FROM CONCEPTS TO IMPLEMENTATION

A HANDBOOK FOR NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS DEVELOPERS

(with special reference to India)

Edited by Jean Marc Castejon

National Skill Development Agency
Government of India

India EU
Skills Development Project

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Acknowledgment

Preface

It is our pleasure to launch this Handbook on National Qualifications Frameworks as one of the outcomes of the India EU Skills Development project, whose team of experts have been co-operating closely with the National Skill Development Agency since June 2014. We believe the Handbook will contribute to better understanding of the National Skill Qualification Framework and how it needs to be developed with a view to international experience with NQFs across the globe. This experience from many other countries must not be copied, but learned from, so that the NSQF becomes a modern and practical tool fully embedded in the Indian skill development eco-system. Building that is the country's priority for its economic and social growth and a huge responsibility for NSDA as the apex body. The Handbook you are opening is not a step by step manual to follow, but a collection of reflective chapters on different aspects of qualifications frameworks and their functions within the systems of education and training. The authors and editors of the Handbook are international experts in the field who all had the opportunity to work with the NSQF stakeholders in India. They facilitated the training workshops in the NSDA on which the Handbook is based and got extensive feedback from rich discussions with the Indian participants during those twelve one-day modules. That helped to take account of Indian realities in summarizing the rich material from the training into this Handbook. We would like to thank the leading author and modular programme designer Jean Marc Castejon, NQF expert in the EU project, as well as the other experts and training participants who contributed to the Handbook. We wish you an inspiring reading.
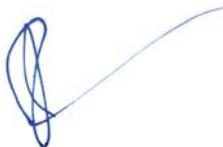
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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Boxes

List of Tables

Introduction

Many countries which have developed a national qualifications framework would agree that the framework is not easy or straightforward to implement and that the framework should not be set in stone. Implementation has proved to be a lengthy, even continual, process. It should be an outcome of the implementation of the national qualifications framework that the framework becomes part of the country's language. Perhaps inevitably the community of purpose that need to exist to create a national qualifications framework will largely involve national and regional agencies and stakeholders organisations. But a much wider community of purpose is required if the national qualifications framework is to make the move from a pretty diagram and elegant policy papers to becoming part of the language of learning for learners, teachers and employers. For national qualifications framework to become part of the language of learning, rather than another passing fad, the benefits experienced by learners, employers and learning providers need to be researched and communicated widely. This is one of the purposes of this handbook.

This Handbook is one of the outcomes of a capacity-building programme which was delivered between 18th February and 15th May, 2015 at the NSDA premises in Delhi, as part of the India-EU Skills Development project, to a group of key Indian Stakeholders actively involved in the current implementation of the NSQF in India. Indeed, rarely has a country committed so much time and energy to the unfolding of a TVET reform around a national qualification framework. The training programme was meant as a global introduction to the topic of development of qualification frameworks through a common understanding of the issues at stake, so that the Participants, as practitioners and as stakeholders, could gain new insights and use them on their own practice.

The purpose of the training programme and Handbook is not to replace old notions with new ones. A fully transformative approach of qualifications starting from a blank sheet rather than from the existing provision, history and culture in a country has always failed. Expertise in the field of qualifications is everywhere among practitioners in any country. But clarify in common notions currently used, and populate the TVET area with a common language is what it is about, starting with the notion of qualification. It is a language which needs to be built, shared and understood. All countries which have experienced the development of NQF have experienced essentially new forms of cooperation and coordination. More easily said than done.

The training programme was conceived as a three–pronged approach of the NQF:

- five days cycle on qualifications,
- five days cycle on quality assurance, and
- two days cycle on RPL.

The first cycle shows the multiple dimensions of qualification frameworks, spanning a continuum from classifications of qualifications to instruments of policy planning and of international comparability. NQF are basically standards-based system offering greater flexibility and choice to learners, greater openness about the standards that a learner has to achieve to receive credit to their knowledge and skills and greater clarity of pathways.

The second cycle develops the notion of standards in action as trust-building mechanisms (related to trainers, training providers, assessors and assessment bodies, certifications) which give value to the qualifications.

