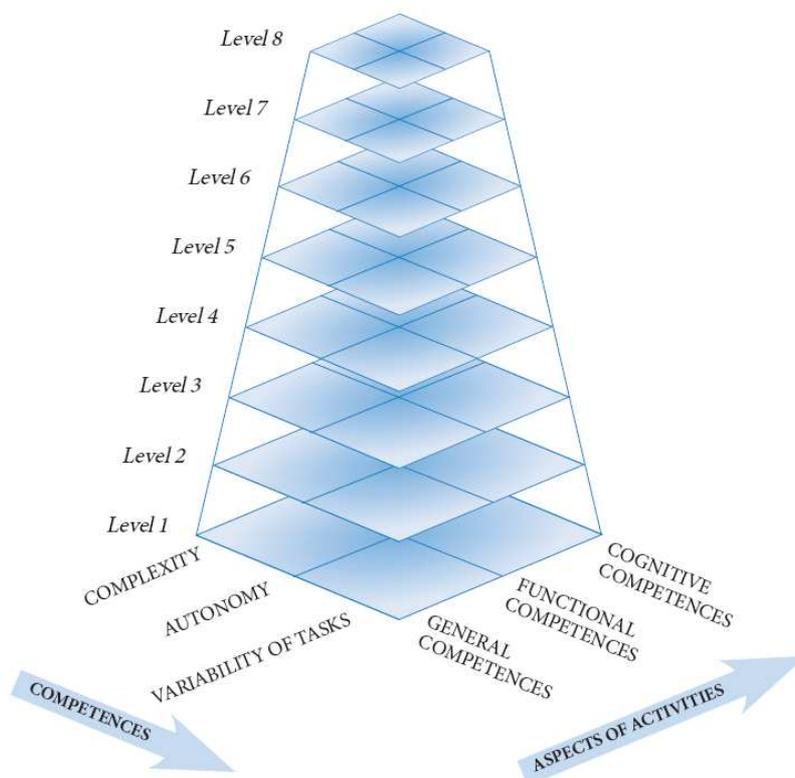




LEVELS OF THE NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK OF LITHUANIA*

Proposed structure of qualifications levels of the National Qualifications Framework of Lithuania, as a fundamental basis of the framework, is built on the methodological basis and is of relevance for practical application. The span and quality of this structure reflects the needs of the system of activities and is in accordance with the possibilities to acquire qualifications provided by the system of education. The levels of the National Framework are linked with the European Qualifications Framework. The levels of the National Framework are clearly differentiated one from another and co-ordinated with all relevant stakeholders, i.e. providers (educational institutions), learners, employees, and end-users (employers). The National Framework of Qualifications is composed of the eight levels of qualifications. The number of levels of qualifications has been defined primarily referring to the needs of the system of activities of Lithuania and only then taking into consideration the compatibility with the European Qualifications Framework.

Pursuant to the principles of development of the National Qualifications Framework and considering the European Qualifications Framework and the structure of vocational education levels in place in Lithuania, it was concluded that *an eight level structure* would be appropriate for the Lithuanian National Qualifications Framework. This number was based on findings of labour market research, analysis of labour processes in the system of activities, practice of the education system, and reflexive analysis. The full range of qualifications is structured in a hierarchy of levels that span from general secondary schools, vocational secondary schools, and labour market training institutions to the higher education. The level reference structure also captures qualifications acquired through non-formal and informal learning and through lifelong learning opportunities.



* http://www.lnks.lt/english/images/stories/dokumentai/Framework_NQS%5B1%5D.pdf

The first five levels encompass qualifications acquired at initial secondary and continuing vocational training institutions, and in work settings; levels from 6 to 8 encompass qualifications acquired at higher education institutions.

A qualification level may be classified into sub-levels, smaller units. In the Lithuanian National Qualifications Framework, the level VI of qualifications is broken down into sub-levels.

In sectoral qualifications frameworks, categories of qualifications for work organisation, payroll management and other fields of HR management in a sector or even an enterprise may be classified.

Descriptors of qualification levels of the Lithuanian National Qualifications Framework provide a clear view of characteristics of a qualification. All qualification levels are described by applying the same methodology.

There are two types of description:

Concise descriptors

For general information purpose, qualification levels may be described briefly. A concise descriptor of level includes:

- characteristics of activities
- content and acquisition of qualification
- opportunities for further learning and qualification development
- types of the recognition of qualifications

The concise descriptors of levels are presented in Chapter Two of this Outline.

