THE MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

Sharifah H Shahabudin
Vice Chancellor
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
(***National University of Malaysia***)

Formerly Director, Quality Assurance Division, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2000-2005) &
CEO, National Accreditation Board, Malaysia (2006)

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

1. Reasons for establishing MQF

2. What is the added value?

3. What are the challenges in realizing them?

4. Scope for Europe-Asia cooperation in further development of national and regional QFs

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- Mid 1990's: Liberalisation, democratisation -→ expanding public, private and cross border education

- Privatisation of higher education as INTEGRAL part of HE → increases access & diversity of learning experiences

- 1996: Regulatory framework established for <u>private higher education</u>

  - Private Higher Education Act 1996 with powers of registration & enforcement

  - National Accreditation Board Act 1996 with powers for recommending COURSE approval and accreditation to the Minister of HE

  - The National Higher Education Council Act 1996 for policy advice on both public and private higher education.

NATIONAL ACCREDITATION BOARD

- MANDATORY

- 2 PROCESSES: (A) COURSE APPROVAL (B) CERTIFICATION OF STANDARDS

- STANDARDS:

  - MINIMUM

  - ACCREDITATION

  (DIFFERENCE BEING TOTAL SCORE OBTAINED IN EXTERNAL EVALUATION)

- NO GUIDELEINES ON "STANDARDS'; SUBJECTIVE; NO COMPARABILITY

- ONE GLOVE FITS ALL APPROACH – NOT PRACTICAL IN DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT (indigenous, "twinning" or programme mobility, branch campus of foreign university)

OTHER ISSUES

- LACK OF TRANSPARENCY→ Confusion in qualification nomenclature & what each represents
    - No measure of desired learning levels
    - No common understanding of "credits" ; use of "contact hours" to calculate credits – formula varies from institution to institution;
- Differences in qualification level measured by credits only
- What to do with individual certification - qualification s acquired by competency assessment/examination (mainly in the professional fields)
- No mechanisms to support & realise the policy life long learning – need criteria & procedures for recognition of prior learning & experiences
- Public/private sector divide – need for avenue for collaboration

PUBLIC SECTOR QA

- By 2002: QUALITY ASSURANCE DIVISION ADMINISTRATIVELY ESTABLISHED IN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
  - to promote public confidence in the standard of qualifications and delivery of programmes of public universities.
- BEGINNINGS OF DUAL SYSTEM IN QA
  - QA as policy, not mandatory
  - institutional & programme audit aimed at continuous quality enhancement (CQE)
  - Emphasis on capacity building → institutional culture of CQE
  - Collegial approach
  - Development of national consensus on guidelines for standards in broad discipline areas by levels of study → QF

HISTORIC DECISION

- September 2004: Malaysian Cabinet directs
  - restructuring of the National Accreditation Board & QAD
  - adoption of internationally accepted good practices in quality assurance system, including developing an MQF
  - Integrated QA for public & private sector HE, including technical & vocational education
- 24 Feb 2006: Formation of MOHE Task Force to develop MQF and draft MQA Bill
- 1 July 2007 Bill tabled in Parliament
- 30 Aug 2007: gazetted as an Act
- 1 Nov 2007 MQA Act comes into force

What is the added value of the MQF?

MALAYSIAN QUALIFICATIONS AGENCY (MQA) ACT

- PROVIDES FOR:
- single agency for Quality Assurance
- Administration of Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF)
- Quality Assurance Processes that address diversity in institutions & programs
  - Provisional accreditation to help establish new institutions or programs in non self accrediting institutions
  - Accreditation (6 chapters to address diversity of provision)
  - Institutional audit to move towards self accreditation
  - Evaluation of other qualifications
- Accreditation of prior learning to support Life long learning
- Malaysian Qualifications Register (MQR) as national reference for qualifications
- Appeals, Enforcement & Investigation, Offences & Penalties