The third cycle describes Recognition of Prior Learning as a lever to release the potential of NQF for recognizing achievements beyond that which arise in formal, academic classrooms situations and to be seen as steps to a bigger lifelong journey, rather than being ends in themselves.

The three cycles are obviously closely interrelated: the understanding of the organic linkages between them is the main learning outcome of the programme, along with a critical perception of the advantages and disadvantages of NQFs, an assessment of the role of NQF in TVET reforms and a sense of NQF as a roadmap showing how qualifications relate to each other.

The Handbook is aiming at all qualification stakeholders, seeking to make the NQF part of the language of learning. Learners have to see the NQF as supporting their ambitions of progressing in employment and further learning. Individual employers need to see the benefit of improved retention, productivity and customer service when they use the NQF in their recruitment and selection practice and in their employees training. Trainers need to see the flexibility of NQF in improving their capacity to make judgments about entry to courses and progress through courses, including giving proper recognition to learners' prior knowledge and skills. And government officials need to see the benefit of the national qualifications framework as the cornerstone of an education and training system that will lead to vibrant national and local economies, strong and sustainable communities and skilled, educated and fulfilled people.

This Handbook is as much as possible based on the presentations made by the experts during the sessions, but it does not restore the richness of exchanges and debates which have taken place during the sessions, both in the "live" morning sessions and in the afternoon Skype sessions in which experts from another part of the world brought an additional light to the topic of the day. The project team wishes to express again its warm thanks to the Skype speakers and their organisations who, in the afternoons of almost all sessions, have graciously given their time and expertise to the programme, contributing to make it a global event. The friendly international organisations are ETF, the CEDEFOP, SCQF, Ofqual, CNCP and DEQA-VET.

While the Handbook is meant as support to the future sessions of the programme which will be carried out by the Central Staff Training and Research Institute (CS-TARI) attached to the Ministry of Skills Development and Entrepreneurship, and the National Institute of Open Schooling attached to the Ministry of Human Resources Development, it strives to be a self-standing document whose purpose is didactical and hopefully inspirational.

The Handbook structure is as follows (in brackets the facilitators, followed by the Skype speakers).

NQF cycle:
- Understanding national qualifications frameworks (Jean Marc Castejon, Arjen Deij and Michael Graham)
- Components of the national qualifications frameworks (John Hart, Jens Bjornavold)
- The governance of national qualifications frameworks (John Hart, Brigitte Bouquet)
- Regional frameworks (John Hart, Aileen Ponton)
- Credit systems (John Hart, James Keevy)

Quality assurance cycle:
- Understanding quality assurance (Belinda Smith, Helena Sebag)
- Quality assurance of training providers and accredited courses (Belinda Smith, Stephen Auburn)
- Quality assurance of assessment and certifications (Belinda Smith, Isabel Sutcliffe, Julie Swan)
- Quality assurance of qualifications (Jean marc Castejon, Mike Coles)
- Quality assurance for Trainers (Alexander Siboni)

Recognition of prior learning cycle:
- Understanding RPL (Paul Farrelly, Vishishta Sam, Karen Adams)
- Tools and Practice of RPL (Paul Farrelly, Shawn Runacres)

MODULE 1

UNDERSTANDING QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

*   The European Training Foundation is an agency of the European union that helps transition and developing countries
     to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems
     in the context of the EU's external relations policy.

It is easy to forget that the current standard-based model of qualifications is a relatively recent invention. Full credit to New Zealand for setting up the first national qualification authority and developing the first fully functioning national qualification frameworks in 1990/1. The emergence of broadly similar national qualification developments in many different countries during the 1990s reflected the extent to which experience was being shared through exchange of information and expertise in publications. Since then many more countries developed or are developing national qualification frameworks- and many have established national qualifications authorities for their frameworks. International collaboration continues to these days and has been formalised, in a number of regions, in the more recent development of transnational qualification frameworks reflecting the growing importance of learners and labour mobility but also, perhaps, as a means by which to encourage cross-border policy convergence.

1   What are National Qualifications Frameworks?

The main features of NQFs are as follow:

- Qualifications are described in terms of a single set of criteria or a single definition of what is to count as a qualification.

