

# **The development of a competence profile for the European Master of Floral Design**

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of the University of Twente.

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## Abstract

This article presents a research about the development of a competences profile. The European Floral Design branch was in need of a new educational programme for floral designers. They wanted a competences profile that forms the foundation of an educational programme at a higher professional educational level. This level turned out to be too ambitious in practice, so a competence profile of an European Associate Degree of Floral Design is developed. In order to develop this profile, documents are analysed about Dutch initiatives in building competence profiles at different levels in floral education. Also literature about educational levels is used to get the competence profile at the right educational level. The information from different kinds of documentation are combined and used to write a prototype competence profile. Expert interviews were undertaken to test empirically, if the competences that were mentioned in literature were applicable and useful for floral design. Empirical results and results from the background literature are combined to form the competence profile of a European Associate Degree of Floral Design.

## Introduction

In the year 2000, a needs analysis has been conducted in order to research the content of a basic module for an international educational programme for florists (Van de Vooren, 2000). The European Master of Floral Design as the programme is called, was implemented in the same year. Unfortunately, due to the lack of time and money of the trainees, who were already working in flower shops and could not get three weeks off, the programme could not be continued.

Recently the initiators of the European Master of Floral Design, under which the Feupf<sup>1</sup> and STOAS<sup>2</sup> have tried to restart the process of writing a new international educational programme.

The first step in building a new programme is writing down a profile of the tasks that a European Master of Floral Design should be able to perform. The goal of this study is thus to build such a profile in terms of competences. The relevance of this study can be found in the fact that there is no international educational programme in Floral Design yet. Secondly there is a need for an international educational programme in which floral designers can learn from different cultures in different countries. This is due to globalisation and mobility of students throughout the world. Asian florists for example are very interested in the European Floral Design methods and are following educational courses in Europe already. Finally the study will be innovative because the European Master of Floral Design programme will be designed at the higher professional education level, while the florist education in Europe at the moment, is mainly at a senior secondary vocational education level.

The Feupf is a European Federation that organises the national Florists' Associations of 20 European countries (Feupf 2008). The Feupf has written down the following goals to be reached with the new European Master of Floral Design. First it should lead to a better image of the florist industry and floral education. Secondly it should be stimulating to keep on learning after one has graduated (Life Long Learning). Thirdly it should become a sort of trademark for excellent florists with international opportunities. And finally the European Master of Floral Design should form a sort of bridge to the development of higher professional education in Floral Design. Implicitly in this goals is the hope of the floristry branch to make a national approved and funded education. But the fact that the name Master is used and that the education should reach the higher professional education level might stand in the way of approval.

Now to restart the development of the European Master of Floral Design, research has to be done to the competences of a floral designer at the higher professional educational level. In order to make a competence profile that is at the level of higher professional education, research also has to be done to the definition and characteristics of the higher professional education level. For the literature study, the

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<sup>1</sup> Feupf is short for Fédération Européenne des Unions Professionnelles de Fleuristes

<sup>2</sup> STOAS is a Dutch highschool for teachers in green education

following research question is formulated: ‘Which competences are relevant for the profile of the European Master of Floral Design on a higher professional educational level?’

The research is conducted from an educational point of view, because the competences profile will be form foundation for a new educational programme. The learning theory of constructivism is funding this research, because it implicates that education can not be seen separate from its context. New information must be related to other existing information in order for learners to retain and utilize it (Swanson & Holton, 2001; Kessels & Poell, 2001) Learning the theory of floral design is not enough it should be related to context and prior knowledge. Practising what is learned in an authentic situation, will be the best way to learn competences (Swanson & Holton, 2001). In consequence competences should be defined and described with the constructivism perspective in mind.

In order to find an answer to the research question, the following sub questions need to be answered:

- What is competency?
- What are the competences of florists?
- How does the European Master of Floral design fit in the Dutch and European educational system?
- What is a higher professional education level?

## **Background literature**

### *The concept of competence*

In order to build a competences profile for the European Master of Floral Design, the concept of competence needs to be defined. The concept was first mentioned in the Latin language as *competens*, which means capable or qualified (Mulder, 2001). In the eighteenth century competences were already implicitly written down in master-assistent learning outcomes. The word competences itself was first described by McClelland (1973) as: ‘Components of performance in coherence with clusters of life outcomes’. Since then a lot of definitions of competence are written down, but still no consensus about the concept is reached.

Two perspectives are influencing the choice of a definition of competence; an organizational perspective and an educational perspective. In organizational research about competences, the focus is on competences as performance (Swanson & Holton, 2001; Kessels & Poell, 2001). An example of an organizational definition of competences is; ‘A competency is a combination of observable performance dimensions; under which individual knowledge, abilities, attitudes and behaviour, but also collective team, process and organisational abilities, that are attached to higher performances and are giving the organisation a competitive advantage’ (Arthey & Orth, 1999). From an educational perspective the focus is on competences as the conditions for performance. In this article the educational perspective will be leading, because a competence profile for an educational programme will be developed. The competences should be written in a way that they can be used for educational purposes. The definition of competences that will be used in this research is thus: ‘Competency is the ability of a person to perform. The competences of a person are build up from actions, skills, attitudes and values. Integrated actions are formed out of clusters of knowledge structures. Cognitive, interactive, psychomotor skills, attitudes and values are needed to perform tasks, to solve problems and to function in a certain vocation’ (Bremner & Bruinsma, 2006). This definition describes the factors that are important for a person to perform competent. The elements of the competences form the foundation of the learning goals that will be written for an educational programme.

Besides this lack of consensus about the definition of competence there is also no consensus about the approach to competences. There are two different approaches to the competences concept; the analytical and the holistic approach.

In an analytical approach to competence, the focus is on the input of an action. It is also called the input-based approach, because of the focus on content of training and learning experiences that lead to competent performance (Hoffman, 1999). When someone is competent it gives him the

opportunity to act in a certain way. In this approach the competences are the little parts that are conditional for the completion of a certain task. In this analytical approach, competences can be split up in knowledge, skills, attitudes, insights and motivations (Toolsema, 2003; Grit e.a., 2006). The analytical approach can be compared to the behavioural approach that is rooted in the American tradition of writing about competences. The American tradition of competence description begins with observing a successful and effective employee to find out what differs him from less successful employees.