MQF IN THE MQA ACT

"The Agency shall be responsible for developing and implementing a national framework to be known as the "Malaysian Qualifications Framework", consisting of qualifications offered by higher education providers based on a set of criteria, including the learning outcomes achieved and credits based on students academic load."
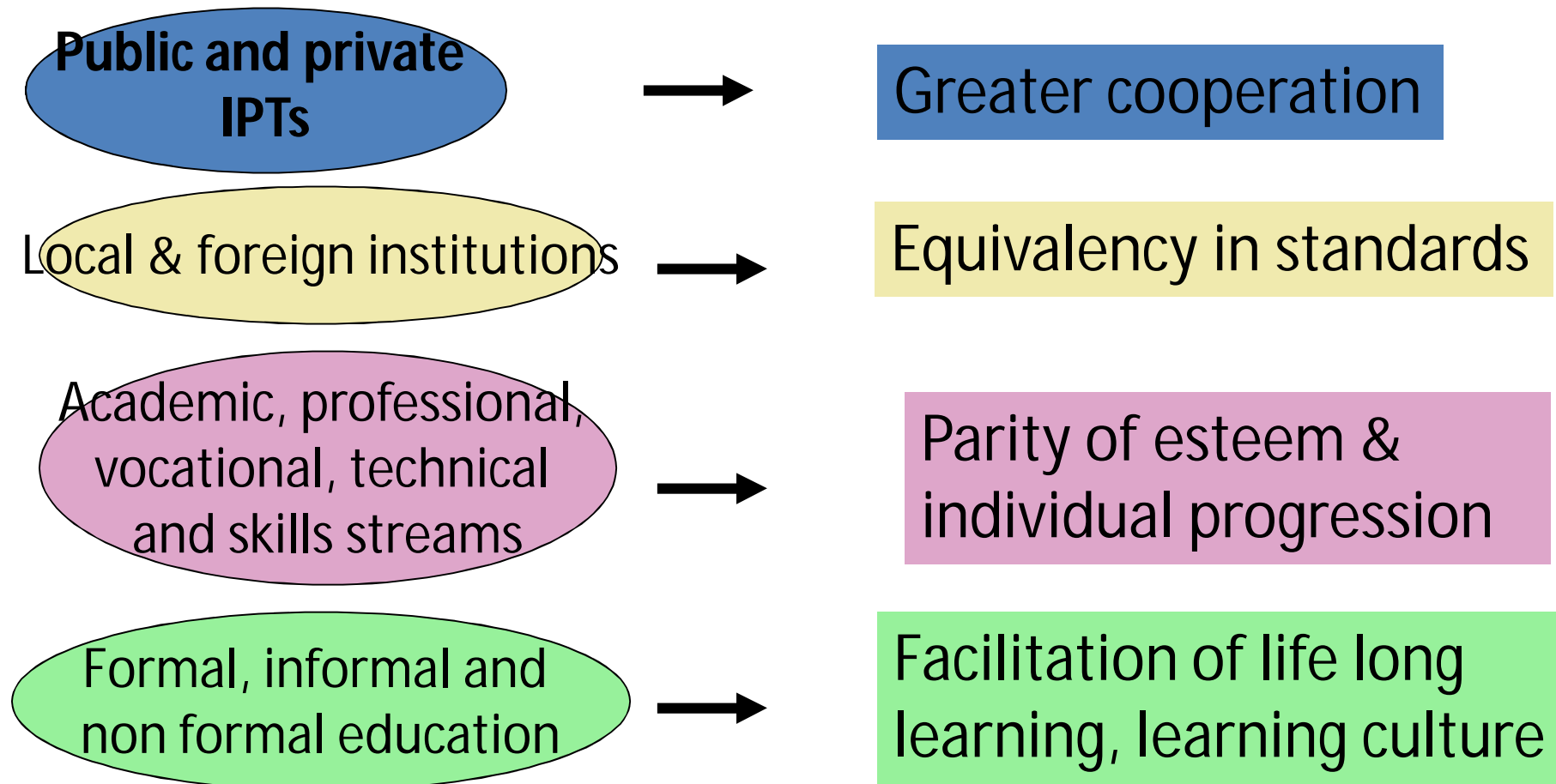
ADDED VALUE OF MQF (TRANSPARENCY)

