



ICF & EMCC Competence Frameworks

A Comparative Approach

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Prepared for: EMCC & ICF Executive Boards

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Introduction

This document puts forward the outcome (framework of project, findings, observations, suggestions) of the work undertaken by the 5 members of the project team.

This team was established following the joint decision of the Executive Boards of EMCC and ICF to undergo project work that would focus on the comparison of the Competence Frameworks (CFW) of the two organisations.

Initial Project Set Up & Scope

Background

Both ICF and EMCC have established competence frameworks that have been diligently developed over time and robust accreditation and credentialing processes so to ensure top standards for the coaching profession, both for individuals and coach training programmes. The two organisations have opened a very fruitful and constructive communication channel that has already produced excellent initiatives like the common Code of Conduct until the very recent Global Coaching & Mentoring Alliance (along with AoC).

Under this same canopy of alliance and working together, the two Executive Boards decided to review comparatively their Competence Frameworks so to establish a detailed picture of where they stand in terms of similarities and differences. To this purpose a project team was established at the end of February 2012 headed by Po Lindvall on behalf of EMCC with two more EMCC members, Anita van Vlerken and Marialexia Margariti and headed by Soren Holm & Amorah Ross on behalf of ICF.

Scope

The project was meant to explore three key areas when approaching comparatively the two competency frameworks. These key areas as agreed between the ICF & EMCC Executive Boards were:

- 1. Review and identify where exactly the two frameworks are in full alignment.
- 2. Identify competencies/elements that are covered only by one of the two frameworks.
- 3. Identify areas, if any, where the competence frameworks reflect elements of significant different between the two organizations.

The plan was and continues to be that after completion of the above steps of review, identification and highlight of aligned and unaligned areas, the Boards will come together and discuss possible further actions. The project duration was originally estimated for 3 to 4 months but when the size of the task was realized, it was left open to the team to take up the necessary time that would enable a thorough comparison.

Project Team Modus Operandi

Project members were covering a wide geography and a broad range of time differences from Woodville, WA all the way down to Greece passing through the Netherlands and Sweden. Except for the first couple of telecoms where we split forces to understand the size of the task and the possible direction we could take, it soon became obvious that we could do much better and move much faster if we were to review, discuss and

debate amongst all 5 of us rather than breaking into sub-groups. So despite the challenges of distance and time difference we successfully managed to find a common time that was working for all of us and we were running 90-minute telecoms, each time discussing and clearing a set of competencies. In total, it took the team 13 meetings and 18hrs of group work to complete the competence frameworks' comparison. On top of those there was, of course, individual work accounting in total for more than 35 hours of personal time that all project members curved out of their personal time with a special reference to Marialexia who drafted the submission paper and Anita who executed special analysis and sensitivities. The most important aspect of it all was our achievement of establishing strong team spirit and constructive dynamics despite the virtual mode of our operation. This achievement was immensely enhanced by the ability to, literally, see each other and interact as if we were in a meeting room thanks to Amorah who kindly offered pro bono her Adobe Connect online training platform that is a virtual classroom.

Terminology & Basic Concepts

A last point that could serve as an introduction to this paper is to clarify some terms that are used differently in ICF and EMCC and if kept in mind it will help reviewing the rest of the document:

- ICF Competence Framework: It is comprised of 4 clusters of competencies, below which the 11 core competences are categorized. ICF model describes key related behaviours for each of the core competencies at a generic level. At all accreditation levels, the same behaviours per core competency are evaluated, with the difference being that the minimum requirement per competency differs and what is expected as minimum in each case is specifically described.
- EMCC Competence Framework: EMCC's first level of categorization is the 8 competencies categories with the second level being specific capability indicators per competence category that differ within the category for the different levels of accreditation.
- Core Competence (EMCC): Each competence category has a
 definition and specific Capability Indicators (CI's) that demonstrate
 per different accreditation level the competence category. The
 capability indicators are incremental competencies under the
 competence category umbrella but also skills and behaviours.
- 4. Core Competency (ICF): Each competency has a definition and related Demonstrative Behaviours (DB's team's abbreviation for the sake of this paper) that should either be always present and visible in any coaching or be called for in certain coaching situations and, therefore, not always visible in any one coaching interaction. When it comes to the different accreditation levels (ACC, PCC, MCC), the key skills to be evaluated per core competency, through the DB's, are specified and they are the same per competency for all levels. What differentiates each accreditation from the other during competency evaluation is that there is different minimum requirement set of these skills, required to be demonstrated by the coach per competency per different accreditation level.

