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Journalism Education and National Qualifications Frameworks:

A Look into the Future

Introduction

National qualifications frameworks have been developed and implemented in many countries aiming to bring education and training closer to the employment markets. The EU member states have set a highly ambitious goal – to become world leaders in socio-economic development and quality of the employment potential by 2020. To achieve this goal, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), an international collaborative system, was launched during the Budapest-Vienna Ministerial Conference held by the Bologna Process members in March 2010. As a result, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ EHEA), the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL) have been adopted; over 20 national frameworks of qualifications (NQFs) have been implemented, and professional and qualification standards are being actively developed. Recently, several former Soviet states have also embarked on developing NQFs (Qualifications Frameworks in the EHEA; Bologna Process; The European Qualifications Framework; Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation of Denmark). The comparison of professional standards in journalism with the Ukrainian National Qualifications Framework reveals discrepancies between the system of journalism training at university level and actual qualifications levels.

Theoretical Framework

National Qualifications Frameworks in Europe, generally approved by national governments, have similar contents and structure, which ensures a common understanding of qualifications in different countries. But most importantly, these documents ensure that educators and employers share a common understanding of qualifications.

The EQF is comprised of eight reference levels (European Qualifications Framework), while the British framework has nine levels applied to all types of education, training and qualifications from secondary school to academic, professional and vocational. A sample of the NQF applied in the UK, for instance, is available free of charge online (National Qualifications Framework).

The table below provides an overview of some characteristics of national qualifications frameworks described by Ukrainian scholar Sergiy Melnyk (Melnyk 17-18).

Table 1

Characteristics of national qualifications frameworks

Characteristics	Number of countries
Countries with fully implemented NQFs	4
Countries that fully / partially borrowed ('imported') the EQF	19 (Finland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, some African and Asian countries)
Countries planning to implement their NQFs	
in 2010	6 (France, Finland et al.)
in 2011	12 (Italy, Spain, Denmark et al.)
in 2012	4 (Bulgaria, Romania et al.)

in 2013-2015	17
the term is not specified	37

Countries with the following number of qualification levels:

6	3 (Sri Lanka, Singapore, Saudi Arabia)
7	2 (Iceland, Hong Kong)
8	65 countries
9	5 (Scotland (plus 3 access levels), the Russian Federation, India, the Philippines, Great Britain)
10	3 (Ireland, Thailand, New Zealand)
more than 10	2 (Australia, Croatia)
Countries seriously violating the EQF classification norms	1 (the Russian Federation)
Countries currently developing NQFs and the 'Bologna Framework' separately for their further mutual recognition	38
Countries currently developing NQFs for pre-university education only	5

The Ukrainian National Qualifications Framework was introduced by the Cabinet of Ministers resolution of 23 November 2011. Similar to the British NQF, it generally complies with the European Qualifications Framework as a single multilevel system of qualifications adopted at national and international levels. The Ukrainian NQF allows to assess / to measure and correlate the learning outcomes reflecting individual's abilities to apply their knowledge and skills in practice, which helps in translating diplomas and certificates of education issued by countries whose NQFs have been recognized as complying with the EQF requirements (see

Recommendations of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe on the EQF introduction of 23 April 2008). The Ukrainian NQF consists of nine levels, including a zero/basic level. The highest (ninth) additional level is equivalent to the national Doctor of Science degree.

The comparison of National Qualifications Frameworks with the EQF reveals that majority of NQFs include the “European” core of qualifications (see Melnyk). This allows comparing on the international scale and translating professional standards in different countries developing their national frameworks. The process of borrowing practices in developing professional standards of other countries makes these standards comparable; at the same time this allows to view them as equally related to the European qualifications framework. In other words, the Ukrainian professional standard in journalism is related to Ukraine’s NQF the same way as, for instance, the British professional standard to the British NQF because the Ukrainian professional standard in journalism was modeled after the British one.

As of April 2013, Ukraine has two draft projects of professional standards in the area of journalism and information – professional standards for qualifications ‘Multimedia Journalist’ and ‘Multimedia Editor.’ These standards were developed by employers in media sphere, have been the topic of heated debates, and currently are undergoing approval at the governmental level.

