Quality Assurance of Academic Programmes due to Effective Communication with Employers: A Framework and Tools.

Dr. Ruben Topchyan,

Director of Armenian National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance, Foundation (ANQA)

Varduhi Gyulazyan,

Senior Specialist at Institutional and Programme Accreditation Division, ANQA

EQAF, 23-25 November, 2017, Riga, Latvia

EQAF EUROPEAN QUALITY ASSURANCE FORUM

ENQA EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

eqar European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

ANQA

Employers usually complain that:

Collaboration with academics is always in theoretical context, fragmented and not regular

Hence there is:

Academics do not took into account practical component

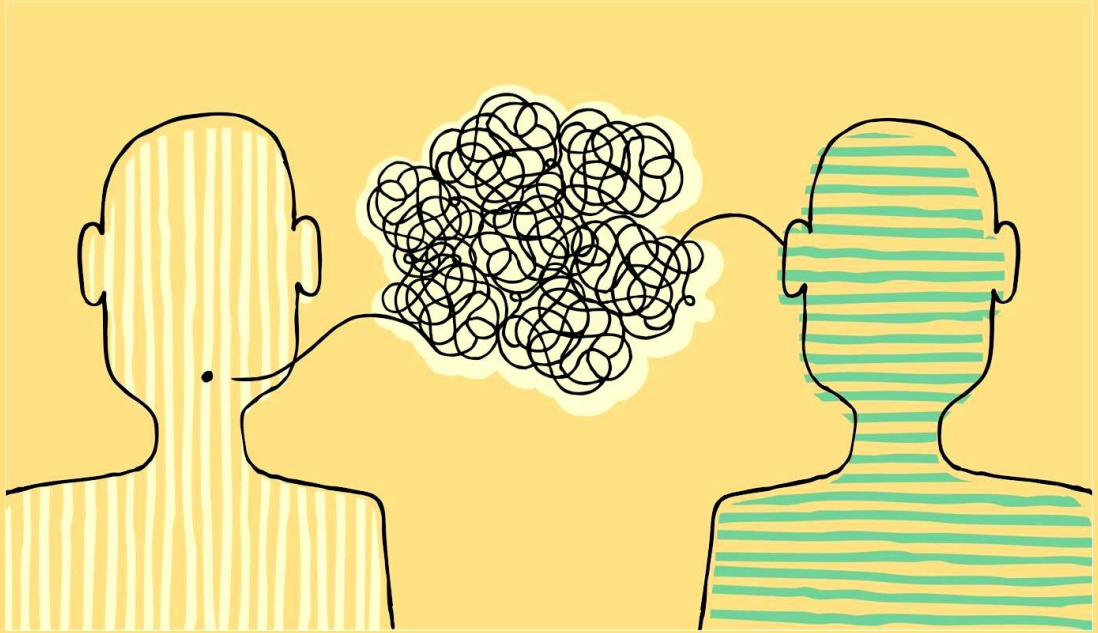
A lack of practical skills among students.

A lack of academics' involvement in collaboration.

