

# Changing Qualifications

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on behalf of Cambridge Assessment UK

# The study aims to...

- provide an overview of existing research in the field of qualifications and qualifications systems
- describe qualifications systems, provide illustrations of the role and functions of qualifications in a range of countries, and analyse how these are changing
- identify the factors influencing these changes and discuss possible future options as regards the role of qualifications in our societies with a particular attention to lifelong learning

# Evidence: Three main sources

- Literature (wide scope)
- CEDEFOP studies (all recent and relevant)
- Country evidence (worldwide but focussing on MS, some in depth)

# CEDEFOP studies

- The shift to learning outcomes
- The dynamics of qualifications (occupational and educational standards)
- The relationship between quality assurance and certification of VET in EU
- Exploring the relationship between credit systems and qualifications frameworks
- Sectoral qualifications and how they are evolving in the environment of the EQF
- Learning outcomes and curricula (educational standards)
- Qualifications at levels 6 and 7 in the EQF

Additionally the following CEDEFOP work is being taken into account

- Future skills supply in Europe
- Assuring the quality of VET systems using learning outcomes
- Modernising VET, 4<sup>th</sup> research report
- CEDEFOP's July 09 study on the development of National Qualifications Frameworks

# Country evidence

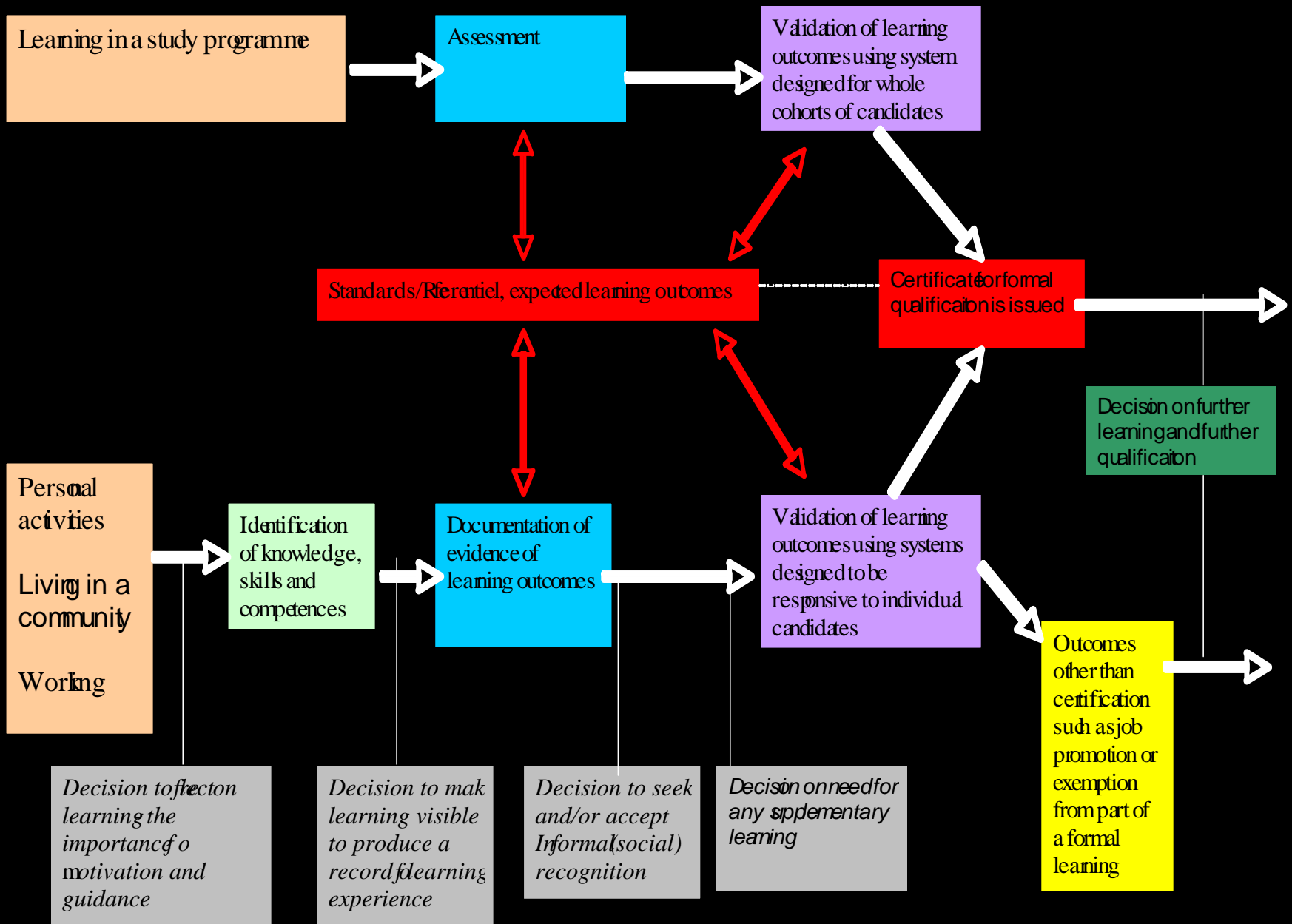
- What are the main pressure(s) for changes to qualifications - or the qualifications system as a whole - in your country.
- Is there change in the view of policymakers about the role of qualifications in achieving policy goals?
- What is actually changing in terms of qualifications and the system as a whole in your country?

