”attitudes”; in other studies, these are viewed as implicit elements. On the other hand, the EQF documents lay stress on the ”responsibility” and ”autonomy” of the individual in the description of competences[23].

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[18] *Education permanente. Revue internationale de référence en éducation des adultes*, Paris-Arcueil. Director: Guy Jobert. Founded in 1969, at Nancy, bz Bertrand Schwartz. Just as valuable are the studies collected in the volume Castelotti,V. şi PY, B., (ed.), 2002, *La notion de compétence en langue*. No. Spécial de NeQ (*Notion en Question*).

[19] Cf. the thematic issue 135/1998, in which M. Stroobants, P. Gillete, L. Toupin brought significant contributions, or the issues in which R. Samurçay şi P. Pastre published their studies, 1995, E. Dugué, 1999, J. Roche, 1999.

[20] Cf. J. Aubret, P. Gilbert and F. Pigeyre, 1993; M. Altet, L. Paquai and Ph. Perrenoud, 2002, Ph. Perrenoud, 1997 and 1999, and others.

[21] J. Roche, 1999, Y. Schwartz, 2000 a/1999; 2000 b/1991.

[22] In these pages we discuss mainly the contributions from the French speaking space, which were more accessible to us; nevertheless, we admit that the contributions from the Anglo-saxon world are at least as notable, or even more valuable, in point of precedence, depth of theoretical analysis and implementation of the concept in the national strategies for education and evaluation (see the frameworks created in Ireland, Scotland or England.)

[23] *Recommendation...*, A. p. 4.

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As described here, competences represent a structure based on the three types of learning results. The temptation is there to present them (even graphically) in hierarchical order:

Competences
Abilities
Knowledge

The truth is that such a structure is too simple. The vertical relation is valid, but it needs to be completed with the interdependences occurring horizontally. In the process of learning, *certain* types of knowledge generate/support the abilities, whereas a *certain set* of knowledge and abilities fosters the development of a competence. Therefore, the functional pattern of the components making up the learning results turns into an ampler system of interactions and hierarchies (see Figure 1).

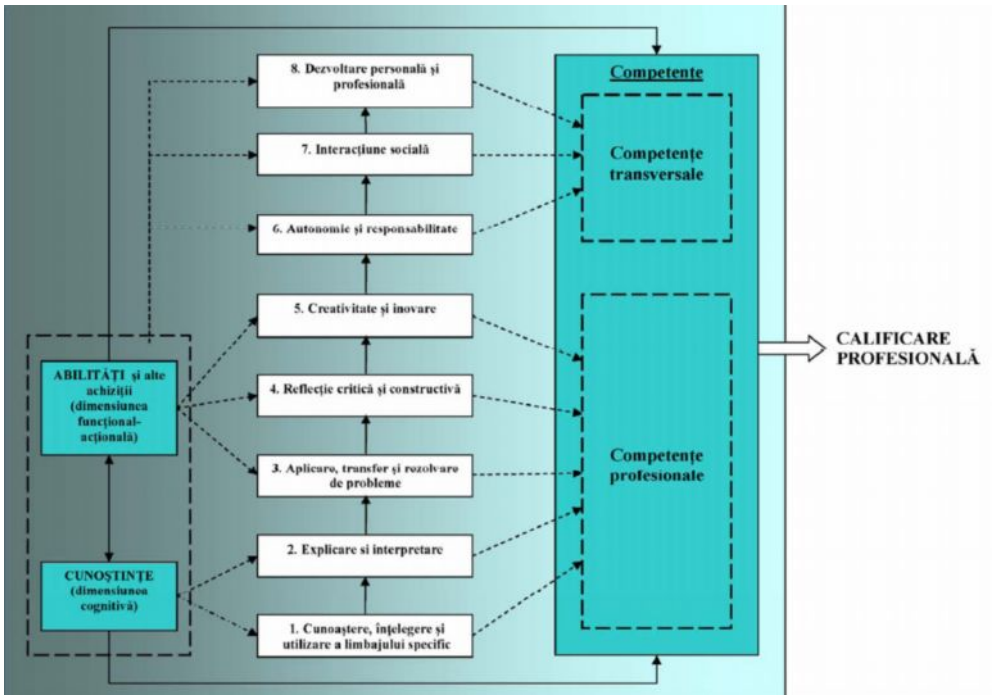


Figure 1: Learning outcomes (*Methodology*, p. 11).

