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Comparing specifications in a diverse qualifications system: instrument development

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Abstract

The UK qualifications system has thousands of diverse qualifications. Comparability research about qualification standards generally utilises two established comparators:

1. Quality of candidates' performance
2. Demand of examination questions

In the case of vocational qualifications, data samples can be deficient for research purposes, so studies use other comparators including specification features such as depth of knowledge. Specifications are documents detailing the knowledge, skills, competencies and assessment arrangements for a qualification. This conference paper describes the process of compiling a research instrument for comparing the specification features of cognate units from diverse qualifications and subjects. Such an instrument is atypical but valuable for conducting comparability research.

Kelly's repertory grid interviewing elicited knowledge from twelve experts. They represented three subjects in vocational, vocationally related, composite and general qualifications. A secondary thematic analysis of the data was completed. The result was a series of specification features:

- Learning
- Knowledge
- Summative assessment task and system

Each feature had several sub-features. Both features and sub-features were used to categorise the interview data. An instrument was derived from the features and sub-features, and refined through consultation with colleagues. Future research might compare qualifications with data collected using the instrument.

The full paper is published as:

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A related presentation:

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