Competences are expressions of behaviour and can be learned, in contrast to personality and intelligence which can't be learned (Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). In an educational context this approach can be very useful, when competences are written down in more detail. The parts that build up a competency can be described and can be helpful by learning a complex competence, step by step (Toolsema, 2003). In this research however, the competences will be written from a constructivism perspective, which means that competences as a whole will be learned in a certain context in which prior knowledge will be combined with the new learned competences (Swanson & Holton, 2001). A more holistic approach will fit better to this research, because the holistic approach does not split competences into different kinds of skills and knowledge, but it combines the knowledge and skills that are needed to perform at a certain level in education.

In an holistic approach the focus is on the result of an action, the output. Being competent means that one can act successfully (Toolsema, 2003). In this approach a competency is a combination of knowledge, understanding, values, and skills that are implicit in a person who is performing a task. To understand the holistic approach, Delamare le Deist and Winterton (2005) have developed a holistic competency model. In this model they are combining cognitive competence, functional competence, social competence and meta competence. The cognitive competences are described as having the fundamental knowledge and theory. Functional competence means that one has the needed knowledge and skills to perform a certain task. Personal competence is nurtured knowledge and skills, like traits and attitudes. And finally the meta competences are the competences that allow a person to combine the different competences while performing a task and to deal with uncertainty, learning and reflection (Delamare le Deist & Winterton, 2005). The different competences are interdependent. To learn functional competences, a learner needs to have and use cognitive competences. When a person needs to collaborate while learning, he needs to have personal competences, like knowing what attitude to use during collaboration and finally the meta-competences will learn a person in what situation, which competences are best to use. In figure 1 the holistic approach is visualised. The interdependence of the competences is made clear in the triangle.

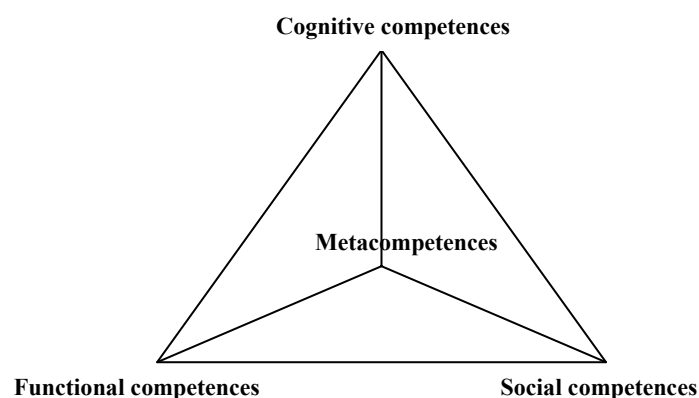


Figure 1: *The holistic competence model* (Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005)

For this research the holistic approach is the best way to look at competences, because it describes the competences as a whole. In order to be a good performer in floral design, the florist has to perform tasks like selling, making flower arrangements etcetera. To perform at a high level, the florist has to combine knowledge, skills and understanding in completing these tasks. Besides the fact

that the competences should be holistic to perform at a high level, also the competences are more specific and measurable in practice when they are described from an holistic approach. The competence profile has to be specific and measurable, which means that the output of a persons behaviour should be the foundation of the competence profile. The outcomes of certain tasks will be written down in specific competences.

When the competences are written down as a whole, they can easily be translated to an educational programme in which these competences will be learned. According to the learning psychology, this educational programme should be blended learning in which classroom learning and learning by doing in practice (using knowledge, skills and understanding simultaneously) are combined (Meijers, 2004). From an educational perspective, the holistic approach is thus the most applicable for this research.

### *The competences of a floral designer*

In the research report of the previous study on the European Master of Floral Design in 2000, five competence clusters were found relevant. These were: communicative skills, international professionalism, organizing skills, international business and public relations (marketing) (Van de Vooren, 2000). But in recent years a lot of developments have taken place in the field of competence based education. So the question rises if the list of 2000 is still applicable or if it should be changed according to recent developments. Three recent initiatives in competence research that are relevant for floral design, will be described here.

### Qualification description documents.

A lot of descriptions of competences for all kinds of vocations are developed recently all over the world. In the Dutch senior secondary vocational education, a standard format for the description of qualifications has been developed, the so called ‘*kwalificatiedossier*’. In this document a vocation is written down very specifically in core tasks and competences. These documents describe five critical tasks for florists, namely: making flower arrangements, selling, giving service, organising and supervising of tasks and finally enterprising. These critical tasks are clarified by a detailed description of the working processes that need to be done while performing the tasks. The third part of the document is an overview of the competences to be used in the particular tasks. These competences are a general list of twenty five competences, developed by SHL, a British company, and they are originally written for managers. The competences are very generic and can be used for all sorts of vocations, but they are not specific enough for a detailed description of a vocation. The competences alone are meaningless and they need to be clarified. That is the reason why the ‘*kwalificatiedossiers*’ are extended with a detailed description of the work processes.

The *kwalificatiedossier* for florists is developed by Aequor (2008), a Dutch branch organization for agricultural education. Because of the fact that the European Master of Floral Design wants to reach the higher vocational level, students should at least have the competences of a graduated florist in the senior secondary vocational education. The competences are written down in the qualifications dossier of a florist by Aequor (2008). In the table 1 below, the core tasks and the competences of a florist, which are written down in the *kwalificatiedossiers*, are written down.

Table 1: *Core tasks and competences of a entrepreneur florist.* (Aequor, 2008)

| <b>Core tasks</b>                                | <b>Competences</b>  |
|--|---|
| Making flower work and plant arrangements        | creating and innovating, delivering quality, learning, using materials and tools, deal with pressure and setback, focus on the needs and expectation of a customer, apply professional knowledge, following instructions and procedures, handle enterprising and commercial, formulate and report, cooperate and consider, analysing, decision making and initiate activities, handle commercially, convincing and influencing, plan and organize, perform professionally, presenting, researching , steering, guiding, |
| Performing work tasks for the benefit of selling |   |
| Selling and giving service                       |   |
| Organizing and guiding tasks                     |   |
| Enterprising                                     |   |

Only five core tasks of a florist are written down in table 1, but they can be performed in many ways. They are very generally written to make sure that every florist can apply this profile to his own working situation. The competences that are described, are the competences that a florist should have to perform well in its vocation.

For course (second chance) education, also a document is written with the competences at the highest level of floral education. This document is a description of work processes and competences of a all-round Dutch flower arranger (ARDFFA). The competences needed are: knowledge of flowers and plants, vocational knowledge about floristry, selling, buying, working with tools and materials, presenting, knowledge of rules and regulations, control, enterprising, advising and giving service, dealing and cooperating with personnel (VBW, 2003). One can see that there is a lot of overlap between the competences learned in initial senior secondary vocational education and in course education.

