Action lines to support curricula in the implementation of a national qualification framework (0198)

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One of the objectives of the Bologna Agreement implies the definition/description of the learning outcomes of every single curriculum. This goal has to be reached for 2020 within the whole European Area with the aim of facilitating the "*recognition of qualifications*" (EHEA, 2014a) and enhancing transparency. It results in a huge reform of curricula as well as changes in the learning paradigm. Going from a course-centered learning and teaching approach to a student-centered one was a complete revolution in practices and thinking within universities (European Students' Union (ESU), 2015).

At a European level, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) took the lead and endorses the role of giving directions to "*ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe*" (EHEA, 2014b) in the form of the QF-EHEA: Qualifications Frameworks in the EHEA (EHEA, 2014a).

In Switzerland, at a national level, this role is endorsed by « swissuniversities ». Based on the Dublin descriptors that describes the Learning Outcomes, the swiss standards take the form of the so called nqf.ch-HS: The National Qualifications Framework of the Swiss Higher Education Area. The nqf.ch-HS acts as "*an orientation tool for the higher education institutions to develop and describe their study courses and programmes*" (CRUS, KFH & COHEP, 2011). Finally, the Rectorate assumes the responsibility for fixing and assessing standards and guidelines at a local level. So the Rectorate of every single swiss University is in charge of editing documents and proposing directions that will address its own preoccupation in accordance with the national as well as international requirements to achieve the stated goals of the Bologna Agreement, along with the QF-EHEA and the nqf.ch-HS.

But how to support the curricula leading teams to avoid a simple administrative perception and implementation of this reform?

At the University of Lausanne (UNIL), all curricula have to comply with the application of the nqf.ch-HS. In this context, the Center for Teaching (CSE) acts as a facilitator or even "translator" to make the curricula learning outcomes conform to local, national and international requirements. This mission is expressed by different action lines such as elaborating adapted tools to obtain information on the curricula, managers training and team or program's manager guidance as well as production of supporting documents (Sylvestre & Berthiaume, 2013). All actions that possibly make local, national or international standards and guidelines operational will be part of its field of action with regards to the curriculum individual needs and usefulness of changes.

The nqf.ch-HS implementation took place in a 5 years' cycle. During these years, data collection tools are used on a single or regular basis to gradually give a portrayal of the curriculum from the point of view of its different "users": faculty, students, administrative hub and actors from the labour market. It includes a yearly summary of all teaching evaluations, all answers collected through questionnaires elaborated in the context of the self-evaluation and all curriculum evaluations. Based on all this information, an action plan is then elaborated within the team in charge of the curriculum reform. Both of this steps are realized with the help of the CSE, that ensures the pedagogical side of this process, checking the consistency of all aspects, from the data collection to the drafting of new objectives for the curriculum. The necessary reflection will naturally focus on the clarification of the learning outcomes (Kennedy, 2007) but also on the contribution of every single course to achieve it. That might lead into deep changes in the structure as well as objectives of a curriculum.

As for this year, more than 70% of all curricula of the UNIL have implemented the nqf.ch-HS and therefore elaborated an action plan. This achievement translates into a whole description of all study courses, in a renewed curriculum. The 30% of curricula left are one or two steps behind, which means they are either currently implementing the nqf.ch-HS or only aware that they will have to work on it within the next years.

Going from a course-centered to a student-centered learning and teaching approach was not at ease. Empirical data was collected in semi-structured interviews with program's manager in order to identify the effect of the support offered by the CSE in the implementation of the nqf.ch-HS.

Some of the teams still consider the whole process as an administrative procedure rather than a pedagogical one. Moreover their implication in the reflection considerably varies, based on their biased perception of the objectives of the nqf.ch-HS process. Finally, their needs for information were not always met, due to lacks of specifically designed tools. Nonetheless, the changes in reflection and practices that were somehow forced by the introduction of the nqf.ch-HS rose awareness of the needs of students among curricula leading teams or managers. It not only made them get together and think in a practical as well as pedagogical way to offer a single vision of their curricula and its learning outcomes but made the process on their own. That opened a new reflection on their needs and objectives and even acted as a team building tool directed among student teaching and learning and a communication channel with students.

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