Background information

The Danish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning [1] was established to fulfil both national and international needs and wishes concerning lifelong learning and mobility. An inter-departmental working group with representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Business and Growth Denmark was set up in 2006 with responsibility for developing a proposal for a Danish Qualifications Framework. The development work involved consultation with and involvement of a number of stakeholders from the Danish education system. In June 2009, a proposal for a Danish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning and its implementation was approved by the abovementioned four ministries.

Goals and purposes of NQF

In a Danish context, the framework helps students and employees build on what they already know and have learned by giving them a comprehensive overview of the education system and rendering routes through it visible.

In an international context, the framework in particular supports international recognition of qualifications across national borders and education systems. Each level in the Danish Qualifications Framework and the Qualifications Frameworks of other countries is linked to a level in the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF). This makes it easier to compare qualifications from different countries.

Structure and levels

The Danish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning is a comprehensive, systematic overview, divided by levels, of qualifications that can be acquired within the Danish education system - from primary and lower secondary to university level and within the area of adult and continuing education and training.

The Qualifications Framework has eight levels. Degrees and certificates are placed at one of these eight levels on the basis of learning outcomes. The level descriptors express the learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

The Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning covers degrees and certificates in the formal Danish education system:

- Certificates and degrees – from the certificate for the Leaving Examination of the Primary and Lower Secondary School to the PhD degree.
- Certificates for supplementary qualifications, for example certificates for Higher Preparatory Single Subject courses, basic courses at Vocational Education and Training (VET), Adult Vocational Training, or preparatory courses.
The degrees and certificates covered by the framework are acquired by means of education and training programmes offered in accordance with Danish Acts and executive orders and which are subject to officially validated quality assurance. It is possible to acquire certain degrees and certificates by other methods than by completing whole education programmes and courses. Certain types of degrees and certificates can be acquired through recognition of what one has learned in working life or activity in associations, for example, on the basis of an assessment of prior learning.

The Qualifications Framework does not cover either private education programmes or municipal and state regulated education and training programmes that do not form part of the formal Danish education system and which have not been validated and quality assured in accordance with Acts and executive orders.

Each certificate and degree is placed at one of the eight levels in the Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. When this is carried out, the individual certificate or degree is compared with a descriptor for a level. The level descriptors are defined by knowledge, skills and competence which together describe the learning outcome of a given level:

- Certificates and certificates for supplementary qualifications: The certificates for the Leaving Examination of the Primary and Lower Secondary School, upper secondary qualification certificates, vocational education and training certificates, certificates for certain maritime qualifications, certificates for preparatory adult education, certificates for general adult education and certificates for Adult Vocational Training and single subject courses are placed at levels 1-5 in the Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.
- Degrees: The degrees for higher education, i.e. the Academy Profession degree, the VVU degree, the Bachelor degree and the Professional Bachelor degree, the Diploma degree, the Master’s degree (Candidatus), the Master degree (within adult higher education) and the PhD degree are placed at levels 5-8 in the Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning via the Qualifications Framework for the Higher Education. The descriptors for levels 6-8 correspond to the level descriptors in the framework for higher education. Danish higher education qualifications at levels 5-8 of the Danish Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (NQF) are also compatible with levels 5-8 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

More information on the types of certificates and degrees in the Qualifications Framework [2].

More information on the levels in the Qualifications Framework [3].

**Implementation and monitoring**

An inter-departmental coordination committee with representatives from the four responsible ministries coordinates the implementation and regularly updates the Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning.

An evaluation of the Qualifications Framework in 2012 is to be undertaken. The evaluation will examine the fulfilment of the objectives of the Qualifications Framework and the validation of the level descriptors for levels 1-5.

**Compatibility with EQF**

The Danish Contact Point for EQF is responsible for ensuring transparency between the Danish Qualifications Framework and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and ensuring access to information about Danish qualifications and their referencing in relation to the EQF. The Contact Point was set up under the auspices of the Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation.
Quality assurance of the Qualifications Framework’s level descriptors in relation to the EQF is to take place as part of the work of establishing references between the Danish level descriptors and the levels in the EQF.

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