

## **The structure of the High Vocational-Professional Education (HVPE) Area** **Ideas for international common names and terms**

*Specific situations – level 5 and SCHE*

### **Part 3d**

#### **Preamble**

This document concerns proposals relating to the international Tertiary Education Area, based on all types of formal and non-formal qualifications at levels 5 to 8 of the EQF. This TEA is divided into a number of sectors. These can be clearly defined on the basis of a number of criteria and with the use of instruments that explicitly determine such a sector.

This is an approach that applies to the international classification of the TEA and the sectors indicated therein. In addition, English names are given that are proposed to be used in the international context. These can be used in international cooperation and agreements based on this between countries, institutions and organizations, as the associated sectors have their own defined characteristics.

Every country that wants to participate in this process in one way or another has complete freedom to design its own 'National Tertiary Education Area', with a self-chosen subdivision and appropriate criteria. Choices are made regarding having names for all kinds of concepts, often in the national language. If the government then uses English translations within one's own official communication about the national system, it can also choose one's own approach. There is no international body that can prescribe and enforce this.

We hope that in the coming years more and more countries will base themselves on our proposal and work with it. This can be compared to the Bologna Process that led to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Voluntary agreements have been established that people can adhere to in all kinds of partnerships. It is true that there are still countries that design certain deviating constructions, for all kinds of reasons. Countries can address each other within the EHEA about these matters, but never force each other to make the right adjustments. This can lead to misunderstandings and less transparent constructions and that is why we hope that our initiative will also lead to a form of harmonization for every National HEA.

In short, we work with international proposals and every country may and may participate in the process that we intend to initiate.

#### **1 Introduction**

In this part of the series we will briefly discuss a special option that exists in a number of countries. Finland is a clear example of this. This involves offering a level 5 qualification, not to be seen as a Short Cycle or a VPE qualification with a duration of three to four semesters, in the full-time format, but as a top-up programme for those who have completed a VET diploma at level 4.

#### **2 Status top-up VPE**

This is often a program that is offered to those who want to specialize after level 4. This can be done after working for a number of years to then see which programme suits the job, to be considered as a 'deepening' or 'broadening'. But there is also an option to take such a step in a dual form of working and learning, to be able to work as a 'specialist' at level 5.

In both cases there may be an opportunity to continue studying for a Bachelor's degree. It can of course also lead to a Short Cycle or a HVPE-A, but it is not obvious to have too much differentiated formats at level 5. The Bachelor's degree programme will often also have to be in a part-time or dual form, to offer working people the best chance of following a study programme.

An interesting scenario is to structure this programme, nominally taking one year, in such a way that the student can choose from a number of units. A clearly personal learning path can be set up. It is precisely such a programme that lends itself to a controlled form of flexibilization. The involvement of the world of work can be high, also because workers can take units that suit a company.

### **3 Position of such a programme**

In one of the other documents (number 6) we sketch a picture of the structure of the HVPE Area, around levels 5 and 6. These are full programmes, with a bandwidth based on the use of 'VP Credits'. It is also indicated that a specific subdivision can be considered.

The most common scenario is that a two-year programme is divided into two one-year phases, with first a certain basic part that in itself also has a clear value within the country itself. Its status is therefore that of being a qualification between levels 4 and 5 of the EQF, but a country like Ireland has more than eight levels and can therefore make a more detailed division.

A common approach is to speak of:

- After 1 year: Higher Certificate
- After 2 years: Higher Diploma.

The use of the term 'Certificate' therefore refers to part of the formal program.

This could mean that this is adopted when designing the HVPE Area, based on an international structure. Then consider:

- HVPE-A Diploma
- HVPE-A Certificate.

### **4 International approach**

As indicated, such a classification mainly plays a role in the national context. But if institutions in different countries work together on these types of HVPE qualifications, they can reach bilateral agreements about the meaning of the subdivision. Furthermore, any holder of such a certificate can register at any institution and ask what its value is for a training course, i.e. by having the examination committee consider this.

Such subdivisions are often not included by the organizations that are asked for a country for the international diploma comparison. The national classification in the NQF can help, but even then the status of a certificate cannot always be clearly determined.

### **5 As part of the possible process for the HVPE Area**

In the proposed process, we will initially look for a clear structure for the qualifications that have a certain and substantial scope. Once this has been determined, it can be seen which subdivision is useful in the international context and how more detail is needed within the countries themselves, without considering how similar constructions are needed in other countries.

---

The topics within this series are:

1. Classification of tertiary education, the positioning of the HVPEA and the use of international common names
2. A closer look at the division of tertiary education
3.
  - a Levels within the HVPEA
  - b Learning paths within the HVPEA
  - c Progression from 5 (HVPE - SCHE) to 6 (First Cycle)
  - d Top-up programmes at level 5
4. Subdivision within the HVPEA and certificates
5. The positioning of the L5A
6. Use of credits in tertiary education, linked to sectors
7. Harmonization of instruments for the EHEA and the HVPEA – for example looking at the European Standards and Guidelines, the Dublin Descriptors and the ECTS for the EHEA, EQAVET, EQF-LLL descriptors and ECVET respectively.
8. Use of micro-credentials in the EL5A
9. Why having the EHEA and the HVPEA next to each other...