#### Higher professional education qualification documents

Besides these qualification description documents, there are initiatives of competence descriptions for florists in the higher professional education. Stoas high school is an educational institute for teachers in agricultural education. STOAS developed a document in which twenty-one critical situations in an agricultural profession, like florists, the so called 'critical professional situations (beroepssituaties)' are described. The critical professional situations are described very extensively and the competences that will be learned and/or are needed in the critical situations are applied (Stoas Hogeschool, 2007). In table 2 on the next page, the relevant critical professional situations and competences for this research are given. These competences are a selection from the critical professional situations and competences that are needed to perform the European Master of Floral Design vocation.

Table 2: *Critical professional situations and competences in the green sector.* (Stoas Hogeschool, 2007).

| <b>Critical professional situation</b>               | <b>Competences learned/ needed</b>   |
|--|--|
| Communication and analysis                           | In command of the language (Own speech and English)  |
| Professional skills                                  | Making an entrepreneurial plan<br>Organising activities at business level<br>Recognizing and appliance of materials  |
| Development of professional knowledge and skills     | Gaining professional knowledge<br>Handling methodologically  |
| Research and advising situations in the green sector | Defining and determining problems or hypotheses<br>Making a research plan<br>Analysing and translating professional, academic literature<br>Performing a practical research<br>Translating of research results to practical solutions<br>Making an advise plan |
| Organizing and cooperating                           | Being able to organize work situations<br>Radiation of commitment and motivation<br>Deal with rules and appointments<br>Being creative in finding solutions<br>Being able to communicate and cooperate<br>Interpreting quantitative information                |
| Professionalizing in floral education                | Deepen knowledge about the profession<br>Gaining new information, insights and developments in the branch<br>Participating in networks   |
| Developing in education and business                 | Planned/ systemic working<br>Anticipating on developments in education and/ or profession<br>Creativity related to the development of new ideas.<br>Implementation of changes  |
| Personal functioning                                 | Being able to handle proactively (initiative, effort)<br>Communicate with colleagues and direction<br>Leading and delegating<br>Being able to develop oneself personally<br>Being able to deal with workload<br>To act responsible in professional dilemmas    |
| Marketing en communication in de green sector        | To make and carry out a communications plan<br>Analysing stakeholders<br>Written and oral communication with target groups<br>Having and extending a relational network<br>Making a marketing plan   |
| Quality and logistic situations                      | Making a quality management plan<br>Analysing and improvement of logistic processes<br>Making an improvement proposal for the chain  |
| Management situations                                | Technical and economical comparison of businesses<br>Responsible entrepreneurship  |

At the moment there are no other higher professional educational programmes for florists. But there is an educational profile for Design education. When a florist will get to a higher level he will have to possess the competences of a designer to bring its performances to a higher level. The higher professional education board (HBO-raad) of the Netherlands developed competence profiles for the higher professional educational programmes. They also described the vocation domain of a designer. In table 3 below the competences of a designer are written down to give an overview of the competences that might be useful for a floral designer too (HBO-raad, 2008). The crosses in the table are pointing at the domain in which the competences are needed and learned.

Table 3: *The competence domains and competences of a Designer.* (HBO-raad, 2008).

| <b>Competence</b>             | <b>Domain</b> | Artistic- vocational<br>technical domain | Professional- social<br>domain | Theoretical domain |
|-------------------------------|---------------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Ability to create             |               | X  |                                |                    |
| Ability to reflect critically |               | X  | X                              | X                  |
| Ability to grow and innovate  |               | X  | X                              | X                  |
| Organizing ability            |               |  | X                              |                    |
| Communicative ability         |               |  | X                              | X                  |
| Context directed              |               |  | X                              | X                  |
| Ability to cooperate          |               |  | X                              |                    |

The final initiative for describing higher professional education in terms of competences is the development of a generic list of higher professional educational competences (Groen Hart Lyceum, 2007). The competences are: broad professionalism, multidisciplinary integration, academic appliance, transfer and broad usability, creativity and complexity in performing, working problem directed, handle methodologically and reflective, social communicative skills, basic management skills, taking social responsibility (Groene Hart Lyceum, 2007).

All the initiatives to create competence profiles for different sorts of vocations, find their foundations in international research on competence directed learning and education. They are for example related to the competence clusters developed by Onstenk (2004) and Toolsema (2003). Onstenk (2004) describes professional and methodological competences, task specific competences, organisational and strategic competences, learning and creating competences and finally social and normative cultural competences. Toolsema (2003) is mentioning social competences, commercial competences, management competences, cognitive competences, computer competences, physical/technical competences, learning competences, and career competences. People can develop or inherit all of these competences by studying or experience (Onstenk, 2004). So its up to the learner to gain all these competences.

#### *The position of the European Master of Floral Design in the Educational system*

The European Master of Floral Design is a Dutch initiative to create an international educational programme. There is no educational programme on a higher vocational level yet in The Netherlands or in Europe. The purpose of study is to create a competence profile for an international educational programme, so the European Master has to meet both Dutch and European standard.

#### Dutch educational floral educational system

In The Netherlands there are two ways to get a diploma in Floral Education. The first one is initial education, which is funded by the government. A student can do a fulltime study on an educational institute, or a part time study while having a normal job. The length of the educational programme can vary between two to six years, depending on the level of education (Ministerie OCW, 2005).

The educational system in the Netherlands has seven levels in which a student can graduate. The senior secondary vocational education takes care of level one to level four. A student that graduates on level four in floral education has permission to run its own flower shop and take hierarchical responsibilities. The higher professional education equals level five. Scientific education is level six and someone that promotes and gets its Phd is graduated on level seven (Ministerie OCW, 2005). The European Master of Floral Design will be developed on higher professional educational level, so it will equal level five.