Methodology of Comparative Approach

Levels of Comparison

When approaching the two frameworks for the first time, we realised that we should review them at more than one level as the only way to ensure that a) we won't leave anything out and b) we will take into account other sources that could possibly inform this comparative process beyond the individual competencies. The different levels were:

- 1. Competence Categories/Core Competencies' Comparison: This comparison would enable us to get the "helicopter" perspective as to what is comparable at category level before we dive into the details of specific competencies. It would also enable us to identify any major similarities and differences in the philosophy behind the structure of the two frameworks. It was a conscious decision of the team though, that regardless of this outcome, we would compare individual competencies without the findings of the comparison at category level affecting our judgement.
- 2. Demonstrative Behaviours/Capability Indicators' Comparison:

 This comparison dives the effort quite a few steps down as it is the "head to head" action to find the matches and non matches amongst the 112 Cl's of EMCC model and the 70 demonstrative behaviours of ICF model. In order to serve cross check purposes, this comparison happened both ways: ICF's demonstrative behaviours against EMCC's Cl's and vice versa.
- 3. Direct Comparison (competencies with competencies): the most obvious way to go is to compare "apples to apples" and this is what we did caveat by the fact that while ICF's DB's reflect almost solely behaviours, EMCC's CI's are incremental competencies but also behaviours, skills and actions. This direct comparison surfaced a number of "gaps" that were viewed as not real gaps since our joint knowledge and experience in the use of these frameworks were pointing to other directions where answers could be found for these "gaps".
- 4. 360-Degree Approach Comparison (competencies with other sources of accreditation/credentialing process): This stage included search into other sections of EMCC and ICF accreditation processes but also into the Codes of Ethics & Standards of the two, aiming to identify in those elements that could be comparable to Cl's and DB's for which the direct comparison was not fruitful.

All the above resulted in three categories of outcome that formulate the basis of our observation, findings and suggestions to be detailed in subsequent sections:

- Match: A clear match identified between individual competencies or between an individual competence and a specific element/section/definition of the accreditation/credentialing process and/or Code of Ethics of either ICF or EMCC.
- 2. Partial Match/Partial Gap: Two individual competencies (CI/DB) have been found to be either partially matched or partially different. This happens because there is a significant caveat or highlight that has been surfaced and prevents a perfect match.
- **3. Clear Gap:** Having done both a direct and a 360-degree comparison not even a partial match can be established for a specific CI/DB.

Observations & Findings

A key observation the team would like to start with, is that the Competence Frameworks of ICF and EMCC have much more in common than what separates them. This might not come as a surprise knowing that both organizations strive for the highest of standards for the coaching profession thus both have established frameworks that are robust enough and include those key competencies through which one can truly identify the professional coach. The team only says that we have now confirmed that via a "hard facts" comparison and we have the evidence.

Comparison at Category Level

The first comparison between the 11 ICF Core Competencies and the 8 EMCC Competence Categories resulted in the following mapping:

EMCC COMPETENCE CATEGORIES	ICF CORE COACHING COMPETENCIE
Covered by a section on ethics and diversity in European Individual Accreditation (EIA) process	1. Meeting Ethical Guidelines & Professional Standards
1. Understanding Self	Not currently covered
2. Commitment to Self- Development	Not covered in the model but it is inherent in the credentialing & recredentialing process (CCE requirements/mentor coach). Refer to the ICF Credentialing Requirements Chart.
3. Managing the Contract Key Difference: Greater emphasis on working with the sponsor. Still there is some description of work with a sponsor in the ICF Code of Ethics.	2. Establishing the Coaching Agreement Key Difference: There is a second level of this competency beyond the overall coaching contract these skills define: the coaching session agreement, which is outlined under the ACC/PCC/MCC Demonstrative Behaviors.
4. Building the Relationship	3. Establishing Trust & Intimacy with the Client
	4. Coaching Presence
5. Enabling Insight & Learning	 Active Listening Powerful Questioning Direct Communication Creating Awareness
6. Outcome & Action	9. Designing Actions
Orientation	10. Planning & Goal Setting
	11. Managing Progress &