- Qualifications are ranked on a single hierarchy expressed as a single set of levels – each with its distinct level descriptors

- Qualifications are classified (in the case of vocational qualifications) in terms of comprehensive set of occupational fields.

- Qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes that are independent of the site, the form of provision and the type of pedagogy and curriculum through which they may be achieved.

- A national framework of qualifications provides a set of benchmarks against which any learning can be assessed in terms of its potential contribution to a qualification.

- All qualifications are defined in terms of elements (sometimes referred to as units expressed as quantifiable credit. A learner has to achieve a given number of credit to gain a qualification.

It is these features that, in principle, allow qualifications to be the basis of the goals they claim for them. For ex-

ample, in principle, qualifications as part of an NQF are designed:

- to be achieved by accumulation over time;

- to be transportable – units of one qualification can be used for other qualifications;

- to be transparent – learners know precisely what learning outcomes they are required to demonstrate to achieve a qualification.

Qualifications Frameworks are flourishing all over the world. Many authors are wondering why so many policy makers are finding them such a good idea everywhere. The first frameworks (1984) came as an idea that things could not continue as before, and therefore had a transformational edge, like in New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and England. This is understandable since the competence-based approach of training was also growing fast at the time and the productive sector could rightfully claim they had to share the driving seat of TVET systems. International experts criss-crossing the world with this new talisman in hand might be partly responsible for this wave of optimism.

Before 2000, only a handful of countries had NQFs. These first frameworks were developed to address specific challenges for linking, regulating or developing qualifications. A second generation of frameworks developed in the early 2000s has been able to draw upon the different national experiences, but it is really over the very recent years that we have seen a huge surge in developments of QFs which aim to link qualifications within and between countries.

The majority of countries developing national qualification frameworks today are also involved in 'regional' (that is a cluster of neighbouring countries) or transnational frameworks. However, as most countries are at an early stage of conceptualisation and design, their relation to a regional framework vary considerably.

NQFs can take many forms across the many countries where they are developing. What they have in common is that they are an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specific levels of learning achieved. Qualifications frameworks aim to bring coherence and clarity to qualifications systems. When qualifications are placed in a classification system, they can be more easily compared by individuals, employers and institutions. But NQFs go beyond other classification systems by bringing together qualifications issued by different bodies and on the basis of levels of learning outcomes.

When different countries' NQF are linked to each other, directly or via a common reference, qualification from different countries can be compared, which supports individuals' mobility across borders. But the purpose of establishing an NQF – and the implications of doing so – are much wider than classification and comparison.

Contrarily to qualification systems, national qualifications frameworks are social constructs. This means that the framework is the result of a consensus between concerned stakeholders. In Europe, the word qualification has been agreed to mean a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. This definition has been adopted in India through the Notification of the National Skills Qualification Framework (23rd December, 2013).

NQF are part of wider qualification systems. Qualification systems include all aspects of a country's activity related to the recognition of learning and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. This includes the development and implementation of institutional arrangements and processes relating to quality assurance, assessment and the award of qualifications.

The levels of a framework indicate different degrees of complexity of the learning outcomes. The lowest level often define the basic generic or vocational skills for people who can work effectively under supervision, the central levels typically define the expected requirements for professionals who can act independently, whilst the highest levels emphasize the capacity to analyse and innovate, create new knowledge and may include the ability to lead and manage people and processes. In some QFs the highest levels are reserved for holders of higher education degrees, but this is increasingly challenged by lifelong learning frameworks with a strong labour market dimension, so that increasingly the highest levels are being opened up to vocational qualifications too.

In order to understand a qualification as the outcome of an assessment, it is useful to understand learning outcomes. Learning outcomes say what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do at the end of a course of learning. Outcomes tell us what is inside a qualification –so creating readability. At the same time, by defining a qualification by what the learner needs to achieve rather than by the traditional inputs such as duration of programme, learning outcomes facilitate diverse learning routes –formal or informal- which recognise and encourage lifelong learning.