What? - Different languages and Different Contexts

UNIVERSITY

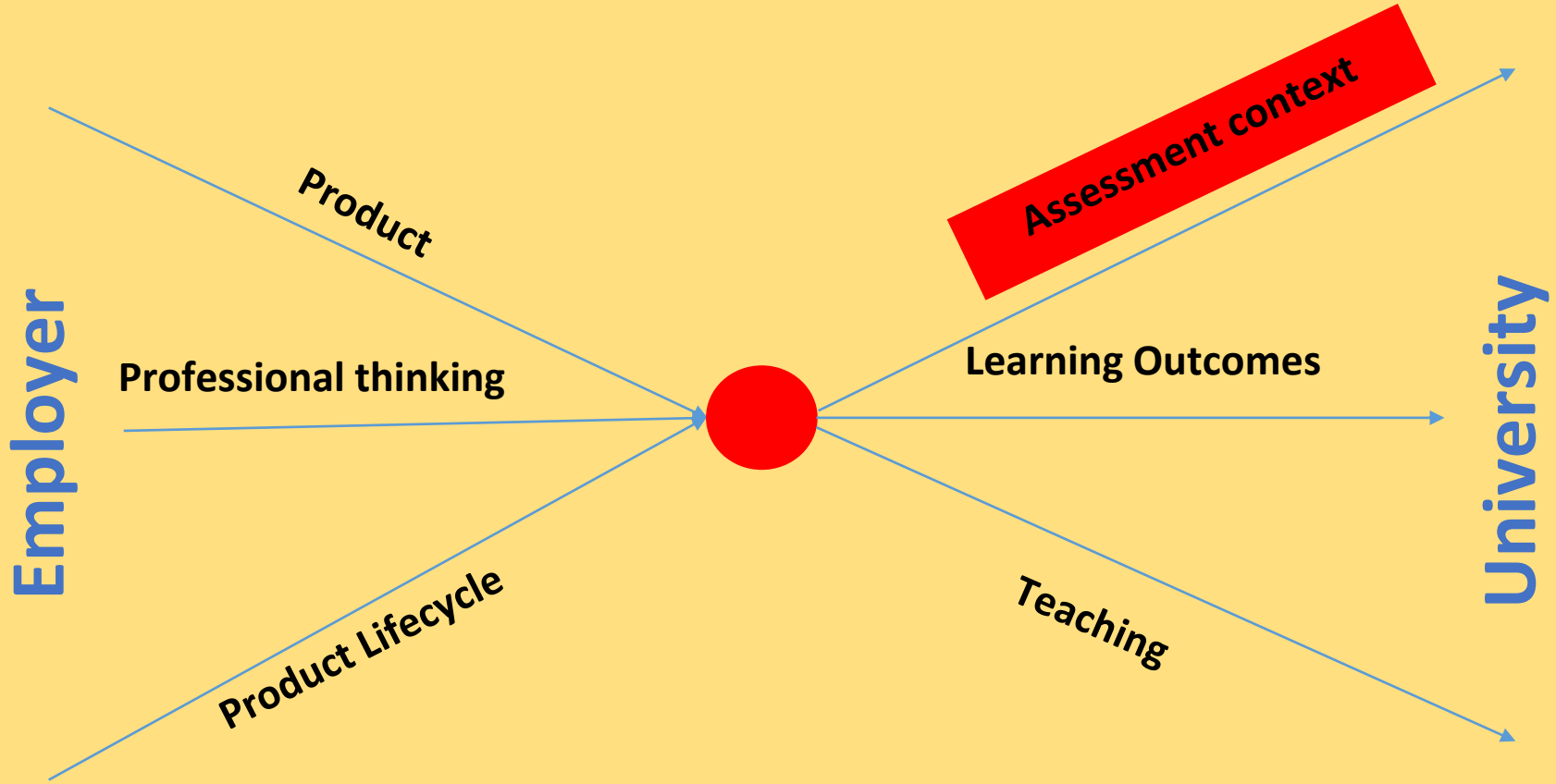
- Learning outcomes
- Knowledge
- Skills
- Competences



EMPLOYER

- Product
- Product lifecycle
- Professional thinking
- Body of knowledge

How to transfer employers context to the university?



Why assessment?

- Can directly address practice
- Is understandable for the university
- Results could be evaluated

Why teaching and learning?

- To shape the environment of education

Methodology of the Model

Used concepts

Enhancement of Academic Programme together with employers

Language
Interviewing
Find the understandable language for communication with employers
Interview employers to find out the working specific context

Contextualisation of Assessment

Translate context elements into assessment activities and practice
Review student assessment system with active teaching staff

Student Progress

Ensure students yearly progress aligning to employer context
Prepare for new cycle of communication

PRODUCT: remaining within the context

"***The Product***" is what is offered to the market, including physical goods, services, expertise, events, people, space, estate, organizations, information and ideas.

Products in education field:
academic programme, curriculum, review,
Internal QA system, Accreditation procedures
etc.

PRODUCTION LIFE CYCLE

"Conceive" is the phase in which the new product idea is generated. It includes needs assessment, definition of the main functional features and the design of the product, currently available technologies.

"Design" is the phase that includes the final design of the product, including its preliminary testing.

"Implement" is the phase that includes the descriptions and the sequence of operational steps and commands. Marketing documents and sales strategy are also included in this stage.