		Accountability
	Use of Models & chniques	Not covered, assumed
8.	Evaluating	Not covered

As shown, the two frameworks are comparable at this level but we have from the start to introduce some other parts of the frameworks to make this comparison complete, namely the EMCC EIA process and ICF credentialing and re-credentialing requirements. This already sets the picture of this project that says that for a complete comparison we indeed need to go beyond the individual competencies and look into the entire accreditation and credentialing processes of the two organizations. The key highlights of this sub-section are:

- 1. The "more similarities than differences" assumption is confirmed and, moreover, no contradictions have been identified between the two frameworks.
- The ICF model, at core competency level, seems to be more detailed. We can clearly see that one EMCC category covers what ICF describes in four core competencies.
 - a. As we will see in the comparison at Cl's/DB's level though, there are many occasions where the reverse happens; one ICF DB covers what EMCC details in multiple Cl's.
- EMCC Competence Categories covers three areas that ICF currently does not do: 1) Understanding Self & Commitment to Self-Development, 2) Use of Models & Techniques, 3) Evaluating (coach's own practice).
 - In the case of Commitment to Self-Development, it is an inherent yet not specifically named part of the requirements for ICF's credentialing & re-credentialing process.
 - In the case of Use of Models & Techniques, ICF places the emphasis on the coach being able to provide coaching responses that are suitable for the individual client and chooses not to ask the coach to provide evidence for the models and tools he is using. This is only strengthened by ICF's tendency to discourage coaches to be too attached to the models and techniques they are using.

Comparison at Cl's/DB's Level

The results that have been surfaced from the more detailed comparison of individual Capability Indicators (CI's) and Demonstrative Behaviors (DB's) remain on the path of "more similarities than differences" yet still they provided us with some additional interesting observations (see attached detailed comparative spreadsheets):

- How detailed: As referenced previously, when the comparison is happening at category level, ICF uses a more descriptive style as it takes more than one ICF core competencies to describe something that EMCC does in one competence category. When the comparison goes a level deeper between EMCC CIs and ICF DB's, we observe the reverse happening i.e. it is not infrequent to see the same ICF DB to match multiple EMCC CIs.
 - None of the frameworks stay at a generic, high level of description

of the competencies. They are detailing those only at different stages within each framework.

- How comparable: The extend of comparability can be seen through some statistics that have been made possible and are really very impressive:
 - Match: 84% of ICF's Demonstrative Behaviors have found their match into the EMCC competence framework and 60% of EMCC CIs are reflected in ICF respectively.
 - Partial Match/Gap: A 24% of EMCC CIs are partially reflected in ICF Framework with the respective percentage of ICF DB's to be 21%.
 - Gap: It is only for a 6% of ICF DB's that was not made possible to find a match within the EMCC competence and accreditation framework. The percentage is higher for EMCC CI's reaching a 21% of them not matched, affected to a large extend by the fact that there are 4 EMCC competence categories, as highlighted previously, not covered in ICF's core competencies.

In relation to gap identification, we would like to add that the areas that have been found most challenging to match are those identified as not matching between the two frameworks at core competency/competence category level (Use of Models & Techniques, Evaluating, and Understanding Self). One could say that this could be expected.

- How different from category level comparison: What is observed as different from the comparison at category level is that when the individual competencies are compared, then a match might be achieved between a CI and a DB of categories that have not been mapped as matching originally. For example, at category level comparison, EMCC #3 Managing the Contract competence category is matched with ICF #2 Establishing the Coaching Agreement core competency. At the Cl's/DB's level comparison, however, we see some of the EMCC #3 competence category Cl's to have a match at ICF #3 Establishing Trust & Intimacy with the Client or at ICF #7 Direct Communication.
- Accreditation Levels: This highlight is mostly linked to EMCC and it
 has been observed throughout the spectrum that when it comes to
 gaps, it is the highest level of EMCC accreditation that is the most
 challenging to match:
 - A 30% of Master Practitioner level CIs have a straightforward match with ICF DB's which might be reflective of the fact that the highest level of accreditation being the mirror of an organization's philosophy, it will, most probably, be the most diverse when compared with another framework that stems from a different philosophy.
 - That said, an almost 50% of CIs at Practitioner Level are either at a Partial Match or a Clear Gap against the ICF CFW, observation that might require a bit more in-depth research as to the reasons behind this finding.