- A united system of qualifications in relation to Malaysia's education system and their quality.
- Uses nationally agreed principles, criteria, guidelines & competency standards that set the boundaries for naming, classifying , positioning and linking qualifications
- for levels of learning attained for developing & classifying qualifications (learning outcomes & credits based on total student workload)
- reference point for information about qualifications and quality assurance
- Used in determining the national "equivalence" of foreign qualifications for the purpose of recognition.
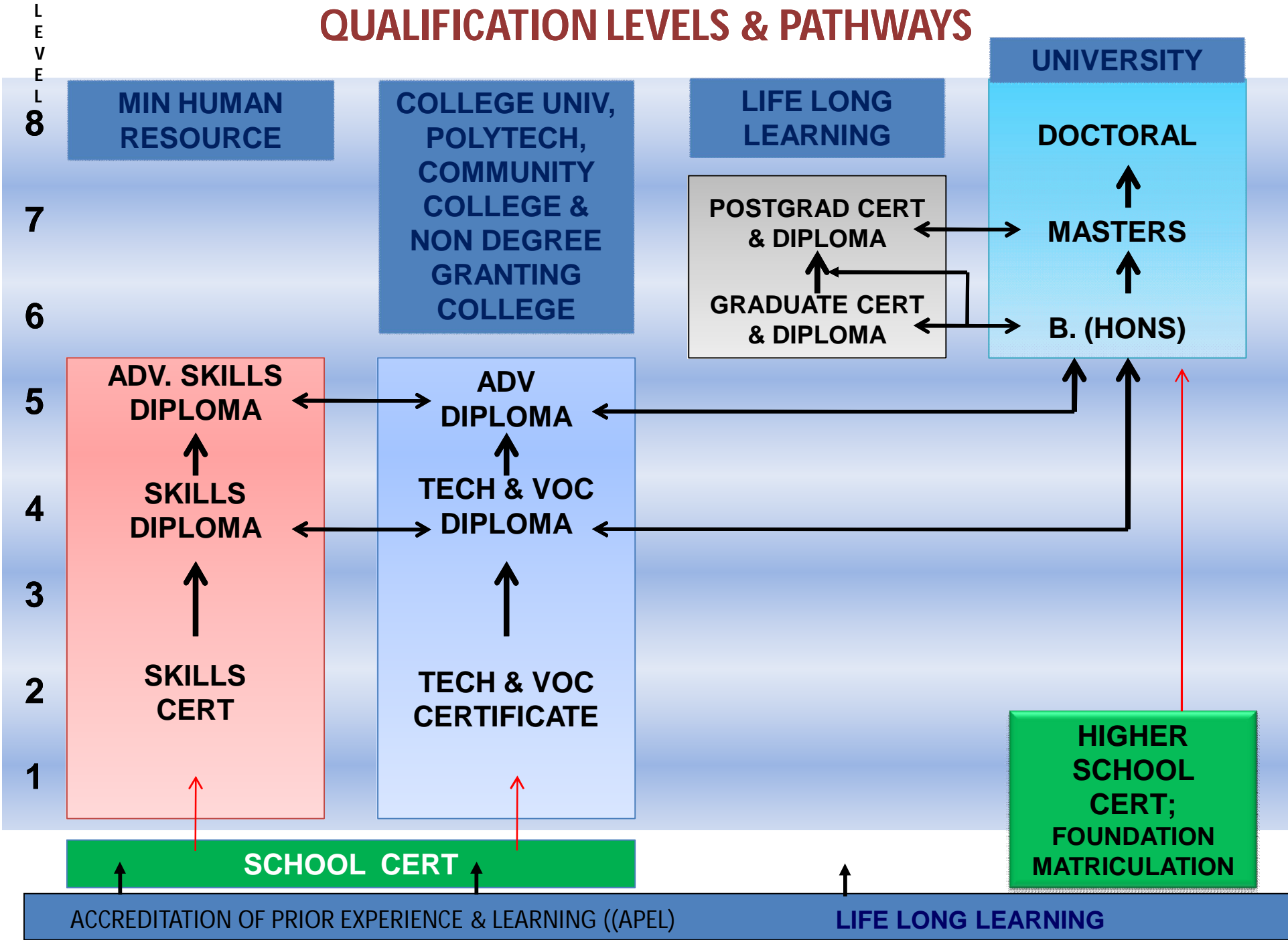
ADDED VALUE OF MQF (PATHWAYS)

