

## What do recent activities tell us about creating a method for levelling?

The case of Hungary

*András Derényi*

Institute for Educational Research  
and Development, Budapest  
Educational Authority

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**3 slides about the background/context**

**9 slides on the method of levelling**  
w/ comments and examples

**4 slides on lessons learnt**

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## [1] Brief history of the HuQF

- HuQF was developed for almost a decade!
- **2005-2006**: launching the implementation of the EHEA QF
- **2007-2008**: feasibility studies for an NQF of LL; awareness raising activities
- **2009-2010**: 1st phase of developing the HuQF [construction of the grid | planning the legal, organizational and institutional setting]
- **2010-2011**: intermediate policy incubation... [new government, getting started w/ the idea etc.]
- **2012-2015**: 2nd phase of developing the HuQF [preparing qualification for levelling | preparing methodology of levelling | levelling exercise | referencing | stakeholder consultations | decision]
- **February of 2015**: presentation of RR to the EQF AG

## [2] Challenges in the process

- low level of knowledge and openness towards using LOs
- scarce practice in student centred learning and outcome based planning
- low level of policy commitment and leadership on behalf of the government
- insufficient and vague assurance of resource allocation to the development process
- development and implementation is basically covered by ESF resources carried by projects [in two phases | separated projects for educational sub-sectors]
- project-based development in long run process has several drawbacks [launch and closing pressure | interference in project timing and product's life cycle | short-sighted objectives etc.]
- projects were managed by different actors [1st phase: solely by the Hu IER&D | 2nd phase: Educational Authority, National Labour Authority]
- between project phases activities took place only at a low level of intensity

## [3] Advantages

In order to cope with the challenges and to keep the process coherent in long-run, **intensive consultations and communication** had to be maintained among the actors, stakeholders involved

- new network(s) of experts, SH representatives
- cooperation among them strengthened
- good experience on common activities emerged
- experiments launched by the projects had multiplicative effects in institutions and in teaching staff.

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## Levelling methods

Three separated projects were responsible for levelling qualifications to the HuQF [ *PE* | *VET* | *HE* ]

They started to develop a common method for levelling

Search for good cases, examples, principles

- no such descriptions can be found in countries' RR!
- Note 3 and 5 on referencing NQF to EQF was useful
- Examples of self-certificating in the EHEA framework
- Criterion 3 and 4

Resources provided poor information on methodology issues to be adapted or applied

→ It was necessary to develop their own way of levelling

## Main points on levelling

### Technical approach:

Adequacy check: is the qualification in question adequate for levelling?

- Is it a qualification at all?
  - If not: it is not subject to make matching  
*[in Hu only the school based qualifications were levelled first ]*
- Does it have an outcome description formulated in LOs?
  - If not → go and write LOs for the qualification  
*[ this has happened w/ VET qualifications in Hu ]*

## Selection of qualifications to be examined

- Group based sampling  
if there are evidences, that all qualifications in a group or category have the same features due to same process, regulation and quality control on developing and founding them.

*[ as it happened w/ bachelor and master degrees in Hu HE ]*

- One by one  
each qualification is subject to levelling

*[ as it happened w/ VET qualifications in Hu ]*

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If the qualification is adequate to start the levelling exercise:

Main questions to be answered:

- What HuQF level does the qualification in question fit?
- What are the evidences of matching?
- How reliable these evidences are?
- What is the correspondence of the match between the HuQF level and the qualification in question?

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## Comparative linguistic (semantic) analysis:

- compare the qualification's description and the descriptions of the target level in the HuQF,
- search for expressions that is identical / same in meaning

Question: how to select the target level?

(How do presuppositions put risks on the results?)

In test phase, it turned out, that descriptions could be very different in formulation of LOs and expressions used; thus it is sometimes difficult to find or justify reliable match.

In order to reach a clear, unequivocal result, **counter check** was made:

- compare the qualification's LOs to the level descriptors of the NQF level that stands one level below and one level above the target level.

In most cases, counter test made it possible to come up with confident statement about the level of the qualification.

