

Part 7

Educational Development Strategies in Different Countries and Regions of the World: National, Regional and Global Levels

Oksana Chigisheva, Anna Bondarenko & Elena Soltovets

Analytical Overview of the European and Russian Qualifications Frameworks with a Focus on Doctoral Degree Level

Abstract

The paper provides analytical insights into highly acute issues concerning preparation and adoption of Qualifications Frameworks being an adequate response to the growing interactions at the global labor market and flourishing of knowledge economy. Special attention is paid to the analyses of transnational Meta Qualifications Frameworks (A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and Towards a European Framework for Research Careers) and the UK National Qualifications Framework, separately for each of its constituent parts, as well as Russia. Doctoral Degree level is chosen as a core for the analytical overview as the authors believe that this qualification level deserves much attention and continuous improvement to provide highly qualified personnel for the sphere of science and education in the nearest future. Critical remarks on the real impacts of such Qualifications Frameworks policy from the international perspective are represented.

Keywords: Qualifications Framework, Europe, Russia, the UK, globalization, quality of education

Introduction

Modern global economy is in continuous search of sustainable incentives for its structural and technological growth due to the increased development of high-tech industries, introduction of new generation technologies and breakthrough fundamental research in a number of scientific fields. The global format of the problem implies its solution at the global level, not only through international business interaction, free exchange of information and technologies, creation of international production chains and strong effective partnerships, but also through perspective vision of the necessary changes. It is obvious that the economies and companies that will form these promising changes will be able to transform the old

and create new sustainably developing markets in the nearest future, and also to identify their leadership positions at them.

In this regard, a special emphasis should be made by all the countries of the world on the formation of high-quality human resources – the leading experts in their fields who will create innovations and introduce breakthrough technologies. It is obvious, that only due to the qualified and competent personnel of the highest qualification it is possible to provide both global and regional economies with explosive growth and sustainable functioning in the future.

Development of creative and knowledge economy presupposes a highly educated human capital, therefore education becomes a key element in this chain, it must keep pace with the times, be competitive and connected with production. Only leaders in education will be able to prepare leaders for the economy, so only close interaction of these two areas will allow restructuring the sphere of education as a social institution, focusing it on the production of innovations and formation of powerful scientific and intellectual potential.

Thus, addressing the issues related to the analysis of modern Qualifications Frameworks with a particular focus on Doctoral Degree level in the international format is strategically justified and prioritized for identifying key steps for sustainable growth and development of the world's countries in the future.

Key facts on Qualifications Frameworks development

First-generation 5 Qualifications Frameworks were developed and implemented in the mid-1990-s, the next 10 appeared in the mid-2000s. In 2012 already 138 countries, including 27 EU countries, were planning, developing or implementing Qualifications Frameworks at the national level (Raffe, 2013). In 2013 more than 20 countries declared of their readiness to join the process and by 2015 “the United Nations listed 193 sovereign states, so NQF coverage extended to approximately three in four countries” (Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks, 2015, p. 6).

Overview of transnational Meta Qualifications Frameworks with a focus on Doctoral Degree level

A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area was adopted at the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in Bergen, May 19-20, 2005. “We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA, comprising three cycles (including, within national contexts, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles” (The European Higher Education Area – Achieving the Goals, 2005). This framework introduces the outcomes and credit ranges in the first and second cycles as descriptors.

“Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field;
- have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity;
- have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication;
- are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas;
- can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise;
- can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society” (A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, 2005).

Thus, it may be stated that these qualifications descriptors make significant stress on the following elements:

- knowledge and understanding and their application;
- making judgments;
- communications skills;
- learning skills.

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning EQF-LLL

The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning EQF-LLL was adopted April 23, 2008 by the European Parliament and Council. It is considered as meta framework, it is the basic document for the development of National Qualifications Frameworks. It consists of 8 levels. As descriptors stand theoretical and/or factual knowledge, cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments) skills, competences in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

It should be noted that the descriptors for the third cycle in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area agreed by the ministers responsible for higher education at their meeting in Bergen in May 2005 in the framework of the Bologna Process correspond to the learning outcomes for EQF level 8. The content for level 8 includes:

1. knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields;
2. the most advanced and specialized skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice;
3. competence to demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research (The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, 2008).

European Framework for Research Careers

The document ‘Towards a European Framework for Research Careers’ issued by the European research network for innovation in 2011 may be seen as a preliminary guidance for the researchers whose work should strengthen European science and technology, promote free circulation of knowledge and technological advances thus, making them more competitive in contemporary world (Chigisheva, 2015). The offered draft distinctly defines career paths researchers may have working internationally irrespective of their age, nationality and country of residence. The offered Career Framework provides comparability in research career structures, lessens researcher’s labor market fragmentation on the national criteria, diminishes segregation tendencies between career in industry, academia and other sectors, stimulates mobility and cross-border research cooperation.

In accordance with this understanding the following stages of researcher’s career development are offered: R1 – First Stage Researcher (up to the point of PhD); R2 – Recognised Researcher (PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent); R3 – Established Researcher (researchers who have developed a level of independence); R4 – Leading Researcher (researchers leading their research area or field) (Towards a European Framework of Research Careers, 2011). The document demonstrates the profiles and necessary and desirable competences for each of them. It is important that such progressive career paths do not necessarily require transition from one stage to another and it means that the researcher may feel comfortably within one chosen stage during his/her lifespan. However it is not a desirable variant as this framework demonstrates research prospects and possible research career advantages worldwide.