- provides articulation principles for individual progression through flexible learning pathways which take into account accreditation of individually driven prior learning & experience (APEL) or credit transfer from formal, informal and non formal learning life long learning
- Not a rigid system- accommodates new qualifications that arise according to needs & growth of knowledge

Linking Qualifications in flexible learning pathways

Unites Qualifications awarded among :

Public and private IPTs → Greater cooperation

Local & foreign institutions → Equivalency in standards

Academic, professional, vocational, technical and skills streams → Parity of esteem & individual progression

Formal, informal and non formal education → Facilitation of life long learning, learning culture

QUALIFICATION LEVELS & PATHWAYS

LEVEL

Level				
8	MIN HUMAN RESOURCE	COLLEGE UNIV, POLYTECH, COMMUNITY COLLEGE & NON DEGREE GRANTING COLLEGE	LIFE LONG LEARNING	UNIVERSITY
7			POSTGRAD CERT & DIPLOMA	DOCTORAL
				MASTERS
6			GRADUATE CERT & DIPLOMA	B. (HONS)
5	ADV. SKILLS DIPLOMA	ADV DIPLOMA		
4	SKILLS DIPLOMA	TECH & VOC DIPLOMA		
3				
2	SKILLS CERT	TECH & VOC CERTIFICATE		
1				HIGHER SCHOOL CERT; FOUNDATION MATRICULATION

SCHOOL CERT

ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR EXPERIENCE & LEARNING ((APEL)   LIFE LONG LEARNING

MQF CRITERIA FOR EACH QUALIFICATION

- **LEVEL LEARNING OUTCOMES (expressions of what graduates   are expected to be able to do at the end of training)**
- **FIELD OR DISCIPLINE of study**
- **NATURE (e,g Masters by course work or research)**
- **CREDITS or academic work load expected of students**
- Other distinguishing characteristics may include:
  – minimum entrance requirement, typical duration , cumulative duration in full time equivalent (part-time courses)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

PSYCHOMOTOR/PRACTICAL/ TECHNICAL SKILLS
(range and complexity)

SOCIAL SKILLS, RESPONSIBILITY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

