

Internationalisation of Library and Information Science Education: the Issues of Recognition and Quality Assurance

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1. Introduction and Internationalisation of Higher Education

To understand the internationalisation of higher education in Europe and the follow up of the Declaration of Bologna [1], called the Bologna Process (BP), we must underline the fact that it represents a reaction to current prevailing opinions concerning university education that it is a service that follows market criteria [2]. This new socio-economic context driving higher education has been created by the approval of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) by the World Trade Organization [3].¹ The provisions in the GATS related to trade regulations in a global environment are particularly relevant to international standards for the recognition of professionals and quality assurance. In the context of an increasingly internationalised job market, employers need reliable information on how to evaluate international higher education degrees in terms of the degrees recognized and granted in their domestic market. To continue to study in another country, a student should be able to have his academic background recognised.

The first impact of GATS has been to stimulate competition among members in order to attract foreign students. Universities worldwide feel obliged to be competitive and engage in more innovative, often electronic, delivery modes. Accordingly, they expand their activities in the area of distance education, continuing education, vocational training and lifelong learning [4]. As a consequence of this competitive market, many fear that an unregulated global higher education market will give way to a devaluation of quality standards. There is the risk that, in a more demand-driven educational market, standards tend to adapt to the demands of customers. The internationalisation of higher education could also be dangerous for the consumer, if it lacks transparency and quality assurance. The accreditation process is becoming internationalised and there is the need of a

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1 The World Trade Organisation General Agreement on Trade in Services (WTO-GATS) approved a multilateral framework that sets rules for the conduct of international trade in services, including educational services. The GATS includes both general rules – for example, those related to the transparency of trade-related regulations – and a framework for specific commitments under which countries choose whether, and under what conditions, to allow access to their markets for foreign suppliers.

mechanism that recognise the academic qualifications gained through international delivery of education.

Internationalisation has also stimulated cooperation between countries. Also, if the main stimulus for international quality assurance remains the influence of the market approach to higher education, another of internationalisation's purposes is to act as a lever for improving the quality of higher education. This approach sees cooperation and finding mutual agreement on quality indicators to act as tool for quality enhancement. Another aspect is the possible impact at national level of international regulations and mutual agreement for quality assurance of educational services.

To counteract the risks and take the opportunities of internationalisation, many guidelines and codes were developed by international organisations, such as Unesco and OECD². All these guidelines and codes of practice aim at three classes of objectives:

- to improve transparency of programmes and qualifications;
- to stimulate cooperation and mutual recognition between two or more countries;
- to foster international cooperation and professional networks.

The first class of objectives deals with the transparency of qualifications/levels and architecture and structures of programmes. Transparency has to be achieved with a common system of recognition and tools, as for example, years of study. For transparency, the guidelines suggest the establishment of an international database, based on a clear set of definitions and a typology of regulatory systems, listing all institutions that are recognised, registered, authorised, licensed or accredited.

The second class of objectives deals with relationships between countries, which are encouraged to agree on common criteria of recognition and quality. To further cooperation, Unesco and OECD suggest the implementation of assessment criteria and procedures for comparing programmes and qualifications as well as the adoption of learning outcomes and competencies that are culturally appropriate.

The third class of objectives refers to the internationalisation of quality assurance experiences, in which it is possible to agree on quality guidelines and on quality assurance procedures with a leading international body. For this third class of objectives, the international professional associations are urged to develop guidelines on recognising standards of professional programmes (Unesco and OECD 2005).

1.1 Bologna Process

The Bologna Process (BP) has established the quality enhancement of the European Higher Education Area as one of its main aims. This responds to two different priorities of the BP: the transparency of the educational offering and the competitiveness of higher education. The objectives are twofold: 1) the recognition of qualifications, 2) a cross border quality assurance [5, 6].

The activities of BP for the recognition of qualifications cover transparency tools such as the European Qualification Framework and other European standards (ECTS, Diploma Supplement, Europass, Dublin Descriptors). The three tier structure of the courses has been the most important reform, introducing the postgraduate education in many European countries for the first time. BP also encourages the specific development of standards in

² Unesco and the OECD forum on trade in educational services were the first in developing guidelines for consumer protection in cross-border higher education (2003, 2005).

occupational sectors with the purpose of improving employability and mobility in an international labour market.