5. Competence categories and the descriptors of learning results

The relationship between learning results and competences relies on the fact that each of these three types of results, taken separately, involve ”distinct targets of education, processes of specialist professional

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training and specific processes of evaluation[24]". In fact, these are precisely the essential aspects of the analysis, description and evaluation of qualifications at any educational level. This is why the typology of competences, also seen as a coherent and dynamic system of knowledge and abilities, practically transforms itself into a system of qualification descriptors.

Each learning result, codified in the above figure and graphically rendered in figure 2, represents a competence, with the difference that some competences apply to a more restricted, while others to a wider area, which means that the graphic representation should be in the shape of a truncated cone standing upside down.

The entire construction is based on the *professional competences*, i.e. those capacities to select, combine and adequately use knowledge, abilities and further acquisitions generated by these (values and attitudes) which guarantee success in fulfilling tasks with a relatively strict description.

First on the list is knowledge selected in its cognitive aspects:

1. Knowledge, understanding and use of the specialist language characteristic of the respective profession or qualification.
2. Description and interpretation of concepts, processes and phenomena related to the professional area.

Next in line, vertically, is knowledge which turns into action through the so-called "abilities":

3. Application, transfer and problem solving in the specialist area of qualification.
4. Critical and constructive thinking concerning the value of concepts, methods and theories, or the limits of processes, projects or programmes.
5. Manifestation of creative, innovative capacity in the respective specialist area.

Higher above is the second great category of competences – *transversal competences* – defined as "value and attitude acquisitions", which could be valid for various study programmes or even domains. These competences generate the next three descriptors in the framework created by the Romanian authors of *Methodology...*:

[24] *Methodology...*, p. 9

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6. Autonomy and responsibility in carrying out professional or learning tasks.
7. Social interaction, horizontally and vertically.
8. Awareness of the need for permanent personal and professional development.

The latter three competences draw upon the same source of knowledge and abilities, namely the same cognitive and function-action dimensions of learning results as the first five, since the transversal competences include and develop the first ones, which are considered ”strictly professional”.

Hopefully, we can now demonstrate more clearly why we attributed so much importance to the competence in descriptor 7 of the framework submitted by our team. Good social interaction involves a professional statute which relies not only on the conjoint action of every competence below it (descriptors 1-6), but also on the effect of the descriptor above it, no.8. Social interaction means communication and action, it means form, but also a lot of content. Therefore, efficient interaction is dependent on the level of the other components and, what is more, on the capacity to harmonise and synthesise them. In its turn, in terms of learning results, the competence in descriptor 7, *Social interaction*, influences all the other competences.

Passingly, we note here that in the description and evaluation grids of national/European frameworks, professional competences are categorised as a) ”specific” – obtained through a single study programme (a single ”specialisation”, in the older terminology of qualifications) and b) ”general” – obtained in the wider space of a group of study programmes, which the current European terminology of qualifications calls a ”domain”.

At this stage, it is important to point out that the description, analysis and evaluation grid extends not only vertically, as shown so far, but also horizontally. The support for the horizontal structure is given by the correlation between the cycles of education. In the case of higher education, which is the subject of this study, the correlation occurs between the three cycles defined in the Bologna Process: bachelor’s, master’s, doctor’s (B-M-D). In this respect, national frameworks of qualifications are largely coincident, as the three cycles are almost unanimously recognised, that is, even states which have not signed the Bologna Declaration use the syntagm ”cycles of higher education” in approximately the same sense. The differences appear only in the cycle cuantification on the evolution scale of the educational process. In the case of the common European strategy, the cycles B-M-D represent levels 6-7-8 of that scale. In other countries, they are numbered 4-5-6, or 8-9-10, etc. Also, there are countries outside the Bologna Declaration

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where the doctoral stage is still looked at as a postgraduate cycle, as in the older European systems, or on other continents. But, again, the correlation with the bachelor's and the master's cycle is not very different. From this point of view, the EQF and NQF fully turn to account the idea of "autonomy and responsibility" which in the E.C. documents is presented as more than just a separate component, among others. In this perspective, all the other competences develop horizontally, from one cycle to the next, according to the degree of autonomy and responsibility shown by these (competences). For instance, descriptor 3 - *Application, transfer and problem solving* – refers to professional competences in their function-action aspect, namely abilities (which require specialist knowledge), and describes the progress of these: "in conditions of qualified assistance", in cycle B; "in indefinite conditions" in cycle M; "interdisciplinary approaches, ... to solve *new* and *complex* tasks" in cycle C. Thus, the degree of independence and responsibility in solving professional tasks is distributed progressively, from qualified assistance, to innovative attitude and creativity.

