The challenge of writing competency-based learning outcomes

Astrid Scholten, Head Studies Department
Jenneke Lokhoff, Policy Officer
Workshop 3rd Quality Assurance Forum
Budapest, 21 November 2008

nuffic

Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education

Writing competency based learning outcomes

■ Presentation of theoretical framework

■ Writing of learning outcomes in sub-groups

■ Plenary reporting and discussion on findings

nuffic Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education

Definitions 1

Competence and competencies (*Kouwenhoven, 2003*)

> Competence refers to the quality of being able to perform the key professional tasks of a profession up to standard

Tool box

> In order to perform up to standard, professionals need certain attributes (knowledge, skills and attitudes), and the need to know when to use which attribute and how! (meta-cognitive skills)

Tools

Competencies are context and culture specific!

nuffic   Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education

Definitions 2

Qualification

Ellström (1998)
> *The requirements at **system level** need to perform a task or job up to standard*

Klarus (1999)
> *If a person can demonstrate that he/she has mastered the required abilities he/she can be awarded the respective qualification*

- A qualification gives rise to a number of rights or priviliges
- Competencies and qualifications are linked to each other through a set of standards

nuffic   Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education
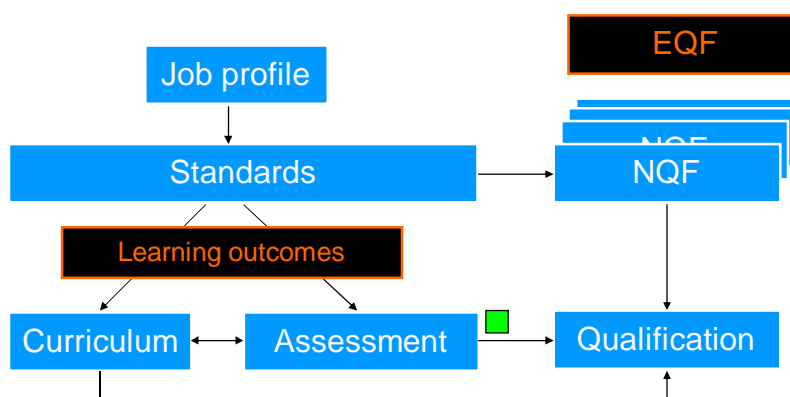
Definitions 3

(Competency) standards

Mansfield and Mitchell (1996)

'…standards offer a benchmark against which individual learning can be assessed and planned'

Definitions 4

Job profile		EQF
Standards	→	NQF
Learning outcomes		
Curriculum ↔ Assessment	▪	Qualification

CoRe Project:
Objectives

Goal

- Evaluating the usefulness of the TUNING competence profiles for the purpose of international credential evaluation

nuffic | Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education

CoRe project:
Activities performed

Evaluation of programme documents of 14 institutions

Documents required from institutions:
- Diploma Supplement / Transcript
- Competence profile

Nursing	History
4 programmes	3 programmes
4 countries	3 countries
Chemistry	Business
4 programmes	3 programmes
4 countries	3 countries

nuffic | Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education

CoRe project:
Evaluation process

Evaluation of information in the competence profile

- additional information

- clear, brief and specific

- missing information

- better understanding of qualification

- effect on evaluation conclusion

nuffic   Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education

CoRe project:
Evaluation process

Evaluation of design of competence profile

- structure

- type of information

- effectiveness of descriptions

- usefulness for credential evaluation

- recommendations for improvement

nuffic   Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education

CoRe project:
Conclusions - Design of the competence profile

- Number of competences: 11 to 113

- Number of categories: 2 to 5

- Clustering of competences varies (see next page)

- Written texts, lists, tables or a combination

- Different perspectives

Conclusion: more uniformity is needed

nuffic Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education

---

CoRe project:
Conclusions

- Intellectual competences
- Professional competences
- Practice competences

- Knowledge
- Skills
- Attitudes

- Care provider
- Director
- Designer
- Coach
- Professional practitioner

- Competencies and standards
- Principles and concepts: application
- Subject knowledge, understanding and associated skills

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills, qualities and attributes

- Course objectives and competences
- The profession
- Personal qualities and skills for nurses

- Knowledge and understanding
- Practical and academic ability
- Competence in communication
- General academic competence

- Chemistry-related cognitive abilities and skills
- Skills related to the conduct of laboratory work
- Generic skills

Conclusion: clustering of competences should be more similar

nuffic Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education

CoRe project:
Examples of competence descriptions

Bachelor's programme in nursing

- Masters basic academic working methods, which are prerequisites for acquiring post-graduate competences at master level

- Formulates, elaborates and evaluates a care plan in accordance with professional standards

- The graduate is able to collect and process information

nuffic   Netherlands organization
          for international cooperation
          in higher education

CoRe project:
Examples of competence descriptions

Bachelor's programme in history

- The graduates acquire generic skills which are applicable in many other contexts

- Possesses a broad basic knowledge of historiography and the theory of history

- The graduates have self-awareness

nuffic   Netherlands organization
          for international cooperation
          in higher education

CoRe project:
Conclusions – usefulness for credential evaluation

- Only a few cases provide relevant information for general credential evaluators

- More examples are found of relevant specific information for admissions officers or employers

nu[fic Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education

CoRe project:
Recommendations for improvement

- More uniformity in number and clustering of competences

- Uniform listings of competences

- Clear distinction between generic and subject-specific skills

- More information on level and scope of competence

- Better linking of competences and the subjects taken

- More uniformity in competence language

nu[fic Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education

CoRe II project

- Development of a standard format

- Development of a brochure how to formulate competences within three fields (nursing, history and physics)

- Development of a glossary of terms

CoRe project Website – www.core-project.eu

nuffic Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education

Workshop activity

- Identify the key generic competences

- What format would you use to present the learning outcomes?

- What are the challenges, in terms of formulating the learning outcomes?

nuffic Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education

Thank you for your attention!

Contact details:

Ms Astrid Scholten, Head of Studies Department
ascholten@nuffic.nl
Ms Jenneke Lokhoff, Policy Officer
jlokhoff@nuffic.nl

nuffic   Netherlands organization
for international cooperation
in higher education