The second way to get a diploma in floral education is by doing courses. Courses are given mainly to florists that are already working and want to deepen and broaden their knowledge. The length of the courses are varying between one and two years. These courses are not financed by the government but by the florist branch. Students need to pay the fees themselves or make appointments

for payment with the company they work for. In the current situation a student can get a diploma on five different levels, that might be compared to the levels of initial education. First there are two diploma's for Dutch Flower Arranger; DFA 1 and DFA 2. The first is a practical and the second a more theoretical diploma. Dutch Flower Arranger one and two can be compared to level two in initial education. Then there are two diploma's for Advanced Dutch Flower Arrangers; ADFA 1 and ADFA 2. These can be compared with level three of the initial education. And finally there is a diploma called Allround Dutch Flower Arranger; ARDFA. A student who has this diploma can be compared to a student that graduated on level 4 of the senior secondary vocational education for florists in The Netherlands (VBW, 2007). In the past, the excellent Dutch florists could get an extra diploma to show their expertise. This was called the 'Proeve van Meesterschap' (prove of mastership). Instead of this diploma, the European Master of Floral Design will be the top of the educational programme in course education. It will be on top of the ARDFA and should equal the higher professional educational level.

### Educational systems and level standards in Europe

In recent years Europe has been working hard to reach international cooperation in the area of education. Reasons for this are: growing concurrence of other continents in delivering highly graduated employees, reaching more transparency in qualification systems to make them comparable and the stimulation of a life long learning in Europe (Toolsema, 2003). In Europe there is no consensus about the educational system. Every country in Europe has it's own educational system. But in order to compare these different educational systems, a framework has been developed to compare educational programmes in terms of level. This European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is build up in eight levels. A description of each level is given in terms of standards that a person should qualify at. The European Commission did prescribe that every level should be written down in terms of three types of learning outcomes: knowledge, skills and broader competences; like personal and professional outcomes (European Parliament, 2008).

### *Levels in Vocational Education .in Europe*

To determine the level of an educational programme, some descriptions of levels are compared. But there is no consensus about the description of levels in international research yet.

### The European Qualifications Framework

In the previous paragraph the Educational Qualifications Framework (EQF) has already been mentioned. This is an European initiative to compare levels, but it is still difficult for countries to place their own educational systems in certain levels. This is due to the fact that the descriptions of the levels are very generally written, because the European Commission wanted the framework to be broadly usable. They wanted to make the European Education more transparent, but so far it has not been really successful. In table 4 below the levels five and six of the EQF are given. These levels are useful for the development of a competency profile for higher professional education, because level five and six of the EQF can be compared to the higher professional educational level in The Netherlands. Levels are indicated by the description of the kind of knowledge that should be learned at either level five or six, the skills that the learner should have at a certain level and the competences that are needed to graduate at either level five or level six in educational programmes (see table 4).

Table 4: *Part of the European Qualifications Framework* (European Parliament, 2008)

Each level is defined by a set of descriptors indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications.

|   | <b>Knowledge</b>   | <b>Skills</b>   | <b>Competence</b>   |
|---|--|---|---|
|   | In the context of EQF, knowledge is described as theoretical and/ or factual.  | In the context of EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments). | In the context of EQF, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.   |
| <b>Level 5</b><br>The learning outcomes relevant to level 5 are | Comprehensive, specialised, factual and theoretical knowledge within a field of work or study and an awareness of the boundaries of that knowledge | A comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems   | Exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change.<br>Review and develop performance of self and others   |
| <b>Level 6</b><br>The learning outcomes relevant to level 6 are | Advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles                                      | Advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study   | Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts.<br>Take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups. |

As one can see, the difference between level five and six are in the deepening of knowledge and skills. To reach level six, the learner has to gain advanced knowledge about a certain field of study and know about principles and theories in this field. Also the skills at level six are more advanced than at level five. The learner should be able to solve complex and unpredictable problems at level six. The competences at level six are different from level five in the sense that level six learners have to take more responsibilities and that they should be able to manage the development of other individuals and groups (see table 4)

### The Dublin Descriptors

A second way of describing levels in higher education is using the Dublin descriptors. The Dutch higher education is using these descriptors to define their educational level. The Dublin descriptors are developed for three circles in education, the Bachelor, the Master and the Doctorate circles. The Bachelor circle is a description of the higher professional education level, so the Dublin descriptors for the Bachelor are relevant for this study (table 5).

Recently there is a development in higher professional education. In order to fill a gap between the senior secondary vocational education level and the higher professional education, a new level has been developed. This level is called Associate Degree. It is a two year study programme which is at the level between senior secondary vocational education and higher professional education. This level is also described in the Dublin descriptors as short circle education (Joint Quality Initiative Group, 2004). In table 5 below, the Dublin descriptors for the short circle (Associate Degree) and the first circle (Bachelor) are given, because these circles can be compared to the level that the European Master of Floral Design should reach.

Table 5: *Dublin descriptors for Associate Degree and Bachelor level (Joint Quality Initiative Group, 2004).*

|                                      | <b>Associate Degree (short circle)</b>  | <b>Bachelor (First circle)</b>   |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Knowledge and understanding          | demonstrates knowledge & understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle | demonstrates knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study |
| Applying knowledge and understanding | can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts  | Applies knowledge and understanding in a way that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and demonstrates competences through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems in their field.   |
| Making judgements                    | have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems   | have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues   |
| Communication                        | can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients   | can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences   |
| Learning skills                      | have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy  | have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy   |

To summarize can be said, that the concept of competence is very broad and that there is no consensus about the definition. For this research the holistic approach of competence will be used to build up the competency profile. The performance outcomes of excellent florists will be used to build up the profile, because the educational programme that will be based on the competences profile of this study, should educate florists to become excellent florists. Furthermore a lot of competences of florists are written down in this section. These competences will be combined and downsized to a general competences profile for the European Master of Floral Design. In table 6 below, the core tasks and competences from literature are written down. The most frequently mentioned core tasks and competences are combined and grouped. This profile will be studied empirically to see if it should be extended with some other competences and if some competences should be left out of the profile.

 Table 6: *Theoretically based core tasks and competences for the European Master of Floral Design.*

| <b>Core tasks</b>   | <b>Competences</b>   |
|---|--|
| Applying knowledge and skills about working with flowers and plants | Professional skills, being innovative  |
| Selling and giving service in a flower shop                         | Commercial skills  |
| Enterprising and presenting your shop or product                    | Context directive skills, entrepreneurial skills, presenting skills, international marketing skills. |
| Organizing and leading personnel                                    | Organizing skills, taking social responsibility  |
| Being creative  | Creative skills  |
| Reflecting on own work and work of others                           | Critical reflection, ability to deal with pressure and setback                                       |
| Professional development and learning                               | Learning ability, research skills, motivation, international professionalism                         |
| Cooperating with others   | Social communicative skills, cooperative ability   |
| Organizing and leading projects                                     | Leading and delegating skills  |
| Communicating   | Communicative skills, writing skills   |
| Making judgements   | Ability to take risks and initiative, problem directive skills                                       |
| Basic management  | Management skills  |

A description of the levels of education that are recently developed and used in Europe were written down at the end of this section. This information will be used to build the competence framework at the right level. In table 6, the levels are not yet clarified, but empirically research will make clear how the higher professional educational level can be clarified in an educational profile. The question to be answered in the empirical research will thus be: 'What competences of a florist are relevant at the higher professional educational level, to form the basis for the competence profile of the European Master of Floral Design?'