In other competences, progression is both quantitative and qualitative, at the same time. Practically, a system develops of concentric circles, typical of the learning process, where each new stage requires successful completion of the previous and the use of former acquisitions in various new situations, in a larger area of action and a wider range of challenges.

All these elements – central or secondary – in the analysis and evaluation of the qualifications obtained in the system of higher education are codified in the EQF and in the NQFs, which dispose of some complementary instruments (Grid 1 and Grid 2 in the Romanian NQF.) For the Romanian NQF, the scheme is shown in Figure 2.

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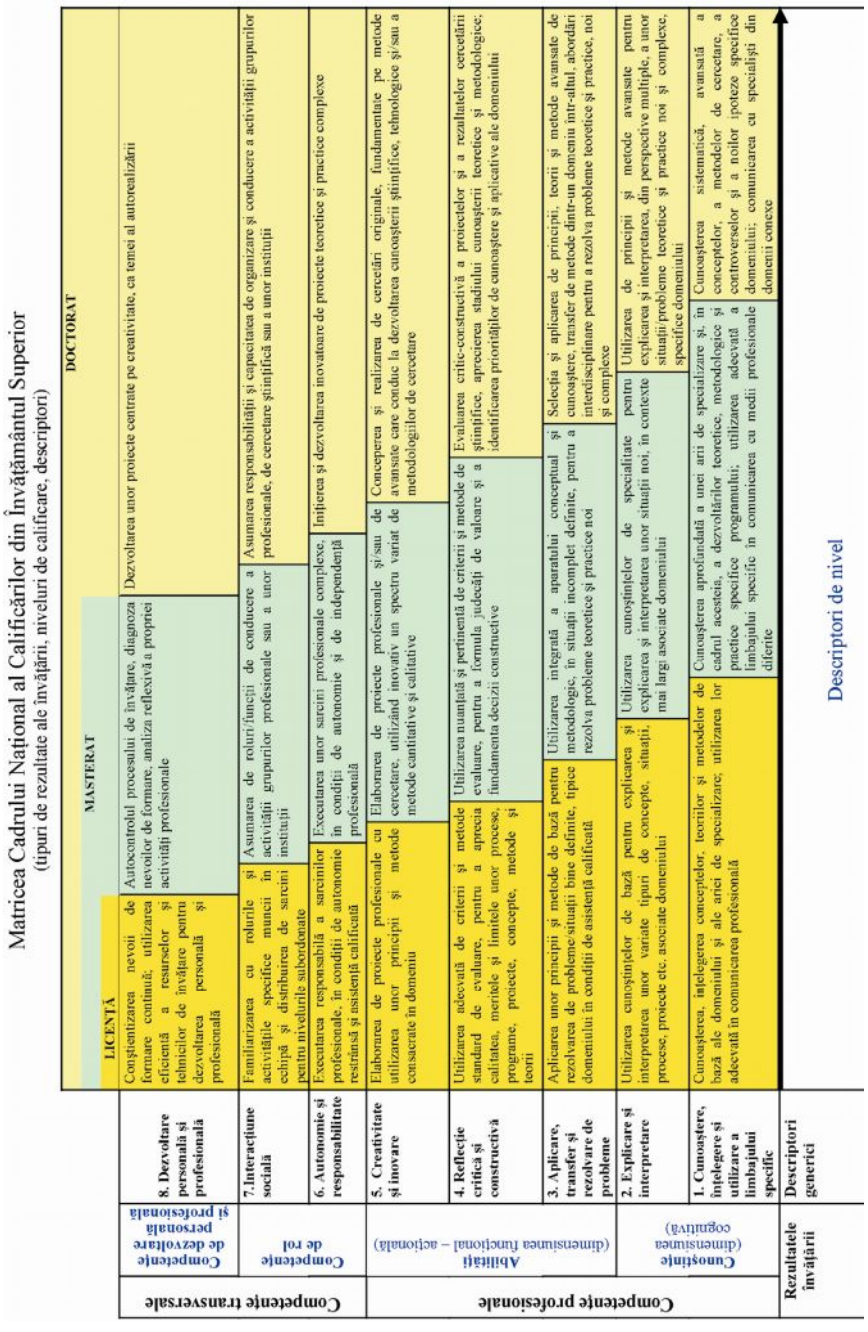


Figure 2: Romanian Matrix of NQF (*Methodology*, p. 14).