Overview of the UK and Russian National Qualifications Frameworks with a focus on Doctoral Degree level

The UK National Qualifications Framework

The UK National Qualifications Framework is represented by *The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)*, *The National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QCF)*, *The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)*. Final versions of the frameworks were published in March 2010 in the “Report Referencing the Qualifications Frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European Qualifications Framework”.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework was developed by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership. It consists of 12 levels with the following descriptors identified: knowledge and understanding, practice, generic cognitive skills, communication, ICT and numeracy skills, autonomy, accountability and working with others. Level 12 corresponds to the Professional Development Awards and Doctoral Degrees and seriously correlates with the European Framework for Research Careers (2011).

It seems really important that at this level much attention is paid to the organization and research design skills. Thus, the professional should demonstrate critical understanding of research methodology and interdisciplinary knowledge leading to the production of new original and creative knowledge and significant

contributions to the research field. Practical application of concrete research outcomes is seen as a dominant characteristic of research activities; ability to research complex issues in uncertain conditions is prioritized. Thus, at this level self-efficacy, leadership and ability to cooperate become really important for the researcher if he/she wants to follow the career path in science and education (Report Referencing the Qualifications Frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European Qualifications Framework, 2010, pp. 104-105).

The National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (2010) was developed by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in partnership with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment. It consists of 8 levels plus entry level. Learning outcomes become the leading characteristic defining the content of the level. Achievement at level 8 (Doctoral Degree level) “reflects the ability to develop original understanding and extend an area of knowledge or professional practice. It reflects the ability to address problematic situations that involve many complex, interacting factors through initiating, designing and undertaking research, development or strategic activities. It involves the exercise of broad autonomy, judgment and leadership in sharing responsibility for the development of a field of work or knowledge or for creating substantial professional or organizational change. It also reflects a critical understanding of relevant theoretical and methodological perspectives and how they affect the field of knowledge or work” (Report Referencing the Qualifications Frameworks of the United Kingdom to the European Qualifications Framework, 2010, p. 26).

The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (2010) was developed by the Department for Education and Skills together with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. There are also 8 levels, the highest (Doctoral) is the last one and it precisely demonstrates the requirement for strong independence in research, good command of research methodology, critical communicative abilities and accountability for outcomes.

National Qualifications Framework of the Russian Federation

National Qualifications Framework of the Russian Federation was developed on the basis of the Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. The final version was adopted by the Order of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Russian Federation “On the approval of qualifications levels for the development of the draft for professional standards”, N 148n, April 12, 2013. National Qualifications Framework of the Russian Federation is represented by 9 levels.

The following descriptors are mentioned: indicators of skill levels – breadth of authority and responsibility (general competence), complexity of the activity (character of skills), science intensity of the activity (nature of knowledge) and the way to achieve the qualification level; however complication of the requirements from level to level is obvious.

In the National Qualifications Framework of the Russian Federation levels 8 and 9 are characteristic of the Doctoral Degree level; however level 8 additionally covers

Master and Specialist stages. Both levels also assume training within additional qualification programs and acquiring practical experience.

The difference between qualification characteristics is clearly indicated by the following parameters.

Level 8

Breadth of authority and responsibility (general competence): defining the strategy, managing the processes and activities (including innovation) with decision-making at the level of large organizations; responsibility for the performance of large organizations and (or) industry.

Complexity of the activity (character of skills): solving research and project issues related to the improvement of the processes' efficiency.

Science intensity of the activity (nature of knowledge): creation of new knowledge of interdisciplinary and intersectoral nature; evaluation and selection of information necessary for the development of the field of activity.

Level 9

Breadth of authority and responsibility (general competence): defining the strategy, managing large technical systems, social and economic processes; significant contribution to a particular field of activity, responsibility for the activity outcomes at the national or international level.

Complexity of the activity (character of skills): solving methodological, research and project issues related to the development and enhancement of the processes' efficiency.

Science intensity of the activity (nature of knowledge): creation of new fundamental knowledge of interdisciplinary and intersectoral nature.

Conclusion

It is quite obvious that the popularity of transnational and national Qualifications Frameworks is steadily growing. Some educationalists even state the existence of 'NQF-[eu]phoria' (Raffe, 2013) meaning that the number of NQFs is rapidly increasing but their impact on the national educational systems is really questionable (Raffe, 2013; Deij, 2014). The idea that all the indicators are focused on achievements rather than just formally on programs or their completion is still not fully accepted by many governmental authorities at the national level. Moreover it is not realized by the students themselves that introduction of such frameworks into national educational systems guarantees recognition of non-formal and even informal knowledge acquisition. Of high importance QFs are for Doctoral level students who are planning their career at the international level and need efficient tools for labor mobility and widening their research geography.

But what is the future for Qualifications Frameworks? Do they have it at all? And what is their impact (if any) on the economic, educational and scientific development of the countries? On the one hand it is rather clear and anticipated – global or regional influences will predominate and national ones in many ways will become synonymous to global. On the other hand it may lead to the opposite effect of changing the strategy from simple policy borrowing (as it is now) to policy

learning. In this case modernization of education, educational quality improvement and scientific and economic breakthroughs are guaranteed.

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Assoc. Prof. Dr. Oksana Chigisheva, Academy of Psychology and Pedagogy, Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia, opchigisheva@sfedu.ru

Master Student Anna Bondarenko, Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia, anuta060693@mail.ru

Senior Lecturer Elena Soltovets, Institute of Philology, Journalism and Intercultural Communication, Southern Federal University, Rostov-on-Don, Russia, hsolt@mail.ru