Comprehensive descriptors

For practical purposes, levels are described comprehensively with detailed indicative characteristics of the level of qualifications. Descriptors of levels are based on two groups of criteria. Each group contains three criteria:

1. Criteria for an activity, for which the level of qualifications is typical:

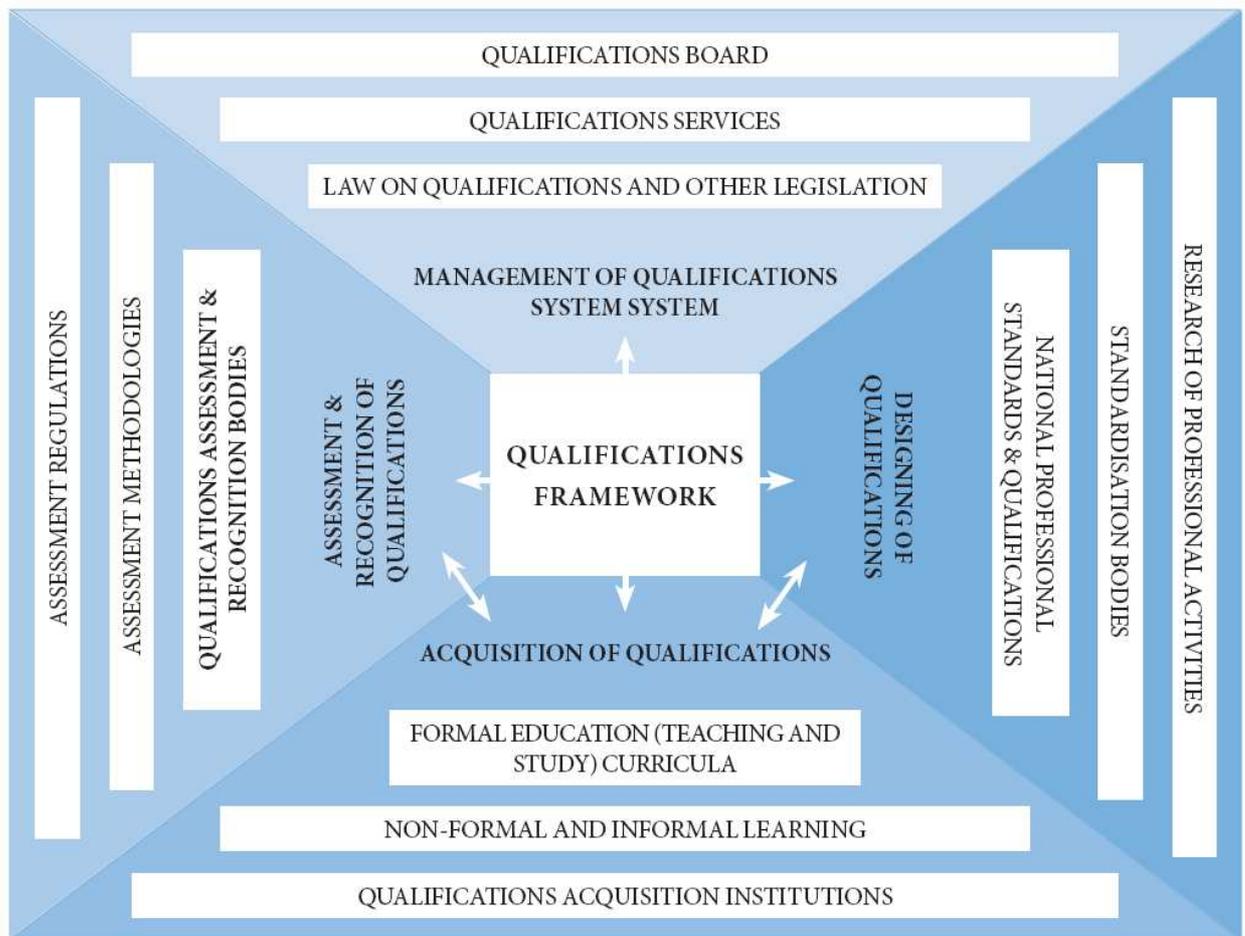
- complexity of activities;
- autonomy of activities;
- variability of activities.

2. Criteria of competences required for the activity:

- functional competences required for an activity;
- cognitive competences required for an activity;
- general competences required for an activity.

The descriptors of the qualification levels make distinction between specific typical functional, cognitive, and general competences, and reflect the evolution of competences on the route from a lower to higher qualification. It is possible that some competences remain stable despite the progression through the qualification levels.

This method was used to describe levels of qualifications for the purposes of a model of the qualifications system.



KEY TERMS

Acquisition of qualifications: the process of formal learning in educational institutions as well as the process of **non-formal and informal learning**, during which the learners acquire qualifications.

Assessment and recognition of qualifications: Evaluation of the attainments (knowledge, know-how, skills, and competences) of an individual acquired in the formal education system as well as through **non-formal and informal learning**, leading to the formal certification of an acquired qualification through the award of a certificate, diploma, or other document set out by the State. A qualification may be recognised if all qualification related competences meet the assessment criteria.