KNOWLEDGE
depth, breadth & relative difficulty of specific content

QUALIFICATION DESCRIPTORS

PROFESSIONALISM, VALUES, ETHICS ATTITUDES,

Life Long Learning & Information Management

Communi-cation Leadership & team skills

Critical Thinking & Scientific Approach

Managerial & Entrepreneu-rial Skills
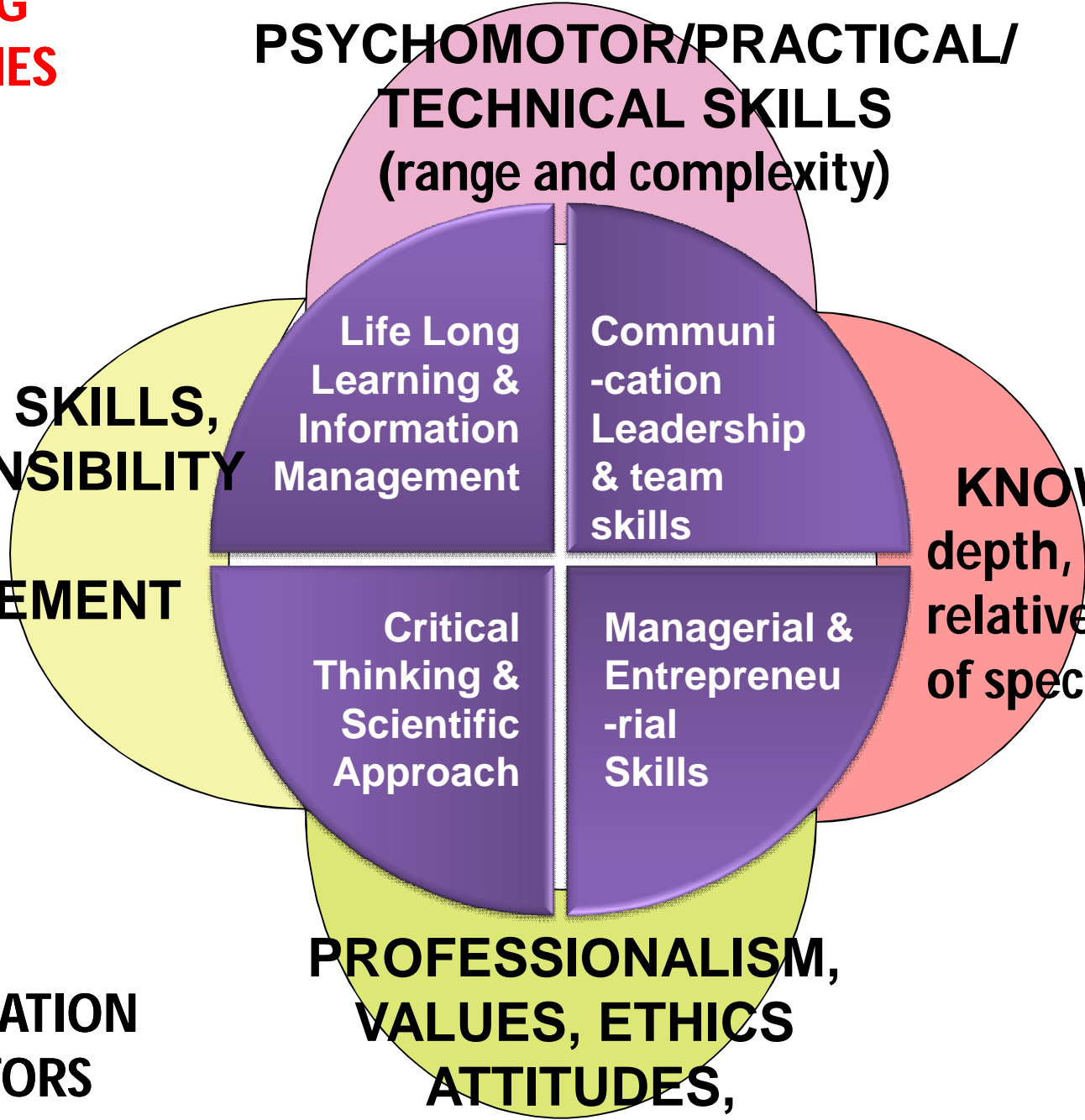
Level 6: BACHELOR

Preparation for career (general or professional) & postgraduate education

- Demonstrate knowledge & understanding of basic principles in a field of study obtained from advanced texts & at the boundary of knowledge
- Shows professionalism in the use knowledge & understanding of the field
- Ability to articulate and communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to experts and non experts
- Ability to search for and use data/information to solve problems & to make decisions based on social, scientific and ethical considerations
- Ability to work in teams and possess interpersonal skills
- Possess learning skills to continue postgraduate education with high degree of autonomy

Level 7 Qualifications
(Master's degree)

- mastery or overview at advanced level, theoretical and/or applied aspects of a field of study or area of professional practice
- demonstrated by ability to
  - analyse, critically evaluate & integrate new ideas with established knowledge;
  - show originality, creativity, flexibility and independence in the systematic application of knowledge in tackling complex issues and solving problem
  - Execute project work or a piece of scholarship or research
- undertaken as coursework, combination coursework/research or research alone

Level 7 Qualifications
(Postgraduate diploma & certificate)

- Purpose:
  - broadening skills of individuals gained in an undergraduate programme;
  - developing vocational knowledge and skills in a new professional area or area of study at the degree level but too narrow to warrant a full degree course;
  - further specialization, within a specific systematic and coherent body of knowledge.
- sometimes used as steps on the route to a degree or as part of training for a specific career.
- usually less extensive than the Master's
- difference between diploma (about 9 months – 1 year) and certificate (about 1 semester) is the credit load

Medical field

- Specialist qualifications are awarded by the universities; overseen by National Conjoint Specialist Board

- The highest professional degree is the Mastership; four year courses for practice in specialised fields of Medicine such as General Surgery, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics and etc.