"Operate" is the phase in which the product owner has to provide all necessary information about product use.

PROFESSIONAL THINKING

Professional Thinking – defined as a specific approach to problems, gained through the study or work experience in the given field of activity.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

Body of knowledge is the content of the academic course/programme offered by educational institutions or training providers.

Process steps

KEY EMPLOYERS

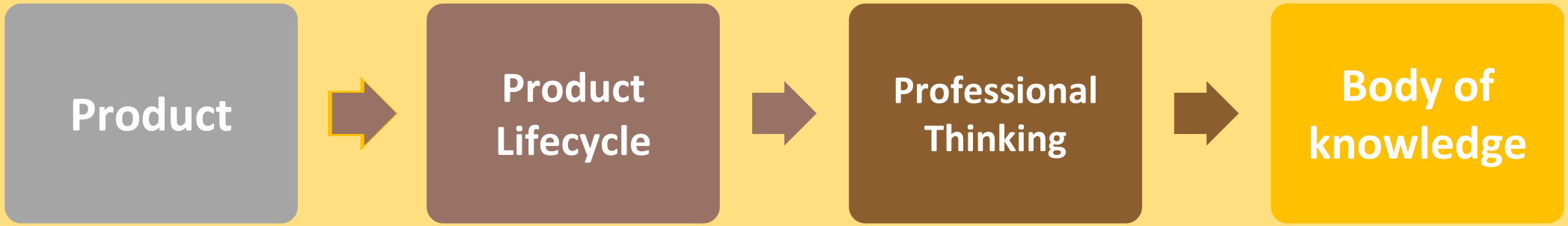
Selection of ***key employers*** for Academic Programme

- Actor: Head of Academic Programme

PLTB framework

Interviewing employers in the scope of PLTB framework

- **Actor**: Third party, independent expert with good knowledge of the framework, university teaching, academic program development in general
- **Actor**: Head of Academic Programme as a passive observer
- **Environment**: Employer's office
- **Media**: **Video recording**



Data Draw Out

Discussion of findings based on recorded video material and minutes of the employer's interview with Head of AP

- Eliciting specific findings in a PLTB framework/minutes
  - **Actor**: Head of AP
  - **Actor**: Independent expert

PREPARATION FOR TEACHERS MEETING

- Exchange of ideas between Interviewer and Head of AP
  - Preparation for a meeting with the teachers
  - **Actor**: Interviewer
  - **Actor**: Head of AP

Introductory meeting with teachers

- Presentation of framework by Interviewer
- Presentation of key findings by Head of AP
- Preliminary reflections by teachers

Internal meeting of academics

- The teachers watch the video recordings
- Discuss possible changes in the courses taught
- And in the general organization of the academic programme.

FINAL MEETING WITH TEACHERS

- Discussion of possible changes
- Employers’ expectations
- Accordingly revised learning outcomes
- Revision of Assessment methods and introduction of new assessment activities

Planning the change

- **Actors:** Head of AP and proactive teachers (jointly selected with interviewer)

…

- Possible extension of communication with employers
  - Joint meeting with employers and university administration

Workshop

- Group work 40’
  - Step 1-Buzz groups for Task 1 – 20’
  - Step 2-Open discussion on Task 2 – 20’

Exchange of experience and sharing of outcomes 30’

Tasks

- Task 1: Using the proposed framework, identify the products and production lifecycle in your field.
- Task 2: Identify useful elements for the review of programmes based on the results of Task 1. (Open discussion)

Step 1 –Buzz groups (20’)

- The buzz-groups of a few participants (two to three people/group) work on the first task.
- Each group assigns a note-taker, summarizing the main points discussed.

Task 1: Using the proposed framework, identify the product lifecycle of your field.

Questions to help identify the products:

- What are the products of your fields of occupation?
- What are the specific features of your product?
- What is the classification of your products? (newly created or already developed)

Task 1: Using the proposed framework, identify the product lifecycle in your field of activity.