The BP approach for cross border quality assurance focuses on the gradual emergence of what are called *zones of mutual trust*, which should guide the internationalisation of Quality Assurance (QA) in Europe. However, there is no agreement, in the context of BP, on whom and what should be accredited at an international level. Van Damme [7] lists the methodology suggested or tested by BP:

Minimal strategy: this is a minimum set of quality indicators selected by ENQA (European Network of Quality Agencies). This includes a learning outcomes orientation, the selection of appropriate teaching and assessment strategies and the development of suitable curriculum design. The European Ministers of Education adopted in 2005 the *Guidelines for Quality Assurance* drafted by E4 Group [8].

Cooperation: some European countries are experimenting with joint Masters programmes evaluation, based on collaboration between national Quality Assurance Agencies.

Quality framework: such a conceptual framework could first of all comprises a set of definitions and principles and later a set of methodological standards. This Quality framework could be developed by the professional sectors to form the basis of a kind of Code of practice for international QA.

Meta-accreditation: in this case, the meta-accreditation results in a formal recognition and a certification done by an International Agency.

The minimal strategy seems to be the more convenient to adopt and the learning outcomes approach is promoted actively by ENQA. The Quality framework could be the best solution for professional sectors such as LIS. However, this approach risks being too time-consuming. While the discussion on the best methodology for an international quality assurance system is still ongoing, two other practical approaches to international QA have been tested:

International Benchmarking: benchmarking and comparison with best practices and standards was started by the BP [9]. Benchmarking should be considered as a response to the growing competition among educational institutions (nationally as well as internationally) and their search for the best practices and most superior performance.

Internationalising Professions: this tries to compensate for the inability of the higher education sector to agree on internationally standards of academic quality, by imposing professional standards [10-13]. For example, the Engineering Professional Associations have developed a set of criteria and competencies for the profession, that are internationally agreed upon.

2. Internationalisation, Quality and Recognition of LIS Education

As the internationalisation driven by the Bologna Process advances, LIS institutions of higher education are beginning to address the issue of quality assurance. Quality assurance has been considered to be of strategic importance for LIS education in Europe from at least two approaches:

- 1) the professional associations accreditation of the programme,
- 2) the higher education institutions accreditation of the programme.

Strengths and weaknesses of these two approaches have been extensively discussed [14-16]. The first approach is used in Europe only in the United Kingdom. In most countries in Europe, the second approach prevails, in which evaluation is not based on professional criteria, but on academic criteria. Most of the present QA systems are driven by Government and university Quality Audit: these assessors look for generic quality indicators such as fitness for purposes and value for money, which are not related to LIS [17]. This problem has been analysed by the International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) and by EUCLID.

2.1 IFLA and internationalisation of quality assurance

Much earlier than the WTO-GATS, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), Education and Training Section, has been active in supporting internationalisation and quality assurance in LIS education. IFLA has focused on two activities: the harmonisation of the curriculum and the procedures for equivalency of qualifications. The goal was to facilitate the mobility of students across national borders and to increase their employment prospects globally.

The harmonisation of the curriculum has been discussed by IFLA very early [18]. This would be based on specified topics such as appear in the IFLA Education and Training Section *Guidelines for LIS Educational Programs*, regularly updated [19]. The content of a core curriculum is indicated, together with transferable skills, such as communication, time management, analysis and problem solving. IFLA *Guidelines* specify theory and practice and suggest having practicum, internship and fieldwork for students. IFLA developed *World Guide to Library and Information Science Education* [20], to list all the institutions offering education in LIS worldwide. It is regularly updated.

The IFLA Section has also been studying the issue of equivalence and reciprocal recognition of academic qualifications in LIS [21]. The Section has published the *Guidelines for equivalence and reciprocity of professional qualifications* [22], aimed at achieving greater transparency of professional qualifications and establishing standards for assessing the quality of LIS higher education programs. Later, Dalton and Levinson [23] conducted a study for IFLA's Education and Training Section on LIS qualifications worldwide, with the goal of increasing international parity of LIS qualifications to facilitate international mobility of LIS professionals. Feasibility of different approaches was sought using the following:

- a database of accreditation criteria by national library associations,
- international expansion of the existing NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres) [24] service in the EU, a detailed database of LIS course content and duration for each LIS education institution in the world.