- Academic degree: unusual degree structure has evolved
  - If the MBBS is the 1st degree, MD is the highest degree
  - If the MD is the 1st degree , PhD is the highest degree

Level 8 Qualifications (Doctoral degree)

- substantial original contribution or significant and original adaptation, application and interpretation of existing knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline;
- Entails comprehensive and searching review of the literature, experimentation, creative work with exegesis or other systematic approach or an advanced, searching and expansive critical reflection on professional theory and practice.
- normally presented as a substantial and well ordered disertation, non print thesis or portfolio and submitted for external examinaton against international standards.
- Demonstarted by the abiltiy to
  - conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding
  - make informed judgments and innovations in tackling and solving problems on complex issues in specialist fields.

- terminal degree in most fields
- credit structure not officially defined but the duration of study is usually about four years.
- academic doctorate can be awarded as a PhD (*Philosophiæ Doctor*
- In professional courses both the PhD and the professional degrees are awarded (e,g DBA)

CREDITS

- Achieve common understanding to secure standards of qualification
- Facilitate credit transfer within and among institutions inside & outside the country
- Facilitate credit transfer within and among sectors: skills, vocational & technical, academic & professional
- Facilitate credit transfer between formal, non formal & informal education

PRIOR TO MQF

- Variation among and within institutions
- Student activities outside the "contact hours" not well accounted for & vary considerably in the calculation of credits, especially those related to lab and field work
- No common understanding in calculating credits for industrial attachments, research or project work, field assignments etc
- Less value placed on student centered, hands-on approaches, e.g 4 hours of PBL/week = 2 credits only but 1 hr lecture/week = 1 credit

MQF CREDITS

- **A MEASURE OF THE TOTAL ACADEMIC LOAD OR LEARNING EFFORT OR VOLUME OF LEARNING A STUDENT MUST UNDERTAKE TO ACHIEVE A DEFINED GROUP OF LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- all forms of learning in **hours**: contact hours, work-based, research, experiential, practical activities, private study, preparation for assessment etc (formal contact hours + additional hours of work students are expected to undertake on their own.

1 credit = 40 hours

MQF CREDITS

- expressed as Minimum Total Credits (specify range) for:
  - qualification level (e.g bachelor, masters)
  - field (e.g Medicine, Engineering, Arts)
  - exit level of program (limits total credit that can be transferred, eliminates practice of condonement
- Qualifications with the <u>same name</u> have the same minimum total credit requirement.
- Qualifications at the same level may have different credit requirements (e.g between Medicine, Engineering, Social Science).

ADVANTAGE OF MQF CREDITS
Academic load per week

- cap the student workload per week to allow them sufficient time for other campus activities & self development

- 20 credits per semester (14 + 2 study + 2 exam)

- Allows flexibility in determining program length depending on policies for academic year/semester/term which vary because of the diversity in imported programs

- autonomy to institutions to creatively design programs to meet various needs & characteristics of students (full time, part time, weekend, distance, e-learning, problem-based, hands-on etc)

TOTAL MINIMUM CREDITS

- BACHELOR: 120 CREDITS (4800 HOURS)
- MASTERS: 40 CREDITS
- PHD: NOT CREDIT RATED

CHALLENGES AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

ATTITUDINAL

Professors know best → accountability
no one should "teach" them how to organize their courses or
how they should teach.
Painful exercise to get them to share make others understand
what they want students to be able to do at the end of their
course. Need firm leadership. & supportive environment

LACK OF SKILLS IN WRITING LEARNING OUTCOMES

so used to teacher dominated model of "passing out
knowledge". "we want student to understand "
irritated when asked " yes, how do they know students have
understood". Workshops, workshops & workshops

CHALLENGES AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

CREDITS & TEACHING LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Very content oriented, familiar with teacher centered contact hours → estimating credits without adding/removing load is tedious process

learning outcomes → re think about teaching –learning activities to support domains outside the knowledge area particularly → innovative student centered methods.

