Governance through learning outcomes

A quality issue?

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Introduction

I would like to provide input on:

(a) to what extent has governance through learning outcomes become reality, to what extent is it an aspiration?

My perspective:

- The role of qualifications in governing occupations (Cedefop)
- The state of play of the implementation of the EQF (European Parliament)
- Qualifications at EQF level 5 (Cedefop)
- Quality in adult learning (European Commission)

Reports of studies can also be accessed via LinkedIn: nl.linkedin.com/in/simonbroek/

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Content

What is the best way to govern education systems so that it is of the highest quality?

- Part 1: The use of learning outcomes across countries and subsystems
- Part 2: Preconditions for delivering quality education
- Part 3: Most appropriate governance system: strengths and weaknesses
- Part 4: Preliminary answer to the first question stated in the background paper

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Part 1: Overview countries /subsystems

- Wide diversity on how LO are applied and defined
- Lack of evidence that level descriptors are strictly applied. Often different descriptors are used, depending on the subsystem
- Difference between operational skills and transversal competences:
  - More detailed LO descriptions can be found for qualifications specializing in more operational skills.
  - When there is a focus on more transversal competences, LO descriptions are less developed
- Environment/ mode of delivery:
  - Operational skills means more work-based environment
  - Transversal skills more school-based environment.
- Governance: relating results and environment
  - Governance through LO seems to work better in contexts where the result is clear, but the environment of delivery is unclear and less controlled.
  - Governance through input factors seems to work better in contexts where the result can less clearly be articulated, but where the environment of delivery is clear and controlled.

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Part 2: What is quality education?

UNESCO principles (CONFINTEA VI):

- **equity**: equitable access to and participation at all levels of education and training.
- **efficiency**: ratio of costs to benefits
- **effectiveness**: expresses means-end relationships in terms of educational outcomes for learners
- **relevance**: effective route to and support for, personal and social change

The quality question plays a role at three levels:

- Macro level (policies, structures, frameworks)
- Meso level (organisation, infrastructure, HR)
- Micro level (teachers, didactics, learning environment)