Tammaro and Weech [21] have recently completed a feasibility study for updating the international Guidelines for equivalency of qualifications. The survey has found evidence that most of the respondents would like to have an international Quality framework, with a more active role of library associations in internationalising the profession. This study has however demonstrated that different requirements regarding entry level and career advancement are needed worldwide and this is an obstacle to equivalency of qualifications.

A comparison can be made between Unesco, OECD [25], the BP suggestions for international QA and IFLA SET proposals for the LIS sector. Unesco, OECD and the BP look for generic tools and stimulate mutual agreements; IFLA SET, in addition, focuses on programs content, on identifying recognised LIS schools and stimulating accreditation done by professional agencies or by an international committee of

experts. For international QA, Unesco, OECD and the BP agree on encouraging international professional associations to develop guidelines for recognising standards of professional programmes; IFLA SET has suggested the development of several tools for supporting library associations, such as an international database listing existing quality criteria [26].

2.1.1 Taxonomy of LIS Guidelines and Standards

The IFLA Section has done a survey on quality assurance systems, analysing different guidelines and standards. Three models of quality assurance have emerged from these [17, 27]: 1) program orientation, 2) educational process orientation, and 3) learning outcomes orientation. The three approaches are listed in Table 1 *Taxonomy of LIS quality assurance models*, indicating the quality evaluation elements of the following: assessor who is accrediting, purposes of evaluation and related indicators, periodicity of evaluation, typical output of the evaluation process and definition of the quality underlined concept.

Program orientation: it is driven by Government and QA Agencies and stresses accountability and consumers protection. Attention is given to functions such as curriculum design, staffing, resource acquisition and allocation. Quantitative indicators such as number of students enrolled and drop out rates are important for evaluation. Staffing quality indicators include attention to the use of effective procedures in teacher selection criteria [28-30]. Quality is meant as *fitness for purposes* and *value for money*, with a focus on accountability.

Educational process orientation: these quality indicators include the major decision areas for teachers, administrators of higher education institutions and university quality audits which focus on quality enhancement of the learning experience and responsiveness to learner expectations. The assumption is that, if the learning and teaching process is well carried out, the success of the education is assured. The monitoring of the educational process is continuous with a combination of self-evaluation and external evaluation. When specifying quality standards, some define minimum requirements and others look for identifying excellence. Industrial standards are often used, such as TQM or EFQM, which usually stress world-class benchmarks and excellence [31].

Learning outcomes orientation: this gives attention on explicit and detailed statements of what students learn: the skills, knowledge, understanding and abilities which LIS schools seek to develop and then test. The adoption of learning outcomes approach focuses on the learner and on the improvements in the quality of student achievements, competencies or employability. The accreditors involved in a learning outcomes approach are Professional Associations together with the active involvement of students. The emphasis moves from the content (what staff teach) to outcome (what students will be able to do). The quality assurance model in this case stresses a transformative concept of quality and the ways to measure it, and is based on individual assessment and certification.

The criteria most commonly used in LIS schools in Europe assume that learning takes place if institutions provide certain inputs or resources (e.g., curriculum content, limited class size, full-time faculty, student workload, documented policies, equipped classrooms and libraries). Instead, the learning outcomes approach is the less used one.

Tab. 1 Taxonomy of LIS Quality Assurance Models

Quality Assurance Models	Programme Orientation	Educational Process Orientation	Learning outcomes orientation
Assessor or accreditee	Government Agency External review committee University Audit	Internal assessment, University Audit	Participation of students and Professional Association Educational providers assessors
Purpose of assessment Indicators	Accountability Customer protection Organisational structure Course content and design Resources in terms of funding, staff numbers and IT/Library facilities	Improvement of the learning experience Validation and approval frameworks Number of students, drop - out rates, recruitment Responsiveness to learner preferences, Pedagogy	Improvements in the quality of student achievements, competencies or employability Student evaluation of the learning experience Assessment of student learning outcomes through exams and/or employers evaluations
Time frame	Periodic	Continuous	Programme lifecycle
Typical output	Accreditation of the programme	Self improvement report	Certification of students/learners achievements
Information sharing	Publication of results	Internal report	Individual Certification, Publication of results
Quality Concept	Fitness for purposes, Value for money	Exceptional, Perfection	Transformative

2.2 EUCLID and subject benchmarking

In the framework of the project *European Curriculum reflections on LIS education*, EUCLID, the Association of European LIS institutions, has been reviewing the course content and the length of instruction of educational programs [32].