We cannot perform similar observations for the different ICF accreditation levels as the same behaviours per core competency are evaluated at all levels, with the difference being that there is a

different minimum requirement set per competency per different accreditation level.

Food for Thought

Introduction

The feeling of the team was from the start that the two competence frameworks would prove to share many things in common. This is now largely established and proven with the impressive 60%+ of Match between the detailed competencies of the frameworks. We believe that this is a new lens through which the two organisations can approach the elements which diverge with the aim to learn from the exchange of best practice, and, even, create new CFW convergence opportunities. To this end, we share in this section these diverging items along with some background information to help explain where the difference stems from. The items have been categorised in order to facilitate the review of this project work. We are aware that at the end of the day it is all down to the philosophy that underlies the ideas, the frameworks, the concepts and the language each organisation uses.

CFWs' Philosophy

Self Reflection & Learning: Both ICF and EMCC believe in the significance of a professional coach's self-development through experience, practice and new learning. There is though a different way to express this focus between the two organisations. In the case of ICF, it is considered a given and it can therefore be traced throughout its Competence Framework, Code of Ethics, Credentialing & Re-credentialing processes. Still, it is not placed as a specific competency requirement against which a coach has to demonstrate his skill. EMCC on the other hand, has incorporated the need for a professional coach to understand, develop and reflect on him/herself as a clear set of competencies that formulate part of its framework.

Suggestion: Since this focus on coach's work with own self is an
integral part of the spirit of ICF, the organisation could review the
possibility of introducing more explicitly a request to the
professional coach to think critically about his practice & learning

Evaluation of Coaching: This is a case where the same competence category is handled in a different way between EMCC and ICF. EMCC views the evaluation as a separate competence entity that relates to both the individual coaching session and the entire coaching programme with a client and that is inclusive of a 360° perspective. A 360° evaluation approach in this case means that the coach critically evaluates her own practice and programme effectiveness based on client's attainment of agreed goals and on client's feedback for the performance of the coach. In the case of a sponsoring organisation, the critical evaluation process involves the sponsor's feedback as well. ICF is focused on the evaluation of coaching as this becomes apparent from the core competence of Managing Progress & Accountability but while there are descriptions of the coach supporting the client to evaluate his goals and progress, there is, currently, very little with ICF about the coach's evaluation.

 Thought: There might be space for emphasizing more the coach's critical evaluation ability and practice.

Use of models & techniques: EMCC requests that a coach provides evidence of his competence to use and, at higher accreditation, to

synthesize and even create his own coaching model. The same goes for the need to provide evidence of the use of appropriate tools depending on the requirements of the client. At a first glance, one could say that ICF does not cover that competence but this is not a correct observation. Having dived in to ICF's system, it can be argued that ICF discourages coaches from being too attached to models and that it definitely aims for unique, tailored coaching responses created in the moment. This can only be made possible if a coach has been trained into coaching models and has, subsequently mastered the ability to synthesize from the various models and tools and deliver to his client a tailored coaching approach, reflective of the specific client's needs.

 Observation: The difference is mainly between the evidence-based language EMCC is using and the choice of ICF not to ask coaches to provide evidence for coaching models as part of their competence evaluation.

CFWs' Concepts

Mentoring, Mentor Coaching & Supervision: This is the case probably of different historical roots for both organisations that is reflected in their CFW's as gaps when compared with each other. The truth is that the work with a more experienced coach is an important activity for the professional development of a coach for both EMCC and ICF. ICF, however, since its establishment, only deals with coaching as a discipline with mentoring being completely outside its spectrum of activities. Mentoring on the other hand, has been since the start a major pillar of EMCC with some markets in Europe already reaching even the point of maturity in mentoring. For ICF the concept of mentoring is only introduced in the form of Mentor Coaching, which refers to the work a coach does with a more experienced mentor coach, and it is totally focused on the improvement of the coach's technical skills, currently mandatory only for ACC accreditation level credentialing/renewal. For EMCC, mentor coaching, as required by ICF, is considered coaching skills' improvement and formulates part of the Supervision process, which is mandatory for self-development and, therefore, a requirement for all accreditation levels. Supervision is considered an ongoing requirement since it also covers the review and discussion with one's supervisor of clients' cases and challenge issues the coach is. It should be noted though that ICF mentor coaching practices have evolved toward case studies, discussion of coach's issues with a client etc. ICF has also defined how they understand supervision. Still, this evolved mode of practicing mentor coaching is still not a norm that ICF asks for or alludes to.