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Supply

Demand

Provision

Outcome

Beneficiaries

Supply

Demand

Provision

Outcome

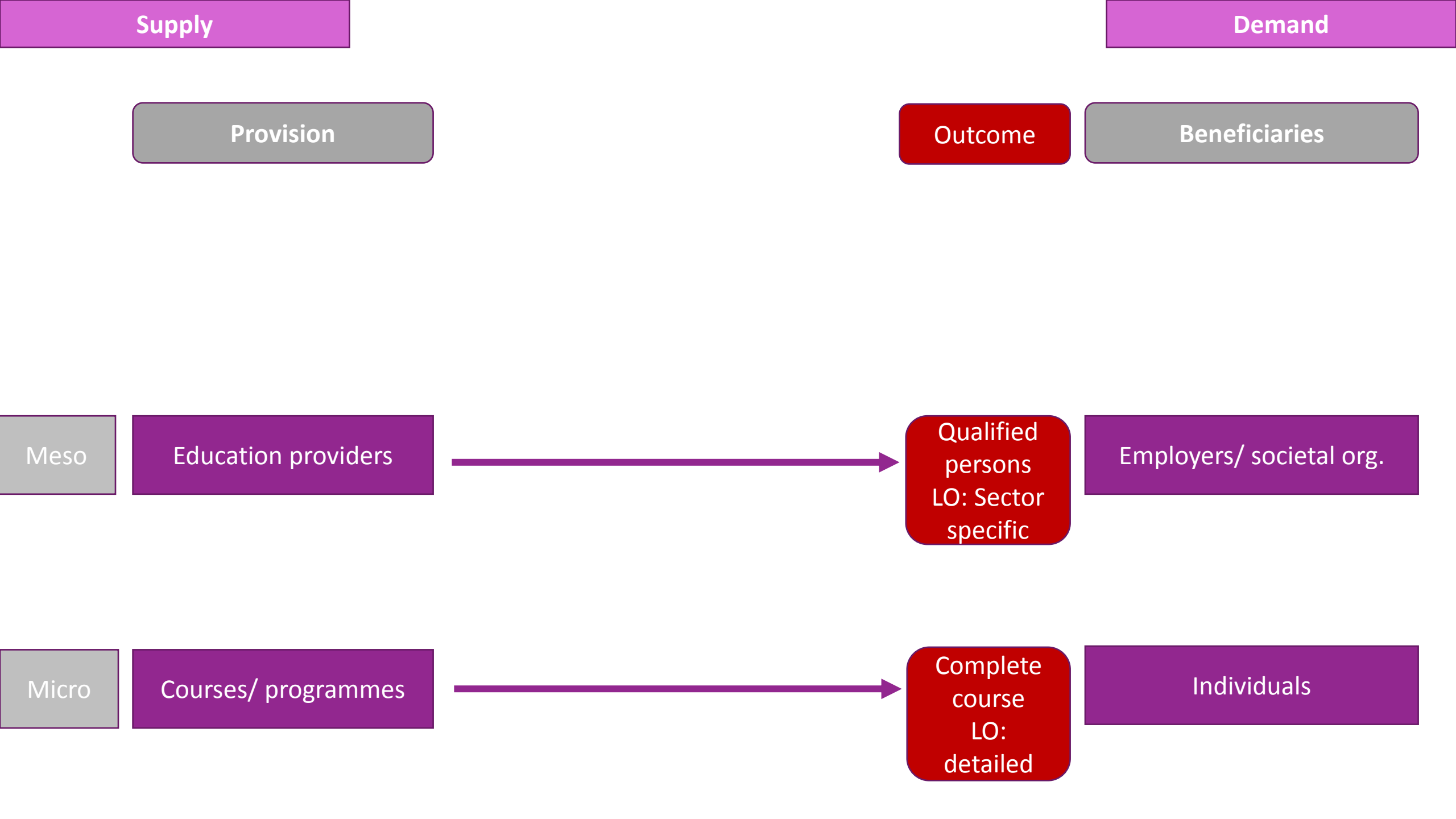
Beneficiaries

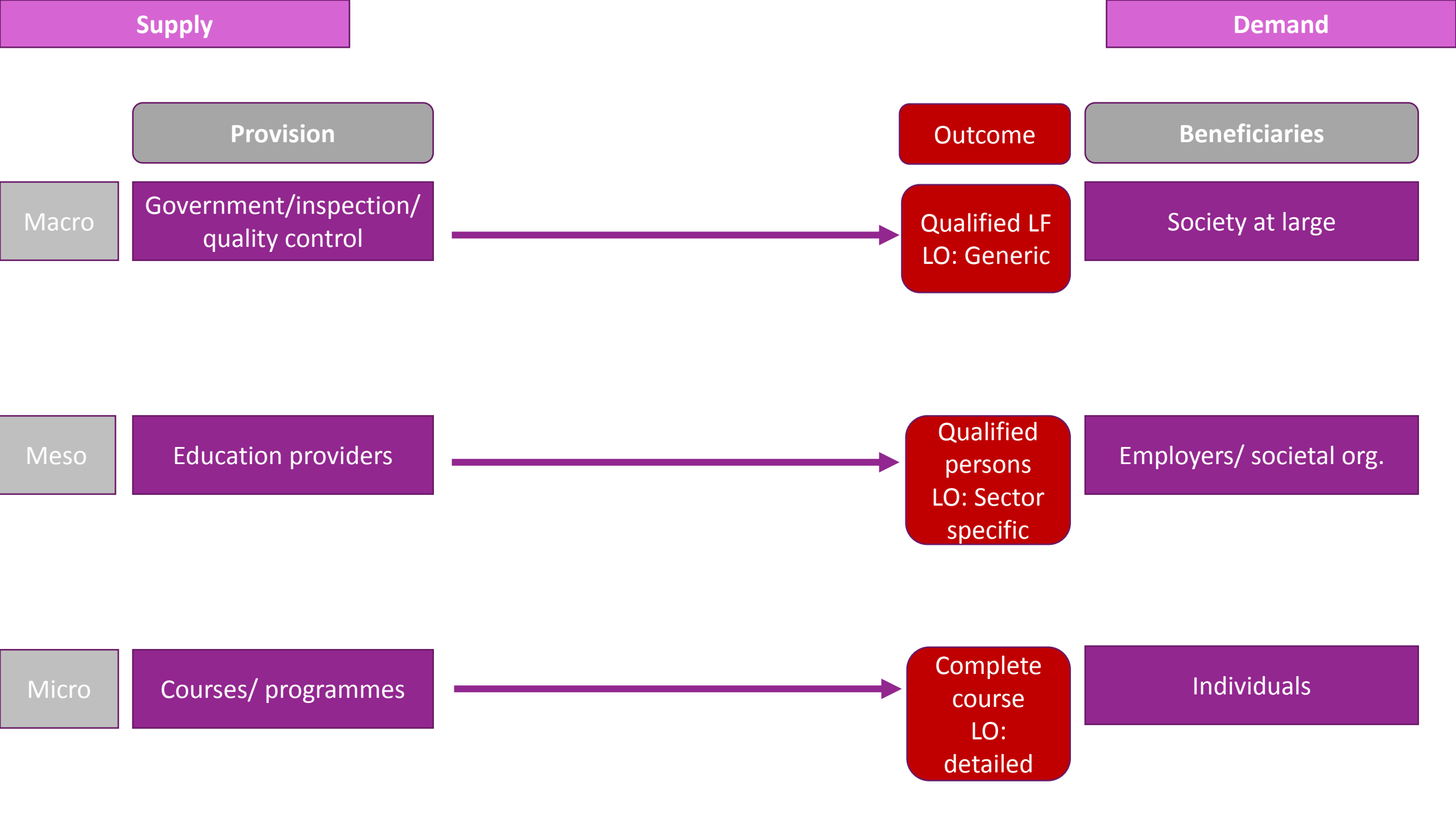
Micro

Courses/ programmes

Complete course LO: detailed

Individuals


Supply
Demand
Provision
Outcome
Beneficiaries
Meso
Education providers
Qualified persons LO: Sector specific
Employers/ societal org.
Micro
Courses/ programmes
Complete course LO: detailed
Individuals


Supply
Demand
Provision
Outcome
Beneficiaries
Macro
Government/inspection/ quality control
Qualified LF LO: Generic
Society at large
Meso
Education providers
Qualified persons LO: Sector specific