In the discussions inside the European project *European Curriculum Reflections* (Kajberg and Lorrington, 2005), an agreement has been reached on the core of the discipline: LIS has been defined as the “science” of organising mediation, using the term science as a special kind of science in the sense defined by Ranganathan [32]. This makes LIS studies a field which prepares for practical work and for teaching and research in libraries, in archives administration, in museums and in the book trade or any other physical or virtual collection or archive-based activity – also outside cultural institutions or organizations [32]. The purpose of an education in library and information science centers on the following positions to be filled by graduates [32]: – education and research positions for the designation and extension of principles about information, its acquisition, processing, utilization and transfer;

- technical positions for the design and implementation of information systems;
- functional positions to ensure adequate use of automated storage facilities in information environments.

The main problem of the BP reform application in LIS is theoretical and is related to the concept of "Library" as currently understood in Europe. Dealing with core content, LIS education institutions in Europe have traditionally had two approaches: one more focused on document and one more focused on information. The first approach covered three basic subfields of study [32]: a) document, b) knowledge organisation, c) management.

a) The study of documents

This subfield covers the two main genres: fiction and non-fiction, their typology and the structure of the main kinds of documents. For some kinds of user, a specific user orientation is recommended e.g. children, visually handicapped, researchers, music listeners or performers.

The document being a combination of text and medium, the various media should be dealt with, from the oldest forms to the electronic ones.

It is assumed that it is not possible to standardise the content at a European level. Each institution must make its priorities according to the traditions of the country and the labour market for the candidates

b) Knowledge organization and information retrieval

This subfield has already reached a certain amount of standardisation and consists of the following items:

Formal and subject analysis

Formal (bibliographic) and content representation (with or without indexing languages)

Storage (cataloguing, shelving, databases)

Searching and retrieval (including search behaviour)

Evaluation of performances.

Diachronic aspects to be dealt with could be, e.g. classification history.

c) Organization and management. Cultural and information policy and legislation

This item covers primarily documentary institutions or organizations, but also issues related to the document flow in institutions or organization in general (information management). Central topics will be the building up of collections or archives through acquisition policies or deposition schemes, the study of the users to be served and the organization of the various services.

An obvious diachronic approach will be the history of institutions, e.g. library history or scenarios for the future.

General topics like planning, staff administration, budgeting and maintenance of buildings should be dealt with here.

The second approach is the information-centered one. This view, presented by Wilson [33] in his paper *Mapping the curriculum in information studies* adds a fourth block to the three defined as: a) information content, b) information system, c) people and d) organisations. The Wilson model is the result of the interaction among the four fields and is based on the information science tradition [33]:

- a) Information content: the "traditional" function of library and information services;
- b) Information systems: information in organizational settings;

c) People: users and information providers;

d) Organizations: information producers, libraries, information centres, etc.

Designing a programme with an international content must answer a key question: what does internationalisation mean for curriculum design? There are two possible answers to this question [34]:

- internationalisation is achieved by adapting course content to reflect shared criteria and LIS values;

- internationalism is achieved by implying a radical redesign of units in terms of content, teaching strategies, resources etc. to make them more inclusive and international.

The design of a curriculum with an international content does not necessarily imply a description of the courses. The current effort of EUCLID, based on the BP, is to reach agreement upon base criteria and values so as to harmonise the various curricula. In Europe the traditions and above all the labour markets are different, and agreement on a single programme is not only difficult but not desirable. We can therefore say that the design of a curriculum with an international content is directly correlated to the values of the various stakeholders and an understanding of these values is essential.