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6. Contrastive analysis of some NQFs and their relation with the EQF

It has been said about the Romanian NQF that it is too elaborate, too abstract, that the competences it contains are difficult to evaluate objectively etc.

I have compared both the Framework and the grids for some of the curricula (computer science, philosophy, foreign languages etc.) with those of other countries such as Austria, Belgium, The Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Malta, the U.K. as well as with the more recent ones from South Africa or New Zealand. Unlike the Romanian team, who identified eight items, most of these grids show between ten and fourteen items. The relation between conciseness and prolixity, concrete and abstract (with direct impact on the cuantification of competences) varies a lot from one country to another. In this respect, the grids from the U.K. appeared to us as clear and efficient.

As a conclusion of this comparative study, we maintain our position that the Romanian Framework is well balanced and that it will soon prove its practical utility.

7. Final observations

● EQF/NQF constitute a very important aspect of the general effort to build a superior, competitive society through the optimisation of the educational system. As expressed in the programatic documents of the E.U., the framework contributes to the foundation of ”a society based on knowledge and innovation”.

● Here, it is also worth mentioning that the creation of European/national qualifications framework addresses not only the higher education, which is the subject of these pages, but also the other cycles, from pre-school to post-doctoral education. It is not by pure chance that both research/action projects and the resulting documents, as well as the institutions which support these projects, actions, manifestations, publications etc., are placed under the generic title *Lifelong learning/Education permanente* etc. This is the concept that underpins the philosophy and practice of the reorganisation of the European education.

● The progress of the creation of these frameworks (the European framework, the national frameworks, and their harmonisation), as well as the first stage of their implementation, i.e. the creation of the curricula, is slower than it is commonly expected.

● Such an ample and complex construction inevitably meets theoretical difficulties, such as the generation of an overall conception and the identification of operational key-concepts around which the respective grids should be created. At the logico-semantic and lexical

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levels, it is difficult to decide on a stable and commonly accepted inventory of key-words which define the content and form of the qualification and competence descriptors. Difficulties arise from perspective differences – scientific, ideological, philosophical and linguistic. Even though a compromise has been reached regarding the basic structure of the *Framework*..., which is apt to provide the ground for the construction of the grid/grids (framework/frameworks), there still persist logical and semantic hesitations/disagreements in defining the concepts, as well as differences in the transfer of their meaning in various languages. The use of a common language – English, French etc. – is a partial solution to the problem, since the research teams think in their own language, moreover, they are supposed to create these operational instruments in the language of the people whose representatives they are. Needless to say, these differences represent only the diversity which inevitably accompanies the common outlook...Those involved in the creation of the *Framework*... agree that these grids are meant to clearly and objectively describe essential, but at the same time diverse, competences, so as to cover the complexity of the socio-professional profile of a higher education graduate. Which requires, in the first place, an exact and concise phrasing.

Difficulties have already been identified in the process of implementation, namely in the creation of competence grids for various fundamental study areas, and for the curricula (specialisations) of the educational systems of various countries. One aspect relates to the endless proliferation of narrow specialisations, which makes the application of complete grids of competence evaluation almost impossible. Another aspect is the overlap of some curricula for specialisations with different titles; some very pompous, others very commercial. Yet another aspect: some curricula do not correspond with the existing grids. For example, in vocational higher education (music, plastic or visual arts, choreography, etc.), Item 1, which refers to knowledge, understanding and use of the professional language cannot apply, since these competences are developed, for this type of education, in pre-university cycles; secondary, and often primary education. Whatever may be added during the university cycle is significant, but not sufficient so as to form a relevant indication of professional competence. This list is by no means exhaustive.