Employers/ societal org.
Micro
Courses/ programmes
Complete course LO: detailed
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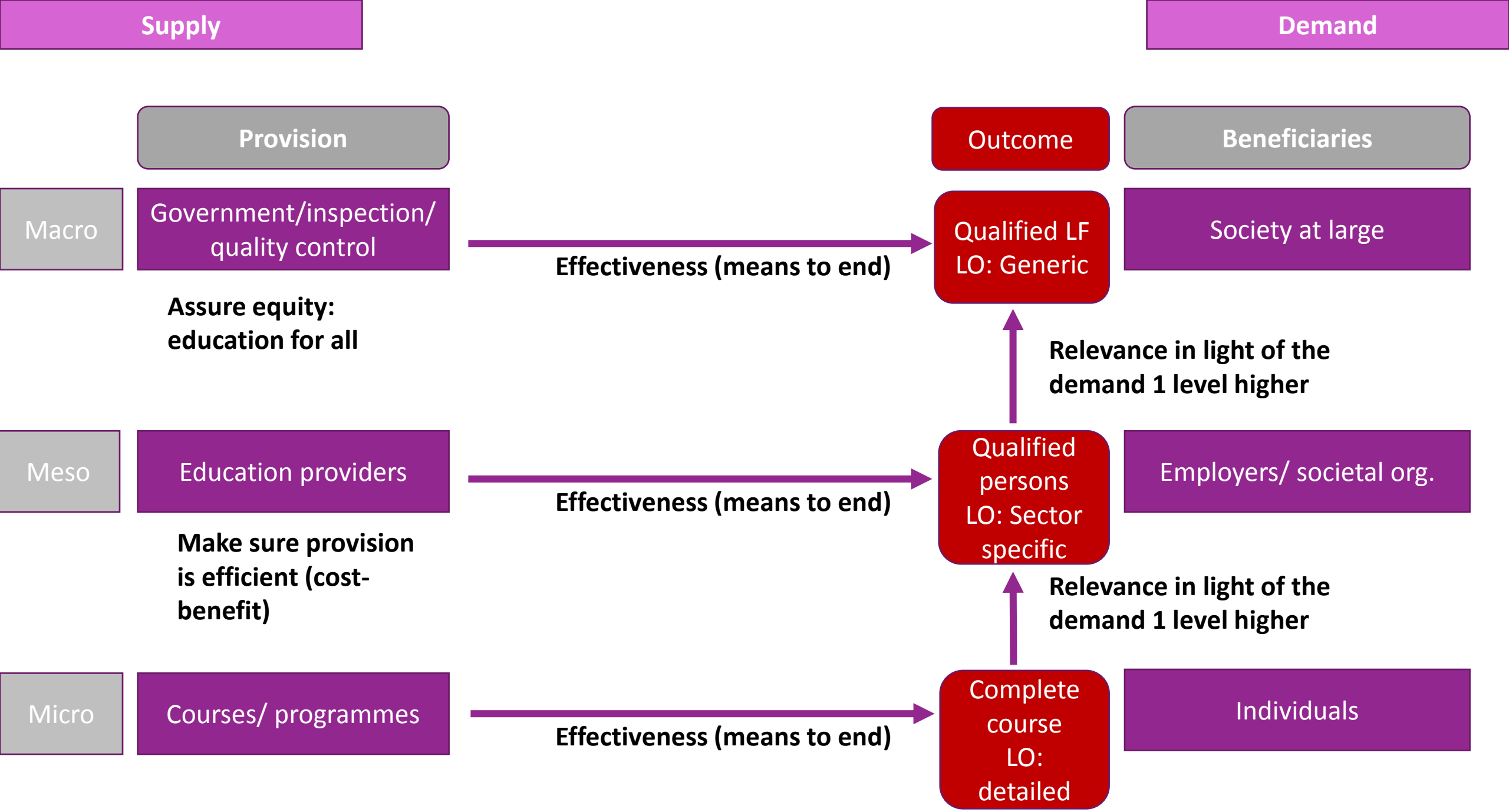
Supply
Demand
Provision
Outcome
Beneficiaries
Macro
Government/inspection/ quality control
Qualified LF LO: Generic
Society at large
Assure equity: education for all
Effectiveness (means to end)
Relevance in light of the demand 1 level higher
Meso
Education providers
Qualified persons LO: Sector specific
Employers/ societal org.
Make sure provision is efficient (cost-benefit)
Effectiveness (means to end)
Relevance in light of the demand 1 level higher
Micro
Courses/ programmes
Complete course LO: detailed
Individuals
Effectiveness (means to end)