Some constraints of LIS education in Europe should be taken in consideration. The Government is financing the LIS institutions – and in this time of budget cuts, it is stimulating the convergence of LIS with other disciplines or areas. However, by adding components of these fields to the LIS curriculum, it becomes less LIS, and graduates will start to apply for jobs that are only weakly related to the traditional labour market. The convergence phenomenon is one of the reasons for the difficulty in changing a curriculum in LIS. Sometimes, especially in countries of Central and Southern Europe, these LIS departments co-exist with other forms of on-the-job training offered by national libraries or other libraries or cultural institutions [35]. This phenomenon characterising LIS education in Europe has a big impact on the quality of the LIS programme, i.e. for content design, where general disciplines sometimes exist as mandatory subjects, or for staff size and recruitment selection criteria.

The convergence phenomenon of LIS schools in Europe is related also to the inter-disciplinary aspect of the subject, often combined with other disciplines such as information management and information technology, archival studies, media and communication studies, book studies, records management and others. For example, the debate arose inside the workgroup of the EUCLID project, whether or not archives and libraries should be integrated in the same course [32]. LIS and Archival Science have been developing separately as professional areas. However, we must reflect on some basic and important questions: do libraries and archives deal with/study different objects or do they both deal with information? [36].

2.2.1. Innovation and Information Technology

Information and communication technologies (IT) have changed things such as access, the presentation and the life cycle of documents and information dramatically and, together with management and marketing, these subjects have been often added to LIS curricula. Information technology has had an impact on LIS education and training not only on what is learned but also how and where it is learned and is the principal threat for change. Reports with a European scope, such as that of Van der Starre [37] have shown a special preoccupation with the introduction of technologies and a noticeable silence regarding quantitative studies or the weakness of scientific foundations of application of technology.

Spinello [38] did a survey of IT profiles and curricula needed in Italy and stressed the different levels and qualifications required:

- the library manager has a leadership and managerial role in developing services and applying the technologies;
- the system librarian works at a more technical level together with computer technicians;
- the system manager assures that adequate service is available for users.

2.2.2 Educational Process Theory vs practice

It may be particularly difficult to update and include an international dimension into the curriculum of an existing institution, because teaching methods may be very inflexible [39]. The labour market orientation pushes for including in the educational system and didactics practical aspects such as internships and an easier access into the job market. The issue of theory versus practice and of academics perspective versus vocational education was one of the first to arise in the working groups discussion of the *European curriculum reflections on LIS education* [32]. In the words of Ton de Bruyn, we have to consider the integration between the architect and the builder, stressing that we have to build a palace and if we want this palace to be strong and effective, we need both of them. Ton de Bruyn was also very helpful in the discussion for distinguishing curriculum design from its delivery and describing the competencies-based approach achieved by Dutch LIS schools [32].

However, we should recognise the fact that European countries have different traditions in teaching LIS and this is evidenced in the methodology and principles which are taught [32]. In LIS schools in Europe we can find different foundations and methodological approaches to LIS discipline, as:

- Epistemology;
- Research methods;
- Linguistic/Philology;
- Social Research;
- Bibliometrics.

2.3. Internationalising the LIS profession

If nowadays one meets a person who considers herself/himself an educated librarian, i.e. educated by a college or a university, one does not know if the person in question holds an academic degree and, if so, at which level (bachelor or master's) or if he/she has a vocational diploma not integrated into the system of academic degrees. And if the person in question has for example a Master's degree, one does not know if he/she has studied LIS for 1 or 2 years, building the Master's upon a bachelor in another subject, or for 5 years, building the Master's upon a bachelor in LIS [40]. BP has been introducing the European Qualification Framework (EQF) as a uniform basis for assessing equivalent degrees and qualifications internationally, but the question is: who will be granted recognition, and how recognition of LIS qualifications will be ensured in Europe?

For a small number of countries, maintaining LIS education according to the Anglo-American model, there is an agreement between CILIP, ALA and ALIA that establishes the mutual recognition of each others accredited qualifications at Master's degree level. But for most of the European countries, there are no organizations or national bodies that take on this responsibility and no international standards have been agreed upon. This is the reason why there are some efforts underway to start a certification process of the individual professional. To reach this objective, the role

of professional associations is important [41]. Two approaches to individual certification can be observed: the first is combining an accreditation of education with a certification program; the second is limited to individual certification.

In the United Kingdom, the certification combined with accreditation of education has already been active for about ten years. A project implemented jointly by the higher education institutions and the Professional Association CILIP sought to record the skills used by librarians in a specific portfolio, which would stimulate the professionals for continual development [42, 43]. The certification enables the lifelong learner, from student to full professional status, to trace his/her progress through the identification and certification of knowledge and skills acquisition, including further training needs (Brine and Feather, 2003). CILIP has also participated in the development of a Subject benchmarking schema together with the Quality Assurance Agency of the UK Government.