Research Methodology

In June 2012, the Ukrainian team of researchers consisting of seven Doctors of Science and two Doctors of Philosophy, headed by the author of this report, carried out a comparative study

of two draft projects defining professional standards in journalism ‘Multimedia Journalist’ and ‘Multimedia Editor’ with the Ukrainian NQF.

At the first stage of the study the team determined its goals and the conditions under which professional standards should function. The main proposition was that the professional standard is determined by the employer and is the order for education, the sphere where future journalists are trained. It is the core of the curriculum and educational programs. The educational process should provide knowledge and skills prescribed by the professional standard. The shortcomings of professional standards should be also revealed in the process of professional training. They should be analyzed by educators and employers and improved according to their decisions. Educational plans, module programs and the educational process in general are organized on the basis of competencies. The traditional conceptual approach to education emphasizing ‘learning inputs’ should be incorporated into this new approach and be less explicit. The planning of educational process does not require teaching any additional functions, knowledge or skills other than those outlined in the professional standard. The main task is to provide education that ensures the employer is fully satisfied with specialists in the area of training they have ordered from educational institution. This result is much more difficult to achieve when universities, instead of focusing on one professional standard, combine two or even more professional standards, or combine a professional standard with an academic qualification. This requires students to gain additional knowledge and develop many additional skills. For instance, the focus of training in vocational schools is the ‘core’ skills. At university level this ‘core’ can be enhanced with academic qualification, i.e. a bachelor’s or master’s degree. As a result, the graduate will not only be a specialist in the area required by the employer, but also an expert with a bachelor’s degree, able to use additional knowledge and skills. Therefore, academic and

professional qualifications should be clearly outlined and differentiated in the curriculum and in educational institution in general. The academic qualification should neither interfere with the professional standard, nor change its logic. The student without any academic qualification from university will be issued a certificate of a specialist, but not a university diploma.

The second stage of the study. The second draft project of the professional standard ‘Multimedia Journalist’ outlines the following employment functions and learning outcomes (see Table 2):

Table 2

List of the descriptors of the professional standard (employment functions and core learning outcomes) before the analysis

Code	Core employment functions and learning outcomes
7A	To organize and carry out journalistic work
7A.1	To provide content for the section he or she is responsible following the requirements for material’s volume, editorial classification, rules of law and ethical norms
7A.2	To conduct interviews
7A.3	To quickly edit material observing language norms
7B	To design media content
6B.1	To create interesting and meaningful headlines using key words
7B.2	To monitor web-based media, print media and television on a regular basis
7B.3	To ensure that received information does not violate media laws

6B	To promote media content
6B.1	To promote media content (on the front page, in social media, in a news column etc.)
6B.2	To analyze the role of the market, consumers and the intended audience for editorial content
6B.3	To maintain up-to-date general and specialized knowledge

In fact, the number of the code refers to a qualification level in the National Qualifications Framework, which the employers have established independently, thus confirming their interest in hiring a graduate with educational level corresponding to a particular level in the National Qualifications Framework. However, the results of the survey among employers who had developed this professional standard, reveal their inclination not to take into account the qualification of a graduate, written in his or her certificate (a junior specialist, a bachelor's or a master's degree). The employer's main concern seems to be the compliance of the graduate's qualification with the professional standard. Despite that, employers cannot help but get affected by a fashionable trend of recent years: Their prospect employee should have a master's degree or even a doctoral degree!

In regard to the main employment functions, they will undoubtedly become part of the course 'Multimedia Journalist' in the future and cover at least half of all the obligatory courses in the curriculum. The obligatory part of curricula should conform to the 'core' of education, thus has to include the cycle of professional disciplines, which will ensure the student has a professional qualification. The academic qualification is additional; it accompanies the professional one, which is not provided by this standard. This additional qualification requires a different curriculum.

Every employment function at each level of the professional standard encompasses a range of core learning outcomes. In fact, these learning outcomes constitute the aim of the education and at the same time are its results.

The table below provides the characteristics of core employment functions and learning outcomes for qualification ‘Multimedia journalist’ corresponding to level 7 (‘To organize and carry out journalistic work’) and sublevel 7A (‘To provide content for the section he or she is responsible following the requirements for material’s volume, editorial classification, rules of law and ethical norms.’)

