

# **Learning outcomes – the German experience (so far)**

Edinburgh, 2 July 2004

Christian Tauch

German Rectors' Conference HRK

tauch@hrk.de

# The situation up the 1990s

- As in most continental European countries, LO remained a rather alien concept in German HE for many decades
- Study programmes had to be in line with nationwide „examination regulations“ that defined the formal framework for programmes in a given discipline: duration, input, content, etc.
- *Ex ante* quality assurance via ministerial approval of a programme, no evaluation or accreditation
- Strict separation of academic education and VTE

# First push towards LO: Two „Trojan Horses“

- EU pilot project on ECTS, first half of the 1990s: Info package required a definition of content and intended results of a programme and its components
- EU pilot project on quality assurance, mid-90s: spreading the notion of evaluation, self-assessment, peer review, measuring achieved results against objectives etc.

# 1998: Changing the legal framework

Amendment of the HE Framework Act:

More autonomy, competition and internationalisation, in particular:

- Introduction of Ba/Ma
- Modular structure and CS for the new programmes
- Quality assurance through accreditation

# Implementing the reforms

- 1997: „Quality“ project at the HRK: developing an „evaluation culture“ in the HEI
- 1998: Start of the accreditation system (accreditation council and agencies)
- 2 pilot projects supported by fed. & state gov:  
Selected HEI receive support to develop good practice in
  - „Modularisation“
  - „Introducing a credit system“

**Today's approach to  
LO in Germany:  
a combination of  
bottom-up and top-down**

# Bottom up

- Ba/Ma programmes have to be defined in modules and ECTS to be accredited
- HEI/departments are defining LO, both at the level of the modules and of the final degrees, drawing on experience from *Tuning*, Thematic networks, professional associations (engineers etc.)
- Presently more than 20% of German study programmes are of the BaMa type

# Top down

- Berlin Communique calls for national QFs
- Growing awareness that the traditional strict separation of academic and vocational education and the insistence on purely formal criteria (no APL or APEL) do not correspond to a changing perception of teaching and learning (LLL etc.)

# January 2004

- A working group was set up as a subgroup of the German Bologna Follow-up Group to elaborate a draft for a QF for the three academic cycles
- Composed of ministerial representatives (fed. & state level), the HEI (rectors' conf.), Accreditation Council and Tuning
- Permanent guests: VET experts

# Objective of the Working Group

- To define LO and formal requirements (entry conditions, ECTS etc.) at the level of Ba, Ma and doctorate as a tool for HEI in CD and for accreditation agencies in their work
- To secure input from all stakeholders – employers, students, professors...
- To make sure that this first approach to a German QF be sufficiently open and flexible to serve as a basis for a comprehensive QF, including qualifications obtained at school or professional level

# Modest beginnings...

<b>Academic</b>	<b>VET</b>	<b>?</b>
Doctorate		
?		
Master	?	
?		
Bachelor	?	
?		
?		
?		
?		

# Methodology

- After a careful examination of the existing QF inside and outside Europe
- we decided to start with a mixed approach of Dublin descriptors and Tuning categories (having experts in the working group),
- trying to keep it simple
- but being aware that more detailed definitions and categories may become necessary as the QF develops into a more comprehensive document

# Problems ahead

- Finding the right balance between general and specific definitions for LO (applicable to engineers and musicians alike)
- Refining the „knowledge“ descriptors
- Marking clearly the difference between Secondary School (Abitur) and Ba., between Ba. and Ma.
- Convincing the HEI and academics to fill the general LO with concrete meaning at the level of the programmes
- Overcoming reservations against defining LO at doctoral level
- Joining forces with the school and VET authorities to arrive at a comprehensive QF

# **And how about you?**

Experiences from other countries and contexts...

Any comments, criticism, suggestions?

**Thank you very much for your attention!**