



Thematic Analysis: Changes in the content of vocational fields of study and compliance with the European Qualifications Framework Thereof

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Introduction

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of Georgia was adopted as an official document on 10 December 2010 by order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia. The NQF was a combination of the Qualifications Frameworks of the three major subsystems (general, vocational and higher education) of the education system. In order to further develop the NQF and ensure its compliance with the European Qualifications Framework, preparatory works began in 2014, which resulted in the approval of the updated NQF and the Classification of Fields of Study on 10 April 2019. As a result of the above process, the approach to the formation of qualifications has changed radically and it has become focused on the fields of study instead of employment positions. Hence, in the course of developing the Classification of Fields of Study, a number of vocational qualifications were merged, and many of them disappeared from the system altogether.

Research Goal

The purpose of the present thematic analysis is to present the analysis of professional qualifications in the study fields of services, architecture and construction, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary and to consider their compliance with the national qualifications framework of different European countries, also to identify the fields of study/professional qualifications that are not included in the Classifier of Fields of Study at this stage, although there is a strong demand for them from the labor market.

The results of the thematic analysis may be used for the purpose of further development and revision of professional qualifications.

Methodology

The desk research methodology was used to conduct the present analysis. The research was based on the analysis of secondary data. In the selection of materials, preference was given to the researches conducted in 2018-2020. In particular, the following were analyzed: Relevant professional



qualifications (in the fields of study) selected on the example of Georgia, Germany and Estonia, studies conducted by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia: "Research on Enterprise Demand on Skills" (2020), Statistical Survey of Enterprise Demand on Skills (2018), Analysis of Georgian Labor Market (2018-2019), Survey on Labor Market Needs in Construction Industry (2019), Survey on Labor Market Needs in Tourism Industry (2018). Labor Market Analysis 2018-2019 - the research conducted by the European Union-Georgia, as well as materials of the research conducted by the EU project "Technical Assistance for the Development of Knowledge and Skills Tailored to the Needs of the Labor Market and Employment."

As a result of the consultation with international experts, the research questions were identified as follows:

1. To what extent do the professions or professional qualifications in Georgia correspond to the structure of the labor market?
2. To what extent does the Classifier of Study Fields in Georgia and the professional qualifications available here correspond to the qualifications of European countries and what is the distribution of these qualifications according to the levels of the National Qualifications Framework?
3. In terms of contents, to what extent do the existing professional qualifications meet the requirements of the labor market in Georgia?

Within the framework of the working group, a full analysis of the National Qualifications Framework was initially planned, but after discussing topics with international experts, it was found that it would be impossible to cover all areas with limited resources (of time, human). Thus, it was decided to consider three areas of study within the scope of the analysis: Architecture and construction, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, veterinary and services.

Also, two countries were selected for the analysis of the European experience: Germany and Estonia, which was due to several factors: The qualification frameworks of Germany and Estonia, as well as the framework of Georgia, is 8-level. Therefore, this factor was considered important for comparative analysis in terms of qualification levels. At the same time, Estonia and Germany are the countries participating in the Copenhagen Process and the quality of their vocational education is recognized in the European Vocational Education Area. Therefore, their experience has been considered as the best international practice.

The analysis of the study areas selected in the paper was carried out through comparative analysis, for which the structure of the analytical part was defined as follows: Initially, a specific field of study was discussed in the Classifier of Fields of Study in Georgia and the qualifications that are prepared within the country were identified. Then, the labor market situation was analyzed and the demanded professions were identified. At the third stage, the professional qualifications related to the same field of study in Germany and Estonia were analyzed. Finally, the final part was made. This, on the one hand, defined the qualifications required for the labor market and which are not made in the country today, and, on the other hand, showed that these qualifications are really professional qualifications and they are successfully implemented in the European educational area.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

As a result of the review of the information collected around the research questions within the thematic analysis, it was found that the relevant professional qualifications in the field of services in



Georgia are quite poorly developed and they are less in line with the structure of the labor market. The specialists demanded by the labor market are not trained in vocational education, part of the detailed fields under the Classifier of Fields of Study are completely empty, while the practice of European countries shows the opposite picture in this direction. If we analyze the data in quantitative terms, we will see that in Georgia there are 15 qualifications in the field of services, in Germany - more than 35, and in Estonia - more than 30. In Georgia, there are 8 qualifications in the field of architecture and construction, in Germany - more than 32, and in Estonia - more than 28. There are 11 qualifications in Georgia in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary, while in Germany there are more than 25, and in Estonia - more than 16.