## Method

To find answers to the research question and the sub questions, a qualitative, deductive research has been conducted (Dooley, 2001). The information in the last section made possible to write down a prototype of the content of the competence profile that will be tested empirically.

### *How to build a competence profile?*

In order to build up a prototype of the elements of the competence profile, the steps to be taken to build a competency profile need to be described. The profile will be constructed according to the process driven approach, which is described by Rothwell and Lindblom (1999). They define a competency profile as a description of specific competences for an identifiable group. The first step to be taken to build up such a profile, is to investigate the work duties, tasks, responsibilities, roles and work environment of the occupation that is the target. The second step is to isolate the characteristics of work exemplars and the final step is to verify the competency model (Rothwell & Lindblom, 1999).

The competency profile needs to be valid, so the SMART method will be used while creating the profile. The competency profile needs to be *specific*, which means that the goals need to be unequivocal, *measurable*, which means that it has to be clear how the goals have been reached, *acceptable*, which means that the target group should accept the goals, *Realistic*, which means that the goals can be reached and finally should be clear how much *time* it will take to reach the goals. In order to make a valid profile, the following requirements should be taken into account:

- The competences profile should be specific enough to be used in de Floral branch;
- It should be well-organized in a way that the elements can be measured;
- The level and content of the competences profile should be acceptable;
- The competences should be relevant for the European Master of Floral Design;
- It should be clear how many time it will cost to learn all the competences in the profile.

### *The expert interviews*

Eighteen interviews are conducted to find out how a competence profile should be build up and what competences are relevant for international floral design. The ten content experts were selected because of their expertise in a certain area. These excellent florists were asked to tell about their occupation. They were asked to explain what they think are critical tasks in their occupation and what are the competences they need to perform their occupation well. They were asked about their affinity with competences and whether or not they agreed with the use of the SHL competences in a competency framework. Finally, questions were asked about the feasibility of an educational programme for florists in international higher professional education.

Besides these interviews to validate the content of the competence profile, also eight experts were interviewed about the context of the competency framework. The eight context experts were chosen because of their expertise about the contextual factors that are influencing a competence profile and the development of an international educational programme. Experts were questioned about the level of education and the way to link the level of education with the competency framework. The differences between the educational levels were asked to be clarified. Also questions were asked about the European developments in level descriptions and the use of them in the Dutch educational systems. These experts were asked about the best way to build up a competency framework and what the requirements are for a competence profile. Questions were asked about the way an educational

programme can be recognized and funded by the government. Finally these contextual experts were asked about the feasibility of the European Master of Floral Design.

The respondents were carefully chosen in order to get reliable results. In cooperation with the branch, the content experts were selected. They were selected for their expertise in a certain area in the floral branch. The context experts were chosen according to their expertise in the area of the development of competence profile and levels in education. The respondents were questioned in interviews of about an hour average.

## Results

### *Respondents*

For this research, ten content expert were interviewed. Under the respondents are four owners of a floral design company that are operating internationally. There were three teachers from the Dutch floral education who also help to develop the floral education in the international context. There was one head of a higher professional education institute for floral education and other agricultural vocations. There also was one employee of Aequor who develops and innovates agricultural education. And the last context experts is an employee of 'Bloemenbureau Holland' that is guiding flower arrangers who are promoting the Dutch floral product abroad.

Besides these content interviews, also eight context interviews were conducted. Two respondents are working at the Dutch ministry of agriculture, nature and food quality. One of them is working at the knowledge direction and is controlling the quality of the kwalificatiedossiers of the senior secondary vocational education. The other respondent is working with qualifications in the senior secondary vocational education. They should be able to give information about how to level the international floral education and what a competence profile should look like. The third respondent is a head of a high school for teachers in floral education. She is working with competence based education on the higher vocational level. The next respondent is an employee of Aequor who is developing and innovating qualifications in the floral education. The fifth respondent is a member of the Dutch higher vocational education board. He should be able to explain the higher professional education level and the way an educational programme can be approved. The next respondent is a consultant who is specialised in levels of educational programmes. And the last respondent is a floral teacher who develops international educational programmes for floral design on the higher professional education level. In table 7, the characteristics of the respondents are given (see table 7).

Table 7: *The characteristics of the respondents*

| <b>Orientation</b>                              | <b>Gender</b>          | <b>Educational level</b>                  | <b>Age</b>                                      | <b>Affinity with competence based education<sup>1</sup></b> |
|---|------------------------|---|---|---|
| Floral education*                               | Female = 2<br>Male = 4 | Senior secondary vocational education : 1 | < 30 = 3<br>31-40 = 2<br>41-50 = 8<br>51-60 = 5 | No affinity with competence based education: 5              |
| Floral Designer*                                | Female = 0<br>Male = 4 | Higher professional education: 8          |   | Little affinity with competence based education: 4          |
| Professional floral organization of agriculture | Female = 1<br>Male = 0 | University: 9                             |   | Much affinity with competence based education: 9            |
| Government of agriculture                       | Female = 0<br>Male = 2 |   |   |   |
| Competence profile development                  | Female = 2<br>Male = 1 |   |   |   |
| Educational level expert                        | Female = 0<br>Male = 2 |   |   |   |

N=18

\* Content experts

<sup>1</sup> Rated on a three point scale (1= no affinity, 2= little affinity and 3 = much affinity with competence based education)

### *Content interview results*

To analyze the content interviews, three themes are described. The first theme is 'core tasks'. The second theme is 'the combination of competences and core tasks' and the last theme is 'the usefulness and feasibility of the European Master of Floral Design'. These three themes are developed from the results of the background literature. They need to provide in answers to the content needed for a competences framework for the European Master of Floral Design.