Another project is driven by CERTIDOC, started as a European project [44-47]. For the certification procedure, it is necessary to provide evidence of an individual's fitness for professional practice. This evidence is based on the individual's list of competencies and an interview of the person to be certified. Euroguide LIS [48] is a very comprehensive list of competencies and also gives indications of the four levels considered in competencies. However the levels are not related to the European Qualifications Framework. Also the list of competencies are not linked to academic degrees and the certification does not highlight further training needs.

It should be emphasized that the process of certification of individual can be cumbersome or costly. Also the lists of competencies³ have to be updated continuously, and risk being a constraint to change and continuous professional development.

3. A Quality Model as a lever of LIS education quality

The results of internationalisation for quality enhancement have been very limited until now. Currently there are no standards for the inclusion of internationalisation in the LIS programme [60], and internationalisation of the programme still seems weak [61]. To develop a quality model for LIS schools, the IFLA analysis of different LIS Guidelines has evidenced that this should include: curriculum content, learning and teaching and learning outcomes approach. In Europe the BP [62] is now placing a growing emphasis on learning outcomes, giving institutions greater flexibility as

³ The certification of individuals has to be based on list of competencies and a relatively small number of competencies have to be evidenced, utilising different methodologies [49]. A first method – driven by employers – is based on analysing work or occupational functions starting from the work already done. This process starts with a top-down process of identifying the key purpose and key roles, and then progressively breaking these down into smaller units of competence. Each element of competence can be further refined into a series of identifiable, measurable and assessable performance criteria. This method is called *competence referenced process*. A number of English-speaking countries have formally developed and published national frameworks of qualifications, or National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) [50]. Another approach – driven by professional associations – reviews the range of settings, activities and work arrangements in which professional functions occur. This approach is called the *criteria referenced process* [51]. Some indicators relate to a professionalism process such as competencies and knowledge mastery, and some critical skills such as problem solving, use of practical knowledge [52, 53]. The methodology, using functional analysis and combined with various verification procedures, has undoubtedly become more sophisticated, to the point where the importance of the methodological concerns have been recognised in some LIS schools [54-59].

to how they achieve such outcomes. Could learning outcomes be a lever of quality enhancement of LIS education?

3.1. Learning outcomes and competencies

There is increased understanding among international experts and policy-makers that it is of limited value to try to achieve convergence in the formal input and process characteristics of programmes [63, 64]. The way programmes are organised, the delivery mode, the specific teaching and learning setting, even the exact amount of time and workload invested in them, are increasingly diverging. But this divergence does not intrinsically affect the comparability of learning outcomes. Emphasis on learning outcomes should consider the relationship of quality assurance to the recognition of qualifications [65].

In practice, learning outcomes are often confused with competencies and the certification process of individuals. In these approaches, the learning outcomes are understood as skills and are based on the lists compiled either by employers or by professional associations. Such lists, however, do not consider the disciplinary knowledge or the ethics of the librarian. They are, moreover, subject to continual change [7], if, in the international scenario, quality standards are established by the labour market, leaving bodies without a dialogue with universities. The foundation of all future education programmes in Europe are to be found in competence-based education and training. A critical question that needs to be answered is how has the LIS labour market been represented and by which leading bodies can curriculum development be established? Is this a role of library associations?

The approach to learning outcomes has been used in the framework of the BP differently from competencies. The Project Tuning [13, 66] has been the first to use the learning outcomes approach. In this approach, the learning outcomes are linked to professional levels or grades and the knowledge or skills required for each level, as listed in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). This relates to the problem of the accumulation of the various credits, comprising ECTS related to formal learning and university training. Moreover, this approach reveals one of the criteria of the BP: the requirement to bring university education closer to professional training, which will bring it into alignment with the demands of the labour market. Participation and representation of all stakeholders in the quality process are now key issues in the framework of BP, and special efforts are increasingly made to ensure that the widest range of views are taken into the QA.