- Questions for identifying product lifecycle:
  - What is the usual life-cycle of production?
    - **“Conceive:”** How the product idea is generated? If you have a new product, what is the procedure in this case? What technologies are used to design the product?
    - “**Design”:** What elements are needed for the final design of your product? What templates should be used?
    - **“Implement”**: What kind of specific actions are required for the implementation?
    - **“Operate”**: How feedback on the product using process is received?
  - What are the skills and competencies, required by the employer throughout the whole product lifecycle?
  - How do employers ensure that their staff always know how to remain competent during each stage of the lifecycle?

Task 1: Using the proposed framework, identify the product lifecycle in your field of activity.

Questions for identifying thinking:

- What is the professional thinking necessary to show professional approach?
- What is the specific approach/behaviour necessary to perform duties professionally?
- What are the specific features of the task performer for a specific product?
- What is specific at each stage of the lifecycle?

Task 1: Using the proposed framework, identify the product lifecycle in your field of activity.

Questions for identifying body of knowledge:

- What is the required content of academic courses for the employee to perform his/her duties?
- What skills should be assessed during academic studies?
- What tasks should students be assigned during their studies in order to gain practical skills?

Step 2 –Task 2: Identify useful elements for the assessment activities based on the results of Task 1. (Open discussion) (20’)

- Each group is presenting the outcomes of the first task.
- All members are reflecting on the results and identifying useful elements for:
  - the review of programmes,
  - academic courses,
  - assessment activities.

Best practice

Interviewees

Focus groups discussions have been held with:

- High level management
- Middle level management
- Staff (3 years' experience)
- Head of Academic Programm
- Teaching staff

PILOTING OF FRAMEWORK

- The framework has been piloted among key IT employers including umbrella organizations.
- The framework has been piloted among the employers in Translation business.
- The results have been discussed with teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Employers at IT sector

Union of IT employers (UITE)

Synopsys Armenia

Synergy

SFL

Armenian Software

Universities

Yerevan State University

Russian-Armenian Slavonic University

Employers at Translation Business

Translation Centre in the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Armenia with special thanks to **Liana Abovyan**

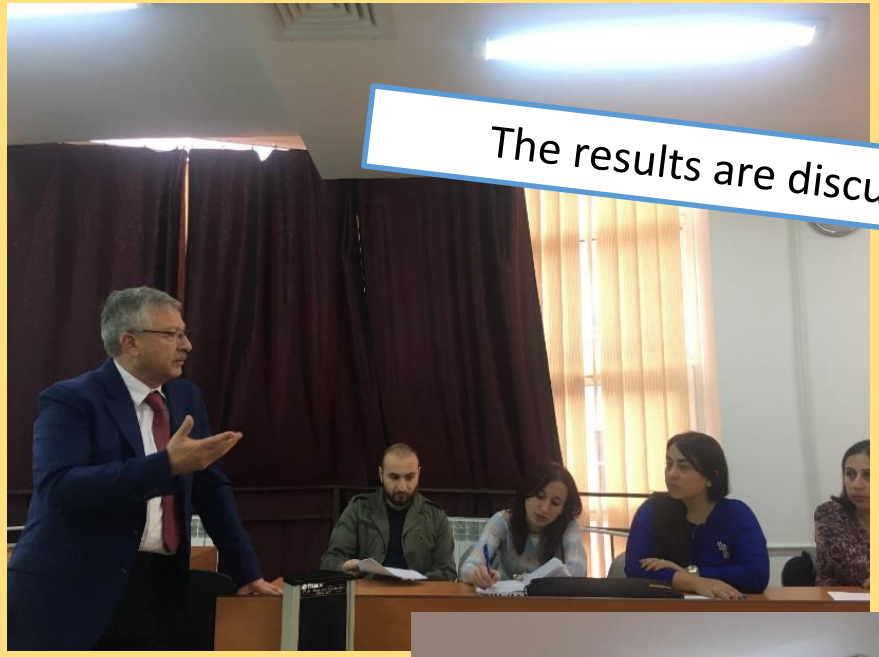
“Gaudeamus” Translation and Education Services

University

Yerevan State University of Linguistics and Social Sciences

Chair of English Communication and Translation with special thanks to the head of the Chair **Kristine Soghikyan and the teachers**

Discussions with employers



The results are discussed with teachers

Results of discussions with employers based on the proposed framework in Translation business.