There are some mismatches at the qualification levels as well. According to European experience, most of the professional qualifications correspond to the fourth and fifth levels, while in Georgia - almost half of the professional qualifications in the service sector (6 out of 14 qualifications) correspond to the third level. The same is true in the other two fields.

As for whether the existing qualifications meet the requirements of the labor market in terms of content, it was difficult to find an unambiguous answer in the context of the analysis, because very little information was presented in this area within the researches. Some of the important facts highlighted by this analysis are the following: The number of employees with professional qualifications in the service sector is very low (14.2%) and it lags behind the number of employees with full general education; 32% of employers find it difficult to determine whether their staff needs professional training. Lack of the following competencies was identified in the field of tourism: Foreign language communication, service skills, problem solving skills, communication skills and professional knowledge.¹

The picture is almost identical in the field of architecture and construction. In the field of construction, research in various professions revealed the lack of the following competencies: Problem solving, drawing/design comprehension, self-discipline, quality control of completed work, knowledge/use of safety measures, effective use of equipment and tools, etc. It is important to note that in terms of labor market structure, there were qualifications identified that are in demand in the labor market but are not produced in the system. Those are: Carpenter, insulation worker, construction site manager.

As for the fields of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, veterinary, both German and Estonian experience show quite diverse and detailed professional qualifications. Also, the same qualification can be found at different levels in the case of Estonia (which is excluded in Georgian qualifications). On the example of Georgia, there is a qualification that is not in demand in the labor market and, consequently, is not implemented by educational institutions (e.g. 0811.3.7 Horse-Breeding). It should also be noted, that the qualification in agriculture is more clearly formulated and understandable to the employer, since 4 different concentrations and 2 elective concentrations are given under the qualification. As we see at the example of Germany and Estonia, these countries are not afraid to specify qualifications and present them in narrow directions, which makes the qualifications understandable for both the vocational student and the employer.

¹ Source: Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia, "Georgian Labor Market Analysis 2019".



10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The thematic analysis revealed the following recommendations at the system level:

- It is important that the relevant responsible agencies conduct labor market research on a permanent basis, as the results of the research are an important tool stimulating the creation and development of professional qualifications. In these studies, it is also important to focus not only on the analysis of the current market situation, but also to identify the future needs of the labor market. This will allow the education sector to anticipate and prepare the personnel with such qualifications that will be in demand in the labor market in the near future. ,
- It is important that the relevant responsible agencies communicate the results of the labor market research with the organization responsible for creating and developing professional qualifications. It is significant that labor market research is conducted at both national and regional levels, holistically and sectorally. Sectoral research is highly focused on identifying the needs of a particular field/direction. Therefore, it provides a means of obtaining more detailed and in-depth information for the development of professional qualifications. It is important that the research process focuses not only on identifying the required vacancies (quantitative satisfaction), but also on defining the skills, competencies and qualifications required for these vacancies (qualitative satisfaction). To this end, the tools used for the research should allow to assess employers' satisfaction with the skills of the staff having specific qualifications.
- It is important that the relevant responsible agencies intensify activities that will facilitate the promotion of vocational education and raise awareness;
- It is important to develop mechanisms, that encourage employers to engage in vocational education at the system level.

Recommendations to the agency responsible for the development of professional qualifications:

- It is important that the process of creating/developing professional qualifications is based on an analysis of current and future labor market demands. This approach will ensure, on the one hand, the compliance of the existing qualifications with the structure of the labor market, and on the other hand, will contribute to its further development, as it will prepare and offer to the labor market the staff who will have innovative knowledge and skills corresponding to the future labor market needs.
- It is important to review the compliance of existing professional qualifications with the levels of the National Qualifications Framework, which will facilitate the further development of existing qualifications. It is crucial to take into account the best practices of Europe in the process of developing existing professional qualifications, which will facilitate the process of comparing and complying our qualifications with European qualifications.
- It is important to initiate new professional qualifications, taking into account the requirements and structure of the labor market.