



The Degree Qualifications Framework and the Community College

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Where did the DQP come from, and why, Part I?

- Partly from listening to other nations, which were not happy with the meaning of their credentials, and watching what they tried to do to clarify that meaning.
- Partly from trying out what other nations have attempted in establishing reference points for student learning outcomes in specific fields.
- And partly from recognizing that something called “accountability” in U.S. higher education means nothing without a comprehensive set of concrete benchmarks for student learning at 3 major degree levels: associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s.



Where did the DQP come from and why? Part II

- Unlike other countries, we don't have a central ministry to declare or commit to such efforts---nor do we want one.
- But we do have entrepreneurial, visionary authorities that can provide creative leadership to such an effort.
- The Lumina Foundation not merely sponsored the major analyses of the European "Bologna Process" that contain the nuggets of the DQP, but took the conclusions of those analyses and put them into Beta operation in unique U.S. contexts.
- Lumina was committed to increasing degree awards, but realized that simply counting pieces of paper says nothing unless we know, very specifically, what those pieces of paper represent, so it undertook a challenge to U.S. higher education and set in motion the processes through which that challenge could be addressed.



More specifically. . .

- All we know of what a degree means is that it requires 60 or 66 or 120 or 128 credits, some kind of minimum GPA, passing course X and/or course Y, and majoring in something.
- What we sometimes say, in addition, is that a small sample of our students, who are paid to be test-taking volunteers, produced “effect size” gains of Q or P when their standardized test scores are regressed on our beloved SAT or ACT, and that’s what our degrees mean.
- As they say. . .”Whoooppee!”
- Other countries don’t do any of this, and they are going to eat your lunch in a globalized work force.



So Lumina started with “Tuning,” something already going on in Europe and Latin America. What is it?

- A ground-up faculty-driven determination of a template of reference points for student learning outcomes in a specific field/discipline.
- The process involves consultation with employers and recent alumni who hold degrees in that field.
- In a U.S. environment, Lumina recruited 3 state systems (Indiana, Minnesota, and Utah) to try it out. Each picked two disciplines (3 in Indiana).
- Each, in turn, recruited the flagship state university, other public 4-year colleges, and (unlike the European and Latin American situations) a range of community colleges to designate faculty participants.
- And unlike the European and Latin American efforts, each disciplinary team included at least one student majoring or preparing to major in the field.



What does “Tuning” in a discipline mean and do?

- After a consultation survey with employers, former students, and faculty, the team sets up a “common language” for expressing what a curriculum in the discipline aims to do,
- But does not prescribe the means of doing it.
- You get “reference points,” not standardization of content, sequence, and delivery.
- There is no straightjacket, but there is “convergence.”



Example: the European Business group definition of a firm as a “value chain” results in:

- **A curriculum content map, from procurement to customer service**
- **“Subject specific skills and competences” as learning outcomes to match the map, and set out as**
 - core knowledge**
 - supporting knowledge**
 - communication skills**
- **The statements are not specified, but the distribution is: 50% core knowledge, 10 % economics, 5 % each for quantitative methods, law, and IT. Notice: that does not add to 100%---on purpose.**



How long did they work at it? What did they produce? What's next?

- While the Euros have been at Tuning in any one discipline for 6 -12 years, our groups worked for 16 months to date and produced fairly detailed sets of discipline-specific student learning outcome statements.
- If we are to take the Indiana chemistry group product as typical, of 36 core learning outcome templates, 26 were common at both associate's and bachelor's levels.
- The best of them from a community college perspective was the work of the Graphic Arts/Design group in Minnesota, since degrees in that field are offered at all levels from associate's to doctorate.
- We have a way to go with this, 'cause while our folks (like the Euros) were okay at identifying core reference points, they were miserable at writing learning outcomes statements (as were the Euros, but they're working on it).



Get enough of this going, across a bunch of fields, and a bunch of state systems, and. . .

- **The logical extension moves from the field-specific to the degree-specific.**
- **Faculty working on Tuning their fields, concluding that X was appropriate at the associate's level and Y was appropriate at the bachelor's level, would say "Wait a minute! We're also talking about something more generic to the degree level itself!"**
- **Voila! What the Euros, Australians, South Africans, Canadians, etc. call a "[Credential] Qualifications Framework" emerges.**



Hence. . .

- **Not only did Lumina begin to move into Tuning 2 (Texas in engineering),**
- **But took the logical extension of a Qualifications Framework, and made it real.**



**Except we're not calling it that,
and. . .**

**for a lot of reasons that are
grounded in the U.S. system.**



We're calling it a "Profile," and what that means involves both content and process.

- **Think of the Alfred Hitchcock face profile.**
- **Now, turn it into a portrait by Durer, Gaughin, or Picasso.**
- **Many hands contribute to the full Portrait, and the full Portrait has obvious variations.**
- **But the palette of colors is the same, and, at the end, you recognize the face in all its details.**
- **Lumina provides the studio, the easels, the brushes, or whatever else is needed to complete the Portrait, and. . .**



...obviously, an initial set of reference points (the Portrait outline) and palette (the Portrait language)

- **The reference points are concrete statements of student learning outcomes,**
- **arranged across 5 broad areas of cognitive and allied archipelagos, and**
- **for each of the 5, the outcomes are in an ascending ladder of challenge, from associate's to master's levels.**
- **The palette consists of active verbs that describe what students actually do to evidence their competence at each degree level.**



Why active verbs?

- They lead *directly* to assessment prompts, i.e. if you describe what students should do to demonstrate competence, then
- you can bring on stage a range of appropriate assignments (papers, exhibits, laboratories, performances) and/or examination questions that will facilitate the demonstration.
- You cannot do that with dead-end nouns such as “awareness,” “appreciation,” “ability,” or “critical thinking.”



What kind of active verbs are we talking about at the associate's degree level?

- For analytic inquiry: **identifies, categorizes, and distinguishes**
- For use of information resources: **identifies, categorizes, evaluates, and cites**
- For applied learning: **locates, gathers, and organizes**

You begin to get a flavor of competency-based criteria for awarding associate's degrees. But . . .



...verbs don't stand alone, so one has to think through the context, e.g. for Analytic Inquiry at all 3 degree levels:

- **Associate's:** identifies, categorizes, and distinguishes among elements of ideas, concepts, theories, and/or practical approaches to standard problems.
- **Bachelor's:** differentiates and evaluates theories and approaches to complex standard and non-standard problems within his or her major field.
- **Master's:** disaggregates, adapts, reformulates, and employs principal ideas, techniques, or methods at the forefront of his/her field of study in the context of an essay or project.



Notice what this means at the associate's degree level:

- First, at all degree levels, the verbs describe what students actually do when they think.
- Second, the associate's degree level phrasing allows for both general transfer degree programs and occupationally-specific programs (“practical approaches to standard problems”), but does not exclude “ideas, concepts, theories” from occupational programs or “practical approaches” from default transfer degree programs.
- Throughout, the wording is very sensitive to the two major categories of associate's degrees.



However. . .

- Even accepting the palette of verbs, some of the wording may not strike you as felicitous;
- Some of the examples of competence may strike you as partial;
- And you may have special generic missions that are not accounted for in the range of degree qualifications presented in the Profile.
- So. . . .



The Lumina process invites you

**to contribute to the refinement of
the Profile you see.**



A 3-year iterative process is anticipated, with

- **Some regional accrediting bodies and institutional consortia trying out the Profile in their respective contexts;**
- **Open forum feedbacks from major organizations and stakeholder groups, e.g.**
- **At the 2011 AACCC convention in April; but**
- **We can start right now, so the floor is yours!**