 Thought: ICF could explore the possibility of introducing supervision for professional development purposes.

Sponsoring Organisation – Stakeholders: EMCC has explicitly introduced in their framework the mention of sponsoring organisations, which mainly comes from the area of Corporate Coaching. This refers to those individuals/disciplines/units in a corporate environment responsible for selecting a coach, with whom the coach has the contract established and who are bearing the cost of the coaching programme for one or more of their employees. It also refers to the fact that, when working with a corporation, there are certain company regulations, policies and procedures that the coach has to manage and operate within. In other words, the sponsors are also a coach's clients, with frequently different

agendas and requirements from the coachee-client that the practitioner will be working with. EMCC has therefore decided that since this adds a level of complexity when managing a coaching contract, the coach has to show evidence of his competence to successfully manage. In the case of ICF, the understanding of the "sponsor" is rather identical to that of EMCC and the sponsoring organisations are recognised as a separate entity the coach deals with. They are currently referenced in Code of Ethics #15 and in some case studies at Master Certified Coach (MCC) accreditation process. So in the case of this concept it is more of a matter of how a very similar understanding is reflected rather differently in the two competence frameworks.

 Suggestion: As Corporate Coaching is a very rapidly increasing business in most markets; there might be an opportunity for ICF to introduce more explicitly the stakeholder management competency.

Client's Non-Dependence concept: A main aim for EMCC is to ensure that the client does not form any kind of dependency with his coach and, in case he does have this tendency, that this is not fostered in any way by the coach. This non-dependency item is one of the regulations of the EMCC's Code of Ethics but, in order to strengthen its importance, it is also reflected in CI 52 "Ensures client's non dependence of the coach/mentor" under Building the Relationship competence category. So a coach has to provide evidence that he is able to do this effectively. ICF is, of course, absolutely focused on the well-being of the client and all actions of the coach should aim in helping the client remain an autonomous person with his own free will, who sets his own targets and attains them and this is evident throughout ICF CFW. Still, the non-dependence concept is currently implied behind other actions.

 Suggestion: ICF could explore the option of introducing the nondependence concept in their CFW.

Celebration of Successes: In ICF's competence framework, we see that a coach has to be competent not only in facilitating the client to set, organise, and strive for achieving their goals but also in celebrating the success when the goals are achieved. Even beyond that, a coach in the ICF model has to be competent in spotting the early successes in a coaching plan thus helping the client to start from actions that are manageable and have a good percent of succeeding. This way, the client will be able to feel increasingly stronger since success will be coming his way and will strive for more and more difficult targets. It is obvious that EMCC aims for establishing professional coaches, who are able to work effectively with their clients, bring success and be happy for their clients' achievement. Still, this is currently assumed and it is not part of any sections of EMCC's CFW.

 Suggestion: EMCC could check the possibility of introducing more overtly the ability to identify early successes and to celebrate and praise achievements.

Systems Perspective: According to EMCC' framework, in order for a client to gain insight and awareness for her/himself, the coach should be competent in introducing a systems' approach. By systems approach, it is meant an approach of viewing one's life not only through just her/himself but also as own self and life is affected and influenced by the whole network of relationships, interfaces, possibilities and constraints of the environment s/he lives in. In short, the client gains understanding and

insight by also introducing into the picture the impact of his situational context. ICF, on the other hand, chooses to focus on the client himself and to facilitate his insight and awareness by bringing him into closer contact with own self through the understanding of thoughts, emotions, values, etc. It does mention, however, that the coach should «Help clients to see the different, interrelated factors that affect them and their behaviors». This is in a sense a definition of systems thinking. But it misses that system analysis is a whole field and paradigm in itself that coaches would benefit from knowing and being able to use.

 Thought: There might be value in giving also the perspective of the situational context and its impact in one's life through the lens of the systems' paradigm.

Use of Humour: This item came on the surface when the team was trying to identify a match for ICF 4e "Uses humour effectively to create lightness and energy" into the EMCC's CFW and realized that actually there is no match currently. Although just a singled-out item while so many more matches have been identified, the team believed strongly that humour can unlock so many doors and boost the energy levels, so the decision was to introduce it here.