#### Theme 1: Core tasks

The ten content experts are mentioning a lot of core tasks that are important for a floral designer in the international context. All the content experts find the management and the running of international projects important for a European Master in Floral Design. European Masters should lead projects like the decoration and finishing of big events, shows, celebrity weddings etc. The demands of the customer should be the starting point of big projects like these. Building networks and international collaboration with stakeholders and project managers is mentioned by seven out of ten experts as a core task. To present and sell your product abroad is also mentioned by seven experts. Six respondents think that gaining knowledge about cultural differences in floral design, with the country you work for is very important. Continuously learning, developing and specializing the floral vocation is mentioned by five experts. Having knowledge about the latest trends and developments in the vocation is very essential to be competitive with your business. Leading people and managing big people in big projects is mentioned by five experts. Three respondents say that entrepreneurship and creating maximum turnover is important to be a successful international floral designer. And the last core task that is mentioned by all experts is the creative enhancement of vocational techniques and not only to work with flowers but also with other materials and style techniques.

These core tasks are a summary of the vocation of a floral designer. The core tasks can be written down more specifically when they will be combined with competences.

#### Theme 2: The combination of competences and core tasks

The content experts were asked which competences they found important for a European Master of Floral Design. They mentioned a lot of competences and the competences that are mentioned more than once will be written down below. The number that is written after the following competences presents the frequency of experts that mentioned the competence. Creativity (5), entrepreneurial skills (7), management skills (7), organisational skills (7), communication skills (8), knowledge of people (8), vocational, practical knowledge and skills (8), intercultural competence (10), life-long learning (5), flexibility/ adaptability (7), marketing/ commercial skills (6), knowing different languages (6), presenting skills (7), convincing skills (7), passion (4), motivation (4), customer directed (6), networking (6), reflection skills (5), insight (4) and the last competence that is mentioned is sensitivity for trends (3).

The competences that are described most frequently are considered to be most important for the floral design vocation. The competences with a frequency of less than four are mentioned by the floral designers with their own businesses. They find that a good floral designer should be motivated, sensitive for trends and passionate and should have the insight to make beautiful flower arrangements. Even though they are not mentioned by the other context experts, they should be very important, because the successful florists see them as necessary competences.

The four florists who are working in the international context, are specifically mentioning creativity, a theoretical base, commerciality and organisational talent to be very important to be successful. The experts from out of the educational area are mentioning presentation skills and knowledge of languages and the commercial organisation Bloemenbureau Holland thinks that commerciality and marketing is essential to operate successfully in the international context. So it depends on the background of the expert, what competences he or she finds important, but overall can be said that the competences mentioned above will give a good overview of the vocation of a European Master of Floral Design.

### Theme 3: Usefulness and feasibility of the European Master of Floral Design

Eight out of ten experts think that the European Master is feasible, because it is a new educational programme and there is a need from practice for well educated floral designers. However the experts do think that a four year higher professional educational programme, will be too ambitious. The reason for this is the fact that the target group of this educational programme has already studied for four years and would love to put into practice what they have learned. Another four years of education is a big step for this group. Other students have already been working in floristry and do not want to go to school for another four years. The European Master of Floral Design could according to three experts better be developed as a two year Associate Degree programme. This makes the step from senior secondary vocational education to higher professional education a bit smaller. Five out of ten experts are thinking that the EMFD is feasible when it will be given in courses. In course education only vocational knowledge and skills for floral designers are important and not the career competences and citizenship competences that are important in government approved educational programmes.

#### *Context interview results*

Four themes have been developed to analyse the interview results. The themes are described according to the subjects in the literature. The first theme is: 'the development of a competences profile', to find out what the requirements are for building a valid profile. The second theme is: 'levels of education and the combination of levels and competences profiles'. The third theme is 'payment and approval of educational programmes' and the last theme is 'the need, the usefulness and the feasibility of the European Master of Floral Design. These themes are chosen, because these are the factors that have their effect on a competences profile according to the background literature.

### Theme 1: The development of a competences profile

The contextual experts are unanimously agreeing about the starting point of the development of a competences profile. A question from practice for a specific kind of vocation with specific competences is forming the base for the development of the profile. A description of the vocation is made which has to be written down in working tasks. The next step in the process of development is to divide the vocation in separate critical professional situations or core tasks. Most of the contextual experts say that the next step is to combine the core tasks or critical professional situations with competences. Four out of eight respondents agree that a more generic competence list, like the one form SHL can form the base for a competences profile. The other four say that only the competences are not enough and that the profile should be extended with the description of work processes. Six of the contextual experts also clarify that, to describe the core tasks and the competences, the description of factors that are proving that the person has got certain competences, should also be included in the profile. Some respondent are naming these factors the achievement indicators.

To reflect on the first theme can be said that the discussion rises if competences should be written down like the generic lists or that they should be clearly defined and explained with working processes and achievement indicators. And the next question that rises is if a generic model or list is usable or not. There is no consensus about these question among the contextual experts.

### Theme 2: Levels in education and the combination of levels and competences profiles

Four contextual experts define the level of an educational programme according to the complexity of tasks, role and responsibilities of learners and the time frame in which a learner is thinking and working. Higher level education has more complex tasks, more roles and responsibilities and the learners have to plan their activities over a longer period of time. Also the typical professional attitude and the language level of learners is mentioned to define the level of the education. The eight contextual experts are defining the levels of the Dutch senior secondary vocational educational system as following. At the lowest, first level, the learner is working under continuous supervision. At the second level, the learner can work on its own and help others. Third level learners can run a business and steer people and at the fourth level the learner can run its own business. The higher professional educational level is according to the experts, defined by the Dublin descriptors. The contextual experts

declare that the Dublin descriptors are the base for defining the level of the higher professional education programmes. Four out of eight respondents are also mentioning the entrepreneurial and steering skills (management skills), besides the factors that are already mentioned before. The last difference between lower and higher professional education is that senior secondary vocational education is more practically oriented and that higher professional education is demanding more thinking and cognitive skills. At the higher professional education level the learner should be able to reflect, to evaluate and to justify their choices.

The Associate Degree (AD) is defined by five out of eight experts as a short, two year higher professional education programme. About the level of the AD is less consensus. Most experts say that the level of the AD is the same as the higher professional education level, but that the AD programme is more vocation oriented and that the higher professional education is more cognitive oriented. The AD can fill the gap between the senior secondary vocational education and higher professional education.

The experts do not agree on the way the Dutch educational system can be placed in the European qualifications framework. Researchers are still trying to make the connection to the European system, but have not succeeded yet. Some contextual experts say that the Dutch higher professional education level is the same as level six in the European qualifications framework.