In the BP approach, the learning outcomes are understood as the result of an educational process. In this case, they are based on theories of learning, and the definition is linked in particular to Bloom's learning taxonomy [67]. The concept of learning outcomes was clarified by Stephen Adam [62] at a Conference organised within the ambit of the BP:

Learning outcomes have applications at three distinct levels: (I) the local level of the individual higher education institution (for course units/modules, programmes of study and qualifications); (II) the national level (for qualifications frameworks and quality assurance regimes); and (III) internationally (for wider recognition and transparency purposes). Learning outcomes and 'outcomes-based approaches' have implications for curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment, as well as quality assurance.

The levels to be considered are therefore different, but related. Teachers must be concerned with the learning outcomes at the level of the course, but they must also consider the

necessary alignment of the levels and the professional qualifications in the national labour context. The problem of educational quality is tied to its place within the framework of lifelong learning. Consequently there is a need to record (quantitatively) learning achieved through both formal education and informal training.

Here one should stress a weakness of the BP: the fact that measurements that are essentially qualitative, such as the achievement of learning outcomes that must for practical purposes be measured quantitatively. This is similar to or commensurate with the EQF levels. Another controversial result of the BP is evinced in the stimulus to start a postgraduate education in countries where the labour market continues to ask for low level qualifications and training. The first change that appears to be needed for applying the learning outcomes to LIS university education relates to an increased collaboration with the stakeholders to clearly define the learning outcomes [64]. A real problem is the gap between academic and professionals. How can research and education be stimulated and enriched by practice?

We need to focus on vocational aspects of HE, in relation to the development of qualifications and competencies at the sector level. This is essential for HE relevancy to labour market. This means a shift of perspective from providers to learning outcomes and competencies [13].

An important initiative has been driven by EBLIDA, the European association of LIS professional associations. The EBLIDA and EUCLID joint conference in Lisbon in September 2007 [68] sought to bridge the gap between academics and professionals.

There is a need to bridge the gap between the academic field and the field of practice when discussing the future of European library and information science education, the profession and its services.

Lars Qvortrup [69], Rector of the Royal School of Library and Information Science of Copenhagen, presented the stimulating idea of Triple Helix, formed by the Public Sector, Labour Market and Research, in which all the stakeholders involved in education collaborate, even if they have different objectives. Innovation is based on a user driven research, building innovation clusters. Can “arenas” or “forums” be established where researchers and practitioners can meet and discuss?

To open the dialogue, one could also ask: how can practice be enhanced by research? For Bidy Fisher [70], LIS professionals should use research in practice to enhance services and facilities for users, ensure the provision of the best environment for staff and users and evaluate our services using appropriate methods and techniques. Equally, exploring the answer to solutions in practice does not require the academic researcher’s experience and expertise. The author affirmed that the ability to do and understand research was one of the critical skills of the practitioner of the future [71]. Professional bodies and employers should encourage a learning environment that will complement the foundations established by university education and encourage staff to use research skills in their work.

Conclusion

In conclusion of this paper, we can conclude that some results have been achieved in harmonising the LIS curriculum and giving more transparency to professional qualifications. To reply to the question: could BP be a lever of quality enhancement of LIS education? One could say that, adopting the minimal approach to QA, the

learning outcomes focus means a stimulus to the dialogue between all stakeholders, and this seems a way to improve employability and assure quality of education.

However, a quality model for LIS education is still needed, and BP demonstrates both successes and weaknesses. Obstacles to the internationalisation of quality assurance are to be found in the different requirements for professional qualifications, different concepts of Library education, different expectations of employers and a general weakness of professional associations.

A real barrier to quality enhancement of education seems to be in the poor communication between academia and professionals. However, the situation can change, thanks to the impact of BP. While the details of the curriculum must differ somewhat from one place to another, with BP facilitating mobility and employment opportunities, LIS institutions need a quality framework defining the broad content and principles which should be the same. The combined efforts of EUCLID and EBLIDA together could stimulate a student centred focus and a solution to the debate on theory vs. practice, with an innovative approach to LIS education.