 Suggestion: Since humour - when appropriately used and respectful of the cultural differences of what is considered humorous – tends to bring people closer, EMCC could explore the option of introducing it as one additional item of building the relationship with the client.

CFWs' Language

General vs. Instructive Language: What became apparent throughout the process of comparing the two frameworks is that some of their differences are not necessarily in the *content* of the competence in review but in the language used. EMCC tends to use a language that is more general, allows space for self-reflection and, on occasions, it can be quite implicit. ICF on the other hand employs a much more explicit language, to the point of being instructive. The difference may stem from the fact that EMCC uses a language appropriate for an accreditation system based on written evidence while ICF has written competencies that can be used in examinations of demonstrated competency. An evidence of this difference is that on occasions an ICF DB serves as the illustration of the EMCC CI like, for example, the case of CI 74 "Proactively manages own "state of mind" to suit the needs of the client" and DB 4g "Demonstrates confidence in working with strong emotions, and can self-manage and not be overpowered or enmeshed by client's emotions".

Thought: Both organisations' accreditation/credentialing processes
have been refreshed recently introducing live sessions in the form
of interviews (EMCC) and of revising some exam criteria (ICF). Can
this be seen as an opportunity for language/tonality adjustments to
reflect these changes?

Cases of re-language: The team has identified two cases where it is considered suitable to rephrase so to enable further clarity of the DB and CI in discussion:

• ICF 2c: This Demonstrative Behaviour currently states "Determines whether there is an effective match between his/her coaching method and the needs of the prospective client". It is suggested to be phrased differently so to emphasize more the empowerment of

- the client. An indicator to this can be EMCC CI 43 "Describes own coaching/mentoring process and style to client so that client is empowered to make an informed decision to go ahead with coaching/mentoring" where it is more explicit that the *client* is also empowered to make the choice of working or not with this coach.
- EMCC 70: This CI currently reads "Explains and works with models from client's context". It is the use of the word "explains" that is found slightly unfortunate. It is suggested that EMCC could rephrase towards "Able to understand and works with models..." direction.

Next Steps

In this document, the team presents the outcome of a very detailed and thorough comparison of the two Competence Frameworks as well as observations, thoughts and suggestions that, in their view, enable identification of a next stage for this project.

EMCC & ICF Executive Boards are asked to review this submission paper and its supportive documentation, to engage as and if necessary with the project team, and to decide on possible next steps that could take this piece of work a step further to the benefit of both organisations.

Respectfully submitted, Po Lindvall Marialexia Margariti Anita van Vlerken Soren Holm Amorah Ross

APPENDIX

The analytic comparison is found in the supplementary document the project team is submitting and it is in excel format. As there are different sheets to cover for the multiple comparisons, we are attaching here below a description for each one of the 8 spreadsheets (tabs) so to facilitate the review of the document:

- **1.** Categories' Comparison (Tab 1): It includes the comparison between ICF Core Competencies and EMCC Competence Categories.
- 2. Comparison CFW EMCC-ICF (Tab 2): It is the comparison that uses EMCC Capability Indicators as the basis against which the ICF Demonstrative Behaviours are compared.
- **3. EMCC CI's Summary (Tab 3):** It is a summary table that shows the status of EMCC Capability Indicators in relation to the comparison process and how this is depicted at the different accreditation levels.
- **4. Comparison CFW ICF-EMCC (Tab 4):** It is the comparison that uses ICF Demonstrative Behaviours as the basis against which the EMCC Capability Indicators are compared.
- **5. ICF Demonstrative Behaviours (Tab 5):** It is a list of all the ICF Demonstrative Behaviours and it serves as a working document.
- **6. EMCC Capability Indicators (Tab 6):** It is a list of all the EMCC Capability Indicators and it serves as a working document.
- 7. Comparison Accreditation Levels ICF/EMCC (Tab 7): This is a first attempt to check the comparability of the two frameworks in terms of their accreditation levels. The project team is conscious of the fact that this was not within our scope of work and that this comparison has not been researched properly. Still, we believe it pertains a baseline for another level of work in the Standards area of each organization.
- **8. ICF DB's Accreditation Levels (Tab 8):** It is a working document including raw data of the comparison of Tab 7.