To describe the level of the education in the competence profile, the experts are agreeing to describe core tasks with the right competences and work processes in such a way that complexity, roles and responsibilities, timeframe and cognitive demands can be traced from the framework. Only one of the contextual experts is saying that level of education can be traced from knowledge out of past experiences. At the higher professional education level, learners should be able to base decisions on what they have learned before. The learner should have entrepreneurial and leader skills and should use them in different professional situations.

So in reflection on the second theme can be said that a higher vocational level in a competences profile can be described by complex tasks, putting in lots of roles and responsibilities, describing working processes that need to be completed in a longer period of time, describing core tasks in which reflection and evaluation is required describing tasks in which management skills are required.

### Theme 3: Payment and approval of educational programmes

Only three out of eight contextual experts can command on the questions about the payment and approval of educational programmes, because they have expertise in this area. The other five experts do not have enough knowledge about these concepts to give their opinion or to draw conclusions about these themes.

To get funded, an educational programme should provide in a certain educational need from practice. And the educational programme should be deepening and new. If there is an educational programme that looks like it, another programme will not be funded by the government. An educational programme will be approved if it educates to the profession that it intends with defined competences. And if it lives up to certain quality requirements, like enough equipment, teachers, quality care etcetera. Moreover an educational programme needs to educate in citizenship competences and in career competences.

An educational programme should be approved to get funded by the government, but not all approved educational programmes are funded by the government. There are also educational programmes that are funded by businesses. If a business is in need for education of their employees they will be willing to pay for an educational programme.

If the European Master of Floral Design is given as course education, it will not be funded and approved by the government. Finally the experts are agreeing on the fact that the name 'Master' should be changed to have a better chance on approval by the government. The name makes you think that it is an educational programme at university level, but in reality it is not, so the name could probably better be changed in European Bachelor of Floral Design.

#### Theme 4: Usefulness and feasibility of the European Master of Floral Design

Seven out of eight context experts agree on the fact that the higher professional educational level is feasible in international floral education. One of the reasons for this is that Dutch businesses are asking for highly skilled employees. According to the context experts it should be a good idea to first develop an associate degree programme to fill u the gap between senior secondary vocational education and higher professional education. When this will be a success, a four year higher professional educational programme can be developed. In the floral teachers education there is already an associate degree programme, but it is educating on the didactics and not in the floral vocation.

The EMFD will only be useful, when there is no overlap with other educational programmes in the Netherlands or in Europe, when there is enough demand for an international oriented floral design educational programme and when it lives up to the needs of the target group. The members of the target group want to specialize and internationally professionalize themselves and as a consequence the development of a associate degree degree program for floral designers can be feasible.

The result of this research is a competences profile as it is written down in table 8. The profile it build up from seven core tasks and twenty-one competences. The competences are a combination of the competences mentioned in the interviews and the competences that were found relevant from the literature. The core tasks are a selection of the core tasks that were mentioned by the experts in the interviews. The core tasks that were mentioned by more than one expert were selected and combined with the tasks that were described in the background literature. Then they were written down in short sentences. The sentences are written down according to the SMART-method. They are written in specific, unequivocal words. They are measurable, because the core tasks are visible for teachers or mentors in practice. The core tasks are acceptable, because they were selected from the results of the expert interviews and literature. They are realistic, because the core tasks mentioned are already being performed in Floral Design now. The only part of the SMART method that is not yet visible in this table, is the time it will take to perform all of the core tasks and competences mentioned. This is a matter for the writers of the educational programme that will be designed for the European Master of Floral Design. Depending on the prior knowledge of the learner, these competences can probably be learned in a two year Associate Degree programme (table 8).

Table 8. *The competences profile of the European Associate Degree of Floral Design.*

| <b>Core tasks</b>  | Deco-<br>rating and<br>finishing<br>of big<br>events | Networking,<br>inter-<br>nationally<br>collaborate<br>with stake-<br>holders and<br>project<br>managers | Gaining<br>knowledge<br>about<br>cultural<br>differences<br>in floral<br>design | Continuous<br>learning,<br>developing<br>and<br>specializing<br>the floral<br>vocation | Having<br>knowledge<br>about the<br>latest trends<br>and develop-<br>ments in the<br>vocation | Creative<br>enhancement<br>of floral<br>design<br>techniques | Being a<br>good<br>entrepreneur<br>that can run<br>a healthy<br>business and<br>lead people |
|--|--|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Competences</b>                                       |  |   |   |  |   |  |   |
| Creativity   | X  |   |   |  |   | X  |   |
| Entrepreneurial<br>skills                                |  | X   |   |  |   |  | X   |
| Management<br>skills                                     | X  | X   |   |  |   |  | X   |
| Organisational<br>skills                                 |  |   |   |  |   |  | X   |
| Communication<br>skills                                  |  | X   |   |  |   |  | X   |
| Knowledge of<br>people                                   |  |   | X   |  |   |  |   |
| Floral vocation,<br>practical<br>knowledge and<br>skills | X  |   |   | X  |   | X  |   |
| Intercultural<br>competence                              |  | X   | X   |  |   |  |   |
| Life-long<br>learning                                    |  |   |   | X  | X   |  |   |
| Flexibility/<br>adaptability                             | X  |   |   |  | X   | X  |   |
| Marketing/<br>commercial<br>skills                       | X  |   |   |  |   |  | X   |
| Knowing<br>different<br>languages                        |  | X   | X   |  |   |  |   |
| Presenting<br>skills                                     | X  | X   |   |  |   |  |   |
| Convincing<br>skills                                     |  | X   |   |  |   |  | X   |
| Passion  |  |   |   |  |   | X  | X   |
| Motivation   | X  |   |   |  |   | X  |   |
| Customer<br>directedness                                 |  |   |   |  |   | X  | X   |
| Sensitivity for<br>trends                                |  |   |   |  | X   | X  |   |
| Networking   |  | X   |   |  |   |  | X   |
| Reflection<br>skills                                     |  |   |   | X  |   | X  |   |
| Insight  | X  |   | X   |  |   | X  |   |

This table has a lot of overlap with table six in which the competences that were found in the theory were written down. Only in that table were no competences mentioned that were oriented at internationally oriented tasks. Table 8 has these internationally based competences and core tasks, that are making the European Master of Floral Design a unique study programme. It seems to be very difficult to describe the educational level in a competences profile. By describing the core tasks according to the Dublin descriptors and level five of the European Qualifications framework, the associate degree level is integrated in the competences profile.