But outcomes do not stop with the frameworks of qualifications –they are also being applied to curricula, teaching and learning, assessment and standards. Countries adopting NQFs are seeking to move to outcomes-based curricula in their schools and colleges. Outcomes can be used to identify appropriate assessment criteria. Most of the times, learning outcomes are based on occupational standards which specify the required work-related competences for an occupation.

While NQFs are tentatively outcomes-based or outcomes-oriented, we should not picture the move to outcome as a radical switch but rather as a gradual tilting of the balance. Indeed, we see countries take a more pragmatic approach, taking account of inputs such as institutional provision and structure and duration of a programme.

2 Main Purposes for Recent Qualification Reforms

It is not always clear whether the development of a NQF is evidence-based or the result of an intuitive approach from the belief that quick results are possible. Although, NQFs are usually seen as tools for reforms, they are not neutral tools. It seems likely that one reason why governments have become so enthusiastic about qualifications in recent decades is that not only are they assumed to motivate learners and potential learners, but they can serve other roles that are just as important, but frequently less explicit aspects of governments' policy. Among the most frequent objectives are

- To establish national standards for the outcomes of learning and improve the social and/or economic value of qualifications

- To improve the quality of qualifications and assessment, increase trust in qualifications and gain national / international recognition for workers' skills

- To relate qualifications to each other and improve access, progression routes and the possibilities of transferring learning (sometimes summarised as "improving learners' journeys")

- To provide a basis for co-operation between stakeholders in education and training in pursuit of some aspect(s) of national policy on social or economic development

- Make education more responsive to demand (incl. from labour market)

- Enhance quality of learning

- Recognise existing skills (incl. in-/non-formal learning)

- Promote international mobility of workers and learners

- Reference qualifications to trans-national framework

- Promote parity of esteem for vocational learning

- Make education system more transparent

- Provide instrument of accountability and control

- Promote access, transfer and progression

- Increase coherence/coordination of education system

Such purposes are over ambitious if they do not come with a range of actions, including appropriate laws and policies, institutions, budget allocation, infrastructure development, personal development for teachers and trainers and provision of learning resources materials. The goals above cannot be achieved by the NQF alone. Policy breadth is required, which is defined as the extent to which the establishment of the framework is directly and explicitly linked with other measures to influence how the framework is used, such as the availability of assessment systems, the adequate retraining of trainers, the existence of well developed sectoral organisations and the new partnership without which, a NQF can never be more than a 'map'. Among less explicit aspects of government policy, a greater emphasis on qualifications enables central government to:

- Increase their control of education in areas where it is relatively weak.

- Provide simple measurable criteria for allocating funds to institutions.

- Make local and regional education and training organisations more accountable.

- Provide quantitative measures of the success of public policies.

3 Types of Qualifications Frameworks

While NQFs are a global trend and appear to share common characteristics, in practice the development, and especially the implementation, of frameworks vary markedly by country. There is a tension between the need to comply with internationally admitted practices and prac-

Box 1: The Case of India

Objectives of the NSQF

- Accommodate the diversity of the Indian education and training systems

- Allow the development of a let of qualifications for each level, based on outcomes which are accepted across the nation

- Provide structure for development and maintenance of progression pathways which provide access to qualifications and assist people to move easily and readily between different education and training sectors and between those sectors and the labour market.

- Give individuals an option to progress through education and training and gain recognition for their prior learning and experiences.

- Underpins national regulatory and quality assurance arrangements for education and training;

- Support and enhances the national and international mobility of persons with NSQF-compliant qualifications through increased recognition of the value and comparability of Indian qualifications.

(NSQF Notification, December 23rd, 2013)

tices applied in other countries, and the need to take full account of national history and a culture. This tension has produced different results in countries depending on how predominantly context-bound or predominantly context-free the frameworks set out to be. David Raffe refers to this difference the NQF having an institutional logic in the first case and an intrinsic logic in the second.

Hence the NQF differ according to their

Scope: sector or comprehensive

Aims: communication, reform or transformation

Governance: regulatory or voluntary

Design: tight or loose

Associated functions, such as progression pathways.

Type: national or regional.