● Viewed from an optimistic angle (the bright side of the moon), these difficulties represent as many suggestions for the identification of solutions to the endemic deficiencies of higher education around Europe. Regarding the last of the problems mentioned above, it is easy to notice that the grid typology needs to be extended, whereas the framework

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should become more comprehensive and flexible than it is now. As for the first two issues, it is obvious that these involve the contents, organisation and eventually the essence of the European higher education. An open, dynamic and competitive society can no longer afford to tolerate narrow specialisations which may disappear from the labour market at any time, in the dynamic context of globalisation. A graduate who is unable to adapt rapidly, through minimal reconversion, to the demands of the socio-professional evolutions would become a human waste. Also, "forms without substance" should no longer be accepted – apparently different curricula that yield the same type of specialists; or content areas and disciplines under different titles, with minimal, sometimes even identical information and methodologies. The credits system itself does not function according to the same criteria, not at the European level, not at national level, and sometimes not even inside the same institution (university, college or department). These deficiences become visible when Grid 1 and, especially, Grid 2 of the national methodologies are applied; it is definitely the case of the Romanian methodology, at least.

● Therefore, during the process of edification of this double qualifications framework, European and national, there is this first stage of implementation which makes its presence felt in two ways. The impact with the objective reality highlights the deficiencies in the conception and organisation of the *Framework*, some of them anticipated at the preliminary stage, some unexpected. On the other hand, as it stands now, the *Framework* shows major, but also minor defects of higher education in Europe. Again, some of these were already familiar, but from different perspectives. But never so far have they been so well highlighted, at various levels: as a philosophy of higher education; from the viewpoint of the trainers, as individuals and institutions; from that of the employers and of society in general; as a milestone of strategic action, from the perspective of administrative and political factors of decision; as the ground for the harmonisation of national, continental and world strategies, ultimately from the perspective of the European construction and of globalisation.

● There is much more to say about the area of constructive applicability of the *Framework*... The grids which make it up are the result of joint efforts (analyses and direct confrontations, during various workshops) of various categories of beneficiaries: trainers (teachers and managers from the higher education systems), students (including students of master and doctoral studies); employers from various segments of the labour market; representatives of professional associations, the civil society, N.G.O.'s, mass media, parent associations and, last but not least, of the administrative and political power.

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That explains why, in the strategy of elaboration of the *Framework*, the relatively final form receives an official and institutional statute.

The expression ”relatively final” refers to the fact that *Metodologia...* includes, alongside the framework and the corresponding grids, the stage of their formalisation, i.e. the obligativity of their implementation in the public and private systems of education, as well as the creation of a National Registry of Qualifications (of Higher Education, i.e., for Romania, R.N.C.I.S.), as an institution and official document at the highest level.

More importantly, for all these categories of contributors/beneficiaries the *Framework...* represents, on the one hand, a cornersone of all expectations, and of self-evaluation, on the other. In a codified form, their offers concentrate in it, and their demands are reflected by it; the three key-factors of any educational system meet in it – the trainer, the student, the employer.

● The history of the *Framework...* is relatively recent. At European level, the issue was raised, in preliminary terms, in the year 2000, in Berlin, shortly after the elaboration of the Bologna Declaration. The various intermediary stages[25] led to the formulation of precise tasks within the group created in 2006 in Dublin, *The Working Group of Qualifications Frameworks,* who created the now famous tool known as ”the Dublin descriptors”. The analyses between 2007 and 2010 helped improve these processes a great deal[26]. We described earlier in this study the impact of these efforts of E.C. on the educational strategies in various countries.

● In the light of the above, we appreciate that about 40% of the distance has been covered towards the implementation of the EQF/NQF. Our estimation is, of course, personal and very subjective, as we do not really know how this great and ambitious project will generate its own directions of development.

● At any rate, despite the difficulties and obstacles already mentioned, or those that will certainly appear in the future, notwithstanding the changes of the economic and social background – at national, European or international level – through effects that are already felt, *the general process has already had some impact*. Without giving exaggerated credit to an activity in which we were personally involved, even though just as a small part of a great mechanism, we believe that if, at the end of the process, the qualifications/competences grids will fall into a logical and useful set, flexible and functional at least

[25] P. Gh. Bârlea, 2009, pp. 12-17.
[26] See, *infra* – *Bibliography*, the reports of the work commitees of 2009, as well as the official statement of the ministers of higher education of E.U.

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in its general lines, *their implementation will determine, beyond any doubt, a radical change in education*. That is, in the education at all levels, in the European countries and other signatory countries of the Bologna Declaration and of the following documents.

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