One of the results of the empirical research was that the Master title was not very suitable for the educational programme, so it would be better to change it into: European Associate Degree of Floral Design (EADFD). The crosses in table 8 are pointing out which competences are developed

when the core task in that column is performed. So when a student has performed all of the core tasks, he can be described as a European Associate Degree of Floral Design.

## Conclusion

Before the conclusions can be drawn, the research question will be repeated. The question was: ‘Which competences are relevant for the profile of the European Master of Floral Design on a higher professional educational level?’ This question has to be sharpened, because the higher professional educational level is too high for a new international floral educational programme. The Associate Degree level will be a better focus. The Associate Degree level contains less tasks, roles and responsibilities than the higher professional educational level and it will be planned in two years of time. The level will be close to the higher professional educational level. Only in practice, the learners can reach this higher level, because the learners will have to perform more complex and time consuming projects in practice.

The European Master of Floral Design will not be approved and funded by the government, because of the master’s title which implies a higher academic level. And the second reason is that it will be developed as course education and that there is not enough need for an international floral design education. But there is some need, also from abroad for floral design courses at a high level. This will be a good opportunity for the Feupf to start off the European Associate Degree of Floral Design programme, to live up to this need. It should be an internationally oriented programme, with courses in different countries, so that the learners can learn about cultural differences and work in different intercultural projects.

According to the experts, the Associate Degree level is the most likely to start the European Master of Floral Design at, because this level will be a kind of bridge to the higher professional educational level. The Associate Degree level can be equalled with level five of the European Qualifications Framework and the short circle of the Dublin descriptors. The educational programme should be written as a two year programme, because two years of education are required to reach the associate degree level.

The core tasks in the competence profile of the European Master of Floral Design were developed by the combination of the results from the background literature and the results from the expert interviews. The core tasks that were overlapping were written down first, and the list is extended with the core tasks that were mentioned by at least half of the content experts. Especially the decoration of big events and gaining knowledge about the latest trends were mentioned by most of the experts, but it did not come up in theory.

The competences in the profile were written down as a result of the combination of empirical results and results from background literature. The competences that were mentioned by the experts and in literature, were written down first and the competences that were mentioned by the majority of the experts but not in theory were added. The last step was to add the reflection competences, because reflection had proven to be very important in the background literature, but the experts did not bring this competence up. The competence was considered to be too important to be left out, so it was added to the list.

The competences in the competences profile can be compared with the SHL competences and one can conclude that there is some overlap. But then the organisational focus of the SHL competences makes that the list is not applicable for the European Associate Degree of Floral Design. The competences of the competences profile are educationally oriented and more specifically written for the floral design vocational education.

Most of the experts agree that a new international educational floral design education will be feasible and usable, but the programme should be well defined in international courses, it should educate in the competences of the competences profile and it should be on the associate degree level.

## Discussion

At the end of this research some things are still not clarified, because they reach beyond the scope of this research. The first thing that has not been clarified is the way to define the level of an educational programme. There is little theory about the level of education and the experts do not agree on how to define the levels in education. More research needs to be done on how to define the levels in a competences profile.

The organization that provided the assignment wanted a practical useful product in the form of a competences profile, but there was not much information to be found about the foundations of competence profiles. They are mainly build up empirically from out of practice like in this research. In order to make this research more theoretically, following research can for example be based on the characteristics of the respondents. From a psychological point of view one can predict that the respondents with an educational background will be more oriented at didactical competences; like presentation skills, analyzing skills etcetera, while the respondents with a background in the practice of floral design, will be more focussed on the competences that are needed to make profit; like selling, commercial skills, entrepreneurial skills etcetera. An explanation for this lies probably in the fact that educators do not have a good overview of the floral vocation and are more focussed on didactical skills because of their own interests. This could mean that a research conducted under only floral design practitioners would not result in presenting skills and analyzing skills (Tennant, 2006).

Gender could also play a role when it comes to collaboration and leadership (George & Jones, 2005; Tennant, 2006). Psychological research has already proven that woman are more socially oriented and are more oriented at collaboration and social leadership, while men are more performance oriented, they like to have power and are less willing to collaborate than woman (George & Jones, 2005; Tennant, 2006). Research could be done by comparing the competences of international florists that are mentioned by woman and competences for international florists that are mentioned by men, to see if there are differences between the two that can be explained by stereotypical gender differences.

Another valuable research to add to this one is an international oriented research. The current research is only conducted in the Netherlands, with Dutch experts. But what if the same questions were asked in Germany, in Finland, in Romania or in Italy? Would that lead to the same competences profile? Probably not, because there are a lot of cultural differences between the different European countries. The starting point of this research could for example be the cultural dimensions of Hofstede (1993). He describes five cultural dimensions that can differ countries form each other. The dimensions he describes are: *power distance*; 'the degree of inequality among people which the population of a country considers normal', *individualism*; 'the degree to which people in a country prefer to act as individuals rather than as members of groups', *masculinity/ femininity*; the degree to which tough values like assertiveness, performance, success and competition outperform tender values like quality of life, maintaining relationships, solidarity etcetera', *uncertainty*; 'the degree to which people in a country prefer structured over unstructured situations and finally *long or short term orientation*; where short term oriented people focus on the past and present and long term oriented people focus on the future (Hofstede, 1993).

Different countries in Europe have different cultural values that can be compared using the dimensions of Hofstede (1993). When for example a country is studied with a high degree on individualism, the competence profile should probably not include the core task international collaboration and the core task communication would be not be mentioned often either. And when a country with a high power distance was under study for example, the competences adaptability, knowledge of people and convincing skills were probably less mentioned, because these competences are not very useful in a hierarchical culture. Every employee knows who is the leader and listens to his leader without complaining in cultures with a high power distance, like China.

Now it is up to the developers of the educational programme to start up the new European Associate Degree of Floral Design in course education. There are already international courses that might be able to educate in some of the competences of the competence profile of the EADFD. These courses should be evaluated first to see if they are able to educate the right competences at the Associate Degree level. The educational programme should prove itself in international education. The

market will eventually prove if the higher professional educational level can be reached or not. This is a more political debate, where the author can not give an answer to at this moment.

It is up to the Feupf and to STOAS now to make an educational programme for the international courses. They should give it a prestigious charisma, so that a lot of international floral designers will attend to the courses to become a European Associate Degree of Floral Design.

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