Table 3

Characteristics of the descriptors of the professional standard (core employment functions and learning outcomes) before the analysis

Code 7A.1	Core employment functions
Core learning outcomes	<p>To select material meeting the requirements of the information content, the set assignment, the allotted time and budget</p> <p>To oversee if the format of the material meets the requirements for its organization and is appropriate for a particular distribution platform</p> <p>To determine the cost, terms, copyrights and other legal restrictions on the use of the material and, if necessary, to obtain permission to use it</p> <p>To provide references to sources according to the editorial policy</p> <p>To identify problems and, in case there’re serious consequences, to discuss and solve them with technical staff and decision makers</p> <p>To assess the quality of data by means of suitable and reliable technologies</p>

To ensure the protection of information content and the medium on which it is stored from any physical damage during work and storage

Required knowledge

Legal and ethical aspects that affect the use of content material (content consumption) for their respective usage on all platforms

Rules and policy of company or organization about sending and receiving material which can be regarded as confidential or dubious

Commercial, domestic and international copyright laws (depending on the location of the property)

Principles of using copyrighted material from another country or in a different country

Familiarity with the editorial policy about citing sources

Awareness of the value of accurate technical and descriptive metadata, including information about the authorship of the content

Basic approaches to establishing contact with different individuals and receiving necessary information from them

Resolutions, orders, decrees, methodological and regulatory materials that govern activities in the sphere of multimedia

Required skills and abilities

To analyse data according to the outlined objectives while preparing the material

To use legal documents while developing the budget

To use materials and equipment when assessing the importance of the prepared information; to react fast in case of damage threat to news content and media; to use computer and office equipment under various working conditions

Professional equipment

Recorder, computer, phone, printer, scanner, the Internet, fax, photo and video equipment

Since no learning outcome by itself has a qualification level, the researchers had to create a professional portrait of a multimedia journalist on the basis of the core learning outcomes, whose qualification would correspond to a qualification level provided by the NQF.

A professional portrait of a multimedia journalist covers a number of employment functions and learning outcomes. Thus, he or she is a professional who:

1. Organizes and implements the journalistic activity, i.e.:

Ensures that the content of the section for which he or she is responsible, meets

the required volume, editorial classification, legal rules and ethical norms;

Regularly monitors online media, print media and television;

Conducts interviews;

Verifies the accuracy of information, according to the media laws;

2. Generates publishing content, i.e.:

Creates editorial content for online media;

Writes interesting and meaningful headlines using key words;

Promptly edits material observing language norms;

Quickly edits material that has to be speedily delivered to the audience;

3. Promotes media content, i.e.:

Examines the role of the consumer market and the role of the audience for editorial content;

Maintains up-to-date general and specialized knowledge;

Provides media promotion of the content (on the home page, in social media, news column, etc.).

According to the employer, the abovementioned comprises an image of a professional journalist that is generally consistent with the qualification level 7, which requires a master's degree. To check the plausibility of the employer's idea, the research team had to make a step by step comparison of learning outcomes prescribed in the professional standard by employers, listed in the table above, with the National Qualifications Framework. The aim of the comparison was to establish whether the learning outcomes correspond to the professional image of the seventh level of the professional qualification. In those cases when they didn't correspond, the researchers by means of a cognitive experiment designed a portrait of the professional belonging to either a lower or a higher level of training and drew a conclusion about the correlation between the learning outcome and the qualification level described in the NQF.

As a result of this analysis, the researchers developed the corrected table of the key employment functions (for comparison, see the codes in Table 3):

Table 4

List of descriptors of professional standards (core employment functions and learning outcomes) after the analysis

Code	Core Employment Functions and Learning Outcomes
(6A)	The ability to organize and carry out journalistic work
(5A.1)	The ability provide content for the section he or she is responsible following the requirements for material's volume, editorial classification, rules of law and ethical norms (5) (Technology of Content Design)
(5A.2)	The ability to conduct an interview