## Collecting and analysing regulations, laws concerning the qualification in question.

In many cases (in Hu) laws give quite strict regulation concerning the structure, standards, other elements of a qualification.

Details of the regulation can help identifying the level of the qualifications.

In many cases results offer an additional confidence factor to the levelling.

### Examples:

in PE: national core curriculum, central frame-curriculum, regulation on school system etc;

in VET: regulation concerning the foundation of a new qualification, orderances concerning generating level-code to the qualification considering prerequisites; rules on placing the qualification into the national VET qualification register;

in HE: Act on possible qualifications awarded in HE and on their features in terms of cycles, credits, prerequisites; the rules on the process of developing new qualifications, requirements of verifying the cycle of the qualification; requirements of verifying the social, labour market needs towards the qualification; rules on placing the qualification into the national HE qualification register.

They all give details that may well confirm the level of the q.

## Surveying social judgement and practice

LOs of a qualification and laws and legal backgrounds are only dead letters.

Practice and social judgement makes qualification alive.

Levelling old qualifications may be supported by evidences coming from the practice and social judgement.

It depends on the sector or the field of the qualification in question how rich evidences one can explore.

Sources of information:

analysis of job ads, public calls for application, opinion of HR managers and head-hunters, research papers and surveys on labour market processes, labour market data-bases [such as data on employment, job search time, wages etc.]; result of graduate tracking system or surveys; prerequisites of enrolment to an educational or training programme in terms of degree or level of education of the applicants; etc.

[in case of newly developed qualifications, preliminary surveys, market need analysis, exploration of the position of similar qualifications can substitute the survey on social judgement].

## Correspondence

In order to better inform stakeholders, it might be worth to indicate the level of correspondence of the qualification match to the stated NQF level [as it first appeared in the Scottish RR].

## Consultation on social partners

You need to be well equipped with evidences and clear presentation of them in order to go through a sincere and efficient consultation.

It is sometimes hard to face with an unexpected result, traditions and technical considerations put a pressure to remain at the well known folk-taxonomy (traditional, implicit understanding) of a qualification's level.

## Decision making

Need to establish a legal body/organization to make the final decision (parliament, government, minister, an authorized body etc.).

Political and policy views may bias the suggested level matches.

In some cases different decisions may be well founded [see reforming QF, when the aim is at developing the qualification system further].

In some other cases it is the short-run policy standpoint that may stimulate the modification of the results.

## Lessons learned

There should be three different sets of steps in accordance to the qualification type:

- Is it a newly developed qualification where development was governed by the NQF?
  - in this case it is the correspondence of LOs that should be evidenced
- Is it an old qualification with LOs originated/developed prior to an NQF has been come to effect?
- Is it an old qualification with no LOs?

# Lessons learned

Details of linguistic (semantic) analysis should be written and evidences should be presented from descriptor to descriptor (with quoted expressions, words with identical or similar meanings). That helps a lot to understand and accept the results since it underpins them with clear examples.

Semantic analysis seems to be too technical. It does not say too much about social judgement and practice concerning the qualification. Surveying social judgement and employment practice made the levelling result being more trustful and acceptable on behalf of social partners.

# Lessons learned

Side-effect: the written examination, the lessons that might be learnt from the process of levelling may be more useful than the result (level index) itself.

Levelling process itself is a good tool of learning on the inherent features of the qualification.

It makes participants more conscious about the functioning of the qualification and therefore they become masters of qualification development.

Sometimes, especially in the first phase of NQF development, this is a more important result than the construction itself.

## Lessons learned

In Hu inter-sectoral cooperation and involuntary establishment of an inter-sectoral expert network was another big added value to the process of levelling and referencing.

It is better to involve social partners and decision makers in the levelling process as early as possible in order to avoid incomprehension.

Early presupposition on levelling puts risks on the results: it may governs the levelling exercise.

# IBE

**Thank you for your kind attention.**

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**Educational Research Institute**

ul. Górczewska 8, 01-180 Warsaw

tel. +48 22 241 71 00 | [ibe@edu.pl](mailto:ibe@edu.pl) | [www.ibe.edu.pl](http://www.ibe.edu.pl)



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