Employer1 perspective:
Our products are legal texts translation such as laws, forensic recordings, international agreements medical resolutions and etc.
Employer2 perspective:
Results of our service are personal documents, agreements, random texts

Perspective of the head of AP:
All these products require specific thinking, and during bachelor studies the students cannot gain all necessary competencies to work with all these products.
At Bachelor's level they can acquire some introductory understanding of certain aspects in these specific fields, and at Master level they can choose the field which is proper to their abilities.
Generally the assessment here can be project-based.

Employer's perspective life cycle: "Conceive"
Pre-translation development. Taking into account the peculiarities of the translated text, a team of technical officers was assigned to ensure all phases with specific tools for translation and verification.

Design: Translation of the material including the verification at each stage of translation.

Teachers perspective:
In fact our students don't know the whole lifecycle of the specialization.
For this reason I will include the whole lifecycle of translation in my course with specific assignments: starting from pre-translation activity ending with verification of the translation.

Teachers perspective:
Assessment tasks will be role plays: one student will do pre-translation, the other student will translate, another one will do the verification and they will do proofreading of each other's work and will be assessed according to proofreading.
Assessment criteria will be how students develop own tools for each phase and reason it.

Implement: Editing the translation with the participation of the field specialist.

Proofreading by native speaker editors.

Operate: When the product goes to the client they give feedback on the product.

Perspective of the head of AP:
“This is an important factor”:

The whole life cycle of the speciality will be included in the programme starting from the 2nd year of the Bachelor programme. For every stage of the lifecycle specific assignments will be designed.
Assessment will take place for each stage of the lifecycle: self-assessment, peer-assessment, team work, making own tools and reasoning.

Professional thinking:
Motivation scheme
Analytical and logical thinking (using the right word in the specific context, finding different contexts, preparing specific vocabulary from the start of the job), perfection and respect to case responsibility.

Teachers' perspective:
I will include teaching specific search technologies in my course to strengthen analytical skills among students.
As criteria I'll evaluate development of professional neceser. Reasoning of each editing will be highly requested.

Perspective of the head of AP:

This will be included in the programme starting from the first year of study. The students will do practical translations starting from the first year keeping in assessment track of progress with increasing component of unknown context. Assessment tasks will focus on text analysis as part of larger individual projects.

Professional thinking:
Realizing responsibility of the work (person who realizes the consequences of the translation quality).
Ownership of the product.
Working under pressure, meeting the deadlines.

Perspective of the head of AP:

This is possible to achieve when the student has first-hand experience of the employers' business environment. I will change the programme so that the students are enabled to visit employers' offices for a week every semester, to shadow a translator.
Assessment will be based on a reflection diary and self-assessment with reasoning of decisions.
Student and teachers will motivate to do SWOT analyse to raise the responsibility.

Professional thinking:
Interdisciplinary communication skills. (To cooperate with specialists from different fields).
Interpersonal communication skills.

Teachers perspective:
We organize TEDx-like events and the students take roles in those events: one group is the organization task force, the other group is the speakers' group. The students are assessed in groups.

Perspective of the head of AP:
The real notion of interdisciplinary skills unfolds at Master's level, however at Bachelor's level assignments will be included in every course focusing on a specific topic and meetings with professionals from different fields and students will be motivated to develop their own vocabulary of terms after each meeting.

Professional thinking:
Incorporating different texts.
Localization of different texts to the local contexts.
Blitz translation skills.
Overcoming translation of difficult texts.

Perspective of the head of AP:
These are crucial and will be formed as one module per translation type.
For assessment: increasing fast decisions will organise competitions.

Body of knowledge:
No big theories, tools, practice,
a lot of translations,
accumulation of contexts.
Debates during studies.
Team work, role plays.
Real life assignments that
make the whole lifecycle

Teachers perspective:
I will include thematic translation debates, e.g. on ethical issues in translation in my course, as this will help to strengthen responsibility among students. The debates develop analytical and team work skills.

Body of knowledge:
Awareness of specific standards of translation.

Perspective of the head of AP:
Translation standards will be included at Master's level. The students will analyse the professional standard and will apply it to assess the quality of their own translation. Assessment criteria focus on standards, keeping them.

Thank you!
Questions and discussions

ruben.topchyan@anqa.am
v.gyulazyan@anqa.am
www.anqa.am