- (6A.3) The ability to edit material promptly and efficiently observing language norms (Editing Electronic Publications)
 - 6B The ability to create media content
 - (6B.1) The ability to design interesting and informative headlines using key words (Complex of Headlines)
 - (6B.2) The ability to regularly monitor Internet publications, print media and television (Forming The Journalistic Profile)
 - (5B.3) To insure that received information does not violate media laws (Legal Regulation Of Editorial Activity, Foundations of Ethics and Conflict Management)
 - 6B The ability to promote media content
 - 6B.1 The ability to promote media content (on the front page, in social media, in news columns, etc.) (Methodology of Media Product Promotion)
 - 4B.2 The ability to analyze the role of the market, consumers and intended audience for the editorial content (Foundations of Forming Editorial Content)
 - 5B.3 The ability to maintain up-to-date general and specialized knowledge (Optimization of Media Content)
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Results

The report below summarizes the results of the study.

REPORT

of the work of the team of researchers that compared the draft projects of professional standards “Multimedia Journalist” and “Multimedia Editor” with the National Qualifications Framework (Ukraine)

Executing the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine № 566 of 11 May 2012 “About the implementation of new standards in high and professional education” a working group of higher education’s branch standards developing in the field of “Journalism and information” worked from 7 June to 14 June 2012 using the facilities of Taurida National V.I. Vernadsky University in the town of Alushta (the Crimea).

1. The focus of study was the comparison of journalism professional standards with National Qualifications Framework. In particular, the core employment functions, skills and learning outcomes were compared to the qualification levels in the National Qualifications Framework. The purpose of the research was to establish the relative qualification level that would meet the employer’s requirements for multimedia journalists and editors, outlined by professional standards. The comparison was conducted by correlating employment functions and learning outcomes with descriptors of qualification levels in the National Qualifications Framework. Since a specialist’s qualification does not correspond to any particular employment function or learning outcome, the descriptors outlined by employers were introduced in the broader context of professional situations. That contextual introduction was discussed and the conclusion was drawn about the correspondence of each specific employment function of learning outcome to a particular qualification level.
2. After comparative analysis, the working team obtained the following results and reached the following conclusions:
 - 1) Occupational standards of employers should be considered only as an order for training of professionals required in the field. The requirement for qualification level, set forth in section 2 “The index card on type of work (professional) activity” in the

professional standard, is mainly of advisory nature and should be regarded by the education system as recommendation only, since the task of the employer is not to determine a qualification level, but to create an order for the education system by means of employment functions and learning outcomes required in the field;

- 2) Learning outcomes and skills are differentiated in occupational standards according to the qualification levels as follows (number next to the *NQF* indicates a qualification level, the digits after the dash – the number of learning outcomes; number of outcomes of complementary qualifications is marked with an asterisk; in total there are 89 outcomes outlined in the professional standard “Multimedia Journalist”, and 17 outcomes in the professional standard “Multimedia Editor”):

Multimedia Journalist

NQF 7 – 2 (1/1*) – 2.25%

NQF 6 – 15 (3/12*) – 16.85%

NQF 5 – 19 (10/9*) – 21.35%

NQF 4 – 27 (16/11*) – 30.34%

NQF 3 – 21 (15/6*) – 23.60%

NQF 2 – 4 (4/0) – 4.49%

NQF 1 – 1 (1/0) – 1.12%

Multimedia Editor

NQF 6 – 7 – 41.18%

NQF 5 – 4 – 23.53%

NQF 4 – 5 – 29.41%

NQF 3 – 1 – 5.88%

- 3) The differentiation of learning outcomes testifies that the qualification “Multimedia Journalist” corresponds to the qualification level 4 almost to one third; it significantly includes qualification level 3 as well as level 5. Level 6 is important. However, taking into account the correlation of the main journalistic qualification and two complementary qualifications of Advertiser / PR expert and PR manager, level 6 is not significantly represented in the main qualification – 3% (in total, the main qualification accounts for 56.17%, comparing to complementary qualifications). Thus, the core of qualification “Multimedia Journalist” equals qualification levels 3-5 – 82% of the main qualification. Complementary qualification corresponds to a large extent to level 6.