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Internazionalizzazione della formazione universitaria dei bibliotecari: le problematiche del riconoscimento e dell'accreditamento di qualità

di Anna Maria Tammaro

Il lavoro si propone di rispondere alla seguente domanda: può l'internazionalizzazione migliorare la qualità della formazione per i bibliotecari? L'internazionalizzazione della formazione è particolarmente importante in questo periodo: un primo approccio si basa sulla competizione, creata dalla liberalizzazione dei mercati e dalla attuale opinione che la formazione universitaria sia un servizio che deve rispettare dei criteri di qualità e di trasparenza per garantire i consumatori. Un altro approccio all'internazionalizzazione si basa sulla cooperazione tra le istituzioni universitarie per un accordo su criteri di qualità e sul reciproco riconoscimento delle qualifiche accademiche. Questo scenario internazionale pone una serie di problemi ed ha stimolato una serie di soluzioni, nessuna però finora completamente soddisfacente. In particolare per la formazione dei bibliotecari in Europa bisogna chiedersi: cosa è la qualità della formazione dei bibliotecari? chi può valutare la qualità della formazione? come può essere valutata la qualità della formazione?

Il lavoro illustra le soluzioni indicate da Unesco ed OECD e dal Bologna Process, il processo di riforma delle università che ha preso il via dopo la Dichiarazione di Bologna; per la formazione dei bibliotecari prende in considerazione i risultati delle iniziative di IFLA Section Education and Training ed EUCLID (Associazione delle scuole di biblioteconomia europee).

Unesco ed OECD hanno prospettato tre tipi di obiettivi:

- trasparenza della qualità dei corsi e delle qualifiche accademiche;
- cooperazione tra due o più nazioni per un accordo sui criteri di qualità dei corsi e sul riconoscimento delle qualifiche accademiche;
- reti internazionali per il riconoscimento delle qualifiche e l'accREDITAMENTO della qualità.

Il Bologna Process persegue gli obiettivi di riconoscimento delle qualifiche accademiche ed accreditamento di qualità dei corsi ed ha cercato di mettere a punto degli strumenti, come l'European Qualifications Framework, che aiutano le nazioni europee al raggiungimento di questi obiettivi. Anche se i risultati raggiunti finora sono stati limitati, il Bologna Process ha stimolato vari metodi per il miglioramento di qualità della formazione universitaria, tra cui sono particolarmente interessanti:

- la strategia minima: un set di indicatori che focalizzano i risultati e gli obiettivi formativi (learning outcomes) come criterio condiviso di valutazione;

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- il benchmarking internazionale: uno stimolo ad evidenziare le migliori pratiche, in uno spirito di competizione per migliorare la qualità;
- l'internazionalizzazione della professione: stimolare le associazioni professionali a fissare standard di qualità della professione che siano riconosciuti a livello internazionale.

L'IFLA Section Education and Training ha studiato il problema della qualità della formazione e del riconoscimento delle qualifiche accademiche per anni ed ha elaborato una serie di linee guida e di pubblicazioni. Il focus è stato sul curriculum, sui criteri di qualità, sui modi per facilitare il riconoscimento e l'equivalenza delle qualifiche accademiche.

EUCLID ha stimolato una riflessione sul curriculum per la formazione dei bibliotecari in Europa ed ha avviato la discussione per un benchmarking internazionale sul curriculum. Ha messo in luce tuttavia una serie di problemi: diversi concetti di biblioteca, diversi principi metodologici che vengono insegnati, diversi approcci al cambiamento portato dalle tecnologie, indicando l'importanza di una didattica innovativa e il giusto equilibrio tra teoria e pratica.

Malgrado le numerose iniziative, tra cui alcune di certificazione individuale delle competenze, un sistema internazionale di qualità della formazione professionale dei bibliotecari ancora non c'è. La problematica che ostacola maggiormente il miglioramento della qualità nella formazione del bibliotecario sembra quella della diffusa mancanza di dialogo tra le università e le comunità professionali, in particolare le associazioni professionali. Questa comunicazione è stata spesso ostacolata da diverse percezioni della qualità della formazione del bibliotecario e soprattutto dal diverso approccio al problema della teoria vs. pratica. Il focus sui risultati formativi spinge a migliorare il dialogo tra i diversi interessati alla formazione del bibliotecario. Recentemente EUCLID ed EBLIDA (Associazione europea delle associazioni professionali bibliotecarie) hanno cominciato a collaborare, aprendo la possibilità di un reale miglioramento di qualità della formazione.