Part 3: What governance system is most appropriate?

Key points input oriented system

Strengths strict input oriented system:

- Long term perspective. Often implicit holistic concept of what a student should arrive at when finalising its studies (Relevance)
- Institutional long term perspective (Efficiency, effectiveness)
- Open to everyone meeting the requirements (Equity)

Weaknesses strict input oriented system:

- Less responsive to and less alignment with emerging labour market needs (Relevance)
- Relationship between means and ends tend to be disguised (Effectiveness)
- Less flexible given non standard learning trajectories (Equity)

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Key points outcome oriented system

Strengths strict outcome oriented system

- Flexible, alignment with labour market needs (Relevance)
- Open to different learning modes/trajectories (Equity)
- Relationship between means and ends are more clearly articulated (Effectiveness)

Weaknesses of strict outcome oriented system:

- Danger of cream skimming: focusing on students that are most easy to lead to a qualification (Equity)
- Short termism, over-emphasis on technical skills. Focus on direct needed skills (less focus on life long learning competences) (Relevance)
- Less institutional security and continuity (Efficiency, effectiveness)

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Final remarks part 3

Governance should entail three dimensions:

- Vertical governance: top-down responsibility on input factors
- Horizontal governance: equal level responsibility for setting learning outcomes
- Diagonal governance: responsibility for setting the learning outcomes in a broader context:
  - How would the programma/qualification benefit from the learning outcomes of the course?
  - How would society benefit from the learning outcomes of the programme/qualification?

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Part 4: Preliminary answers to key questions

(a) to what extent has governance through learning outcomes become reality, to what extent is it an aspiration?

- Governance through LO is widely spread, but differently defined and used
- Governance through LO takes place at different levels
- Governance through LO should be accompanied by input governance to cover potential threats and weaknesses
- The quality principle of relevance should receive addition attention.

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Thank you for your attention

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