Multimedia Journalist

NQF 7 – 2 (1/1*) – 2.25% (1.12% / 1.12%)

NQF 6 – 15 (3/12*) – 16.85% (3.37% / 13.48%)

NQF 5 – 19 (10/9*) – 21.35% (11.24% / 10.11%)

NQF 4 – 27 (16/11*) – 30.34% (17.98% / 12.36%)

NQF 3 – 21 (15/6*) – 23.60% (16.85% / 6.74%)

NQF 2 – 4 (4/0) – 4.49%

NQF 1 – 1 (1/0) – 1.12%

- 4) Determining the qualification level for the educational and qualification characteristics, let’s focus on the highest level of qualification core – 5, considering

- levels 4 and 3 as directly incoming, i.e. as those that should be checked by the acceptance, or transfer to level 5;
- 5) The differentiation of learning outcomes testifies that almost one-third of the qualification “Multimedia Editor” corresponds to the qualification level 6, but significant is the percentage for levels 5 and 4. Unlike with qualification ‘Multimedia journalist,’ basic outcomes, but not complementary ones, are outlined in the editor’s standards. Thus, the editor’s professional standard can be implemented at the level of two educational programs – at levels 3-5 and at level 6;
 - 6) Professional journalistic standard is overloaded with complementary qualifications, such as of Advertiser / PR expert and PR manager. This fact should not be considered as a lack of understanding by employers of the difference between these qualifications, and should be treated as the requirement of the industry to have such professionals with the main qualification of a journalist who can simultaneously perform duties of an advertiser, a PR expert, and a manager;
 - 7) The employment functions outlined in professional standards are not always properly provided by learning outcomes and skills; learning outcomes and skills are more simple and “primitive” than the employment function. Almost all employment functions are based on actions that are characteristic to specialists of different qualification levels. However, it may become the subject of discussion on the gradual training of specialists to perform a specific employment function at different qualification levels – from the lowest to the highest one;
 - 8) The fact that employers outlined qualification level 7 in both occupational standards, and in fact at the level of learning outcomes and skills they formed an order at level 3-

5, partly 6, – indicates the existence of misunderstanding of the correlation of qualification levels and educational and qualification levels;

- 9) The working group proposes to implement professional standards developed by employers concerning the opening of EQL ‘Junior Specialist’ to train a Multimedia Journalist, major 5.030301, specialization ‘Multimedia Editor’ in the respective colleges.

Discussion

Today there is a widely spread opinion that higher education in journalism is useless – its goals, principles and content are alien to practitioners because they consider education too academic. Practitioners complain that graduates from journalism departments need long-term on-the-job training (they have to be taught basic professional skills) before they can work effectively in editor’s office. This gap between journalism education and current needs of the market can be overcome by introducing professional standards into education. On the world arena journalism as a professional activity is the most sensitive in terms of rules, regulations and principles of work organization. First of all, it is due to the openness of the professional activity since anyone, regardless of their major, can call themselves journalists and work in the field. However, it is obvious that, if there is a professional activity, there should also be a system of staff training. The latter means that only those people should be employed who have been trained professionally, i.e. who received their degrees. The system of training in journalism is to be based on occupational standards specific for the professional activity. So, where one should look for media occupational standards? The absence of occupational standards in professional activity and the field reveals either deep professional crisis or its beginning.

If there is no professional agreement about the rules and regulations of work, education is helpless since it has no guidelines. In fact, history of journalism education is an academic initiative in terms of studying and academic treatment of the professional activity. The problem is that the employers have never discussed their professional requirements with universities. Everything has been on the hearsay level in terms of criticism: Inadequate training. And that was all. That's why educators are not just aware of the gap between the field and universities; they are also trying to overcome it. But this is a one way movement and without a feedback. In reality, the media field should be an active participant in their prospect staff training process, not merely a consumer. This is not to say they should participate in training journalists – the editorial offices will never substitute universities since they have their own issues and everybody must do their work. The best that editorial offices can do is to adapt the graduates to their technologies as well as to improve skills of their staff. The role of editorial offices in staff training is that they are able to work out professional requirements through trade unions or journalistic society, or specially set up bodies as well as they are in charge of students' training i.e. teach them but not just use them as staff, moreover, participate in both tutorials and seminars.