EVERYONE IS INVOLVED

learning outcomes in 8 domains → require > 1 professor's effort commitment from the faculty, school and university

Eg. Inculcation of social skills and responsibility, ethics and values require more than classroom interactions; students need varied learning experiences organized by other parts of the faculty or university.

CHALLENGES AT INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

ASSESSMENT SYSTEM
drive learning by supporting it with an appropriate assessment system that measures and records performance in all the domains.

academic assessment system + Observation & measurement of generic skills & competences.
UKM devise a new assessment system: web based accessible to different assessors parts (residential college activities, student advancement center, faculties, students etc) to observe & measure & record performance

Scope for Europe-Asia cooperation in further development of national and regional QFs

(VERY GOOD, ON THE TABLE SINCE 2003 – ACTS, BUT NEED FRESH APPROACH)

HELP COUNTIRES BENCHMARK EQF BUT LET THEM DEVELOP THEIR OWN UNIQUE QF TO ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS

MQF BENCHMARKING

- QF UK, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND & EUROPE (Bologna process & EQF)
- LISBON CONVENTION
- DISCIPLINE /SUBJECT BENCHMARKS (e.g WFME, Washington Accord, UIA)

HELP COUNTRIES DEVELOP QA PROCESSES, GO HAND IN HAND WITH QF

MQA benchmarking

- QA AGENCIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES

- INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF QA AGENCIES IN HE (INQAAHE)

- ACCREDITATION PROCESS OF PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMMES

- UNESCO/OECD GUIDELINES ON QUALITY OF CROSS BORDER EDUCATION

  (ADDRESS GOVERNMENTS, HE INSTITUTIONS, QA & RECOGNITION BODIES, PROFESSIONAL BODIES, STUDENTS)

  * AP UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Degrees, Diplomas & Certificates (being drafted)

SUPPORT ASEAN ROUND TABLE OF QA NETWORK FOR REGIONAL INITIATIVE

- INITIATED BY MQA: first ASEAN Roundtable meeting in Kuala Lumpur on 7 July 2008.
- the MQF and the MQA have been identified as the starting point for the ASEAN collaboration
- March 2009 2nd roundtable in Bangkok: panel assessors
- 2010 3rd RT in Jakarta: interphase between internal & external QA

INSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVES

- SUPPORT JOINT/DOUBLE AWARDS
- ESTABLISH EUROPEAN/ASEAN STUDIES CENTERS (UKM HAS AN AMERICAN CENTER, INTERESTED IN PURSUING A EUROPEAN CENTER AT THE INSTITUTE OF OCCIDENTAL STUDIES)
- GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP STUDENT MOBILITY PROGRAMMES , UKM HAS SEVERAL MODULES WITH PARTICIPATION FROM ASIA, UK, AUSTRALIA, USA & LATIN AMERICA:
  - SUSTAINABLE TROPICAL HERITAGE
  - INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS
  - LATIN AMERICAN EXCHANGE

UKM students in Universität Duissberg Essen

SHOW EXAMPLES & SUPPORT MORE MOBILITY PROGRAMMES (E,G JOINT/DOUBLE AWARD DEGREE PROGRAMMES, CT)

Branding UKM the RIQ Way

The ACU 2006 Conference

Our supervisor Mr. Jacek Januschkiwitz and my friends from Germany

UDE students in UKM

DESIRABLE OUTCOMES

- DEVELOP COUNTRY CHAMPIONS
- HELP QA NETWORK DEVELOP GUIDELINES & TOOLS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING
  - ASEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ASEAN QF)
  - ASEAN QA CODE OF PRACTICE
  - NETWORK OF ASEAN QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER
- COMPLEMENT INITIATIVES BY OTHER PARTNERS SUCH AS UNESCO & EU
- FINANCIALLY SUPPORT MOBILITY PROGRAMMES BASED ON EQUITY
- ESTABLISH EUROPEAN STUDIES CENTER IN ASIAN HEIs & ASEAN STUDIES CENTER IN EUROPEAN HEIs

THANK YOU