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Collaboration in Bologna Process: The Experience of Department of Interior Architecture in Çankaya University

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Abstract

Bologna Process studies in Çankaya University's Interior Design and Architecture Department have been initiated in 2008. This study analyzes the curriculum development efforts in a participatory point of view and the findings of the first stage by providing insights for the next step of the process. As a result of the consensus among professors and questionnaire, program qualifications have been identified and listed. Assessment of questionnaires conducted to students and graduates revised these qualifications. These new qualifications specifically involve the subject-specific ones related with the fundamentals of design processes, history and technical topics of interior architecture; design and construction issues.

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1. Introduction

Lisbon (1997) and Bologna (1999) processes are two milestones for target policy approach of being an information society for increasing the competitiveness of the European Union (EU). Lisbon process aims to establish the most powerful information economy in the European territory as well as establishment of a life-learning system in order to satisfy the qualified human resources required, supporting the vocational education and restructure the higher education infrastructure in order to design a framework. Whereas Bologna Process's (BP) main goal is to set up a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by harmonizing the higher education systems of the 46 countries involved for achieving the Lisbon targets as the ultimate one and to increase the awareness of the European Higher Education system worldwide. Involving 10 action lines (Heitmann, 2005), it includes a motion of reform series (Elias, 2010) to make European Higher Education more compatible and more attractive for students and scholars from other continents. In this regard, two sister processes converge in the areas of improving the transparency and the quality (Saarinen, 2005) of the higher education systems as well as facilitation of the students and graduates' mobility. In this regard, it can also be said that the Bologna process also aims to increase the overall effectiveness of the higher education in Europe. To do that, Bologna Agreement includes principles some of which are uniform degree structures, a system of credits and increase in joint programs.

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The most important aspect of the process is the framework we mentioned in the above paragraph which is classified into two: The overarching framework for qualifications of the EHEA (QF-EHEA) and European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL) (Durman, 2010). In fact, these frameworks are two different approaches for the same goal which is also assumed as the ultimate references for comparing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) we will mention next. These two can also be attributed the top-level rings of a hierarchical chain in which NQF stands one level below. NQF is the umbrella concept which connects the program qualifications and learning outcomes to the needs of the society and initiates a system approach involving a wider links to other areas of education and training outside higher education such as the lifelong learning as a permanent process. In addition to student knowledge and abilities, improvement of students' independent study and responsibility taking competencies, learning competency, communication and social competencies as well as area-specific competencies establish main elements of the NQF. Stakeholder involvement and self certification (EC, 2009) are the integral parts of the NQF development process.

Program outputs and learning outcomes in fact constitutes the remaining lower level ring and the beginning point of this hierarchical chain, and an innovative shift from teacher-centred education to a student centred one. Focusing on the department basis, program outputs mainly deal with improving students' competences which is defined as a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities (Kehm, 2010) in regard to national qualifications, sectoral qualifications and educational goals. Thus program qualifications are providing the basis not only for harmonizing the teaching system with the Bologna process but also the connection of the institution with NQF. In all stages of the program qualifications process, continuous quality improvement via quality assurance systems is vital.

Attached directly to the educational goals program qualifications also involve a complicated process including performance criteria, formulation of educational strategies, participation of the related stakeholders, measurement and data collection and finally the assessment (Özkale, 2010). Accordingly, program outputs and learning outcomes (Lizzio et al., 2002; Anderson et al., 2005; Harden, 2007; Pierce & Mar Robisco, 2009) vary on department basis and curricula should be redesigned in order to reflect the learning outcomes (Kennedy et al., 2006; Meyers & Nulty, 2009). Lastly, program output context is one of the most traceable process in managerial terms and involve the participation of the experts in the area, in other words, it is a process in which the closest to the problem makes the call, hence increase its effectiveness as the case was in Çankaya University's Department of Interior Architecture (INAR).

Turkey has been included in BP initiated in 2001. Since then, signature and ratification of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and establishment of a committee of formulation of the NQF are the main developments to be noted. The committee in question prepared the draft NQF in 2007 and in the same year a supplementary "National Qualification Working Group" has been established for supporting the process in collaboration. We should note that NQF mainly internalized EQF-LLL as the main approach (HEC, 2009). In accordance with the process Çankaya University's INAR has initiated the process as of 2008. In fact, this stream is the one which designates the main timeframe of our study.

In the light of what we have stated above; this study's purpose has twofold; the first one is to design the required program qualifications' framework which will be applicable for the INAR as well as the roadmap to manage future developments in a way that they will be realized mainly in a student-oriented manner. Regarding the fact that the process is pretty new for Turkish universities, the second purpose is to enlighten preliminary steps to be achieved by other universities and similar departments via sharing the experiences during activities. Accordingly, following the introduction, developments in INAR along with the process and mission requirements will be overviewed. In the third part, the result of the study involving student expectations and formulation of program qualifications will be discussed. The conclusion part includes the last revision and final listing of qualifications as well as future steps to be undertaken for improvement of the process.

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