It's obvious that educational institutions are interested in introduction of a set of professional standards. But the very journalistic community must accept them and stick to them. The movement towards creation of occupational standards which is finally under way in Ukraine is sure to have a positive impact on the very journalistic community.

Only National Qualifications Frameworks can shed light on the adequacy of our educational and training levels in terms of the requirements of the professional activity. As neither the trade, nor education had such a document in the past (and not only in Ukraine!), the

system of professional training in the world “got carried away”: Everybody wants to have a master’s degree and everybody wants to train only graduate students.

The problem is that educational system will retard the process because of its own interests or will reluctantly coordinate their academic programs with occupational standards, since this concerns the existence of institutes, departments, schools and teachers. In fact, today employers through their set of occupational standards have placed an order for training of a primary position in media, i.e. reporters which correspond to the level of vocational schools. The latter are actually absent in Ukraine, and there are very few of them in the world. Combination of both professional skills of a journalist which are actually required by employees and academic community should take place but, on the other hand, it seems odd, if we speak about combination of master’s degree program and professional skills of a junior specialist. Taking this process to extremes leads to the fact that employers blame universities for excessive academism of journalism academic programs.

The findings of the research first of all have proved the fundamental identity of National Qualifications Frameworks in different countries. Secondly, if one compares them with occupational standards in journalism, there is a common for many countries but not quite healthy tendency towards overestimation of the role of bachelor’s and master’s programs in training journalists. Occupational standards in journalism while compared with national qualifications in reality correspond to the fourth and fifth qualification levels. Which translates into the language of education as a necessity to provide mass training of journalists on the level of vocational education, specifically in the short cycle of Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area. Thus, occupational standard “Multimedia Journalist” has got the following qualification index:

2.25% corresponds to level 7 (master's degree)

16.85% corresponds to level 6 (bachelor's degree)

21.35% corresponds to level 5

30.34% corresponds to level 4

23.60% corresponds to level 3

4.49% corresponds to level 2

1.12% corresponds to level 1

Conclusion

The analyzed draft projects of the Ukrainian professional standards “Multimedia Journalist” and “Multimedia Editor”, which have a lot in common with the British occupational standards, have a clearly outlined component of junior specialist professional qualification, and, for the editor, a bachelor's degree. The survey conducted among employers proved they are not concerned with the name of the degree held by graduates; the only things relevant and important to them are the graduate's skills and knowledge required by occupational standards.

Educational system which doesn't react to qualification terms will finally find itself (and has already found!) in the situation when academic master's degree programs in journalism, in fact, will not correspond to the level of master's degree according to the qualification term applied in Europe, but will fully satisfy the employer, i.e. academic programs will actually correspond to the level of professional but not academic higher education, despite preserving the name ‘master's degree.’

Every country has to make a choice taking into consideration national traditions of education and culture.

According to the decision of the Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine has found its own solution: To implement a competent-based approach to organizing academic activity in the professional training of reporters as the most optimal way to implement the professional standard into the academic activity. Besides that, an attempt was made to set a strict distinction between professional and academic qualifications during the education period. The change of educational-qualifying level and its improvement in particular, is accounted not for the academic training complication, but for the reasonable change of the occupational standard with its representation on the educational level. The complexity of academic training varies within the limits presupposed by the vocational qualification. Such approach makes manipulations of educational-qualification levels impossible outside the interests of the field.

A team of Ukrainian researchers that analysed the abovementioned documents suggested that the Ministry of Education and Science should introduce professional training of reporters at the level of vocational education. This team will use all the corporate networks, that they have in their disposal, to reach out to colleagues in journalism education and encourage them to conduct a similar analysis of their curricula and examine their compliance with national professional standards and National Qualifications Framework. This will result in linking up the system of journalism training to the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ EHEA) and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL). This will promote understanding, equality and transparency of journalism education worldwide.

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A team of Ukrainian researchers have conducted a comparative study of National Frameworks of Qualifications and professional standards in journalism education. The focus of their research was the comparison of journalism professional standards with the NQF. The results of the study revealed that professional standards in journalism, compared to the NQF, basically correspond to the fourth and fifth levels of qualification. Translating this into the

language of education, the bulk of journalism training should be performed at vocational educational level, particularly, as part of the short-cycle Framework for Qualifications in the EHEA.