# Some gaps in information

- Belgium (Fr+Fl)
- Finland
- Hungary
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Norway
- Poland
- Slovak Republic
- Slovenia
- Spain

# The qualification process

- *Learning*: the basis of qualification, this learning could be gained through a formal curriculum or learning through experiences in settings such as work or personal and social activities; learning might take the form of knowledge, skills or wider competences such as personal and social competences.
- *Assessment*: judgement of a person's knowledge, skills and wider competences against criteria such as learning outcomes or standards of competence.
- *Validation*: confirmation that the outcomes of assessment meet predetermined criteria (standards) and that a valid and reliable assessment procedure was followed. This means that the outcomes have been quality assured and can be trusted.
- *Certification*: a record of the learning has been validated; the certificate usually issued by a body which has public trust and competence, confers official recognition of an individual's value in the labour market and in further education and training.
- *Recognition*: follows the previous four stages and is seen in the raised self esteem of individuals and when third parties use the qualified status of an individual to offer progression into a new job, higher pay and/or increased social status.





# Help us to tune in to change

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

# Strong signals of change

- the EQF is an engine for change
- NQF development and their associated functions
- commitment to learning outcomes
- linking of formal, non formal and informal validation
- pressure for stronger links between the labour market and education

# Signals of change

- the role of qualifications becoming broader and stronger e.g. system management, accountability
- government interest in qualifications as a policy tool is increasing
- pressures for convergence of the concept of qualification
- broader use of criteria/standards
- qualifications are increasingly structuring VET
- limits to the capacity of social partners to support qualification process
- modularisation of programmes
- international benchmarks and surveys are important
- routes into qualifications are receiving attention
- the VET/higher education bridge is important
- employability is a key issue

# Weak signals of change

- credit transfer arrangements
- level 9 post doctoral recognition
- overqualification
- changes in higher education qualifications
- support for pedagogies from qualifications
- motivating people to learn
- move towards a more market driven system
- e-assessment
- use of registers of qualifications

# No signals of change

- changes in recruitment practices based on qualification
- shifts in control of the design and operation of major national school qualifications
- changes to assessment patterns
- new functions
- new needs from users
- shifts in the desirability for achievement (whole programme outcomes) and attainment (assessed outcomes)

# Change v stability

- qualifications are naturally dynamic - what is the nature of the cyclic changes
- there is a rhetoric about change from policy leaders. Some of the changes may not be as new as they seem as there is clearly weak corporate/policy memory
- locus of control
- demand led systems with supply side controls
- the knowledge base/subjects

# Stakeholders

Involvement of stakeholders is critical for the advancement of qualifications systems as tools for lifelong learning. There are signs that stakeholders are more involved in qualifications systems (often through the development of NQFs and validation processes) but this is possibly limited by the capacity of social partners to make sustained interventions.

# Currency

Lifelong learning should be accompanied by lifelong recognition – for most people the validation of learning is important for recognition (self esteem and for progression in salaries, jobs and studies). Achievement of qualifications is growing yet evidence is not clear when deciding whether qualifications are carrying the currency for enabling progression. If the currency of qualifications depends on factors other than the learning outcomes that are signalled by the qualifications (content) then there is danger that credentialism is emerging.



# Lifelong learners

Lifelong learners need the possibility to update and extend their validated learning update and renew their knowledge, skills and competence throughout life. This demands that qualifications are more flexible in terms of structure and assessment and reporting. Whilst there is evidence for the modernising of qualifications and the development of new qualifications for specific social groups, the evidence is less clear when it comes to deciding whether the use of learning outcomes, availability of modular programmes and unit assessment are allowing qualifications to meet the potential demand from lifelong learners

# Some additional points

- Is it the EQF or the development of NQFs or the development of LO that could lead to increased mobility, transparency, breadth of validation, etc.?
- What is the reality of the strength of LLL as a driver of change? Economic, personal and social arguments are clear for LLL but do the EU and national policy positions have real substance or are they simply ways of expressing a whole range of reform actions?
- What are the trends in assessment? E-assessment, documentation and formal examinations as measures of achievement may be changing in significance. Is formative assessment rising in significance?
- Is there more cross education sector validation of achievement?
- How is the role of NQFs as a quality instrument changing?
- Key Competences: what changes in qualifications?

# Looking forward systematically - scenarios methodology

How is the environment around qualifications likely to change?

What are the trends and, most importantly, what is uncertain?

CEDEFOP toolkit

# Feeding into the project