Scope | Sector NQF (usually TVET) are envisaged in countries which developed the first generation of frameworks (New Zealand, Australia, England) as the world of work was the first to alarm the institutions to the growing mismatch between the outcome of traditional sys-

tems and the skill needs. There is a trend now for the new generation of framework to be comprehensive, that is inclusive of various needs for learning at all and for corresponding recognition and validation. This trend follows the shift to lifelong learning which requires inclusive frameworks in terms of target groups but also in terms of modes of learning.

Design – *Tight or loose* | comprehensive NQFs need to embrace the full range of concepts, values and traditions in the different parts of education and training covered by the framework. This leaves two options:

- Try to reform the system according to the one-fit-all principles of the framework (in line with outcome-driven model), or

- Introduce a "looser' framework accepting and respecting existing diversity but insisting on a common core of principles to be introduced and shared.

Tight frameworks are normally regulatory frameworks and define uniform specifications for qualifications to be applied across sectors. They seek to improve the relevance and quality of qualifications and the coherence of the qualifications system. They are typically found in either the newer Member States of the EU, for example, or in transition and developing countries. Tight frameworks, as exemplified by the early South African and New Zealand frameworks, generated resistance and undermined support for the initiatives. These experiences have led to general reassessment of the role of frameworks, pointing to the need to protect diversity.

Loose frameworks introduce a set of comprehensive level descriptors to be applied across sub-systems, but allow substantial variation across sub-frameworks.

Whether a framework is tight or loose depends on the stringency of conditions a qualification must meet to be included in the framework. A possible example is the difference between the English and Scottish frameworks. The SCQF makes simple demands on qualifications to be admitted to its hierarchy, the requirement for a minimum size, quality assurance and a learning outcomes format are seen as minimum requirements to support the integrity of the SCQF. This might be contrasted with the English QCF which makes demands in terms of structure, for example, qualification titles, size, unit format, form of assessment criteria, classification of units as mandatory or optional, and rules of combination of units to form a qualification. The effect of the framework on qualifications therefore differs markedly.

European frameworks can mostly be described as loose as the inclusion of qualifications is based on sector legislation, not on uniform rules covering the entire framework. Most countries operate with different principles for the inclusion of qualification from general, vocational and academic sectors. This approach is well illustrated by the proposed Polish framework where generic, national descriptors are supplemented by more detailed descriptors for the sub-sectors of general, vocational and higher education. While not so explicitly addressed by other frameworks, the basic principle applies across the European continent.

Governance | In the case of comprehensive frameworks, four set of functions must be carried out as part of the governance.

- Management of the framework

- Standards and qualification development

- Quality assurance of education and training providers

- Assessment and certification.

Clear consistent roles of different ministries and public authorities need to be distinguished from the role of the "Qualification Authority" and from other players such as the private sector and NGOs. NQFs are voluntary or regulatory according to the obligation made to the training providers to comply to national standards of delivery as a condition of access to public funding. There are no clear cut difference between the two. The table 1 summarizes some countries' arrangements in terms of scope and governance.

Aims of frameworks – *Communication frameworks* | aim to coordinate different subsectors of a national education and training system, and make the national qualifications system more transparent. They are predominant when the national system is long settled and sustained by a national consensus. The changes to the national system tend to be adjustments rather than major overhaul. These frameworks essentially add value to the system.

Reforming frameworks are more ambitious: they seek to actively improve the national education and training system in terms of relevance, coherence and quality of qualifications. They are typically found either in the newer member States of the EU or in transition and developing countries. They are therefore much more influenced by external factors and tend to resemble each others in structure (e.g. numbers of levels) and scope. Tight reforming frameworks, as exemplified by the early south African and New Zealand frameworks, generated resis-

Table 1: Countries arrangements in scope and governance (Source ETF)

Country	Scope	Governance
Australia	All sectors	Ministry
Denmark	All sectors	Co-ordinating Committee (4 ministries)
England and Northern Ireland	Vocational (separate HE framework)	Government sponsored agency
France	VET	Government sponsored agency
Germany	All sectors	National and regional ministries
Ireland	All sectors	Government sponsored agency + separate schools authority.
Kosovo	All sectors	National qualification authority + separate school VET and HE authorities
Malaysia	VET and HE	National qualification authority
Morocco	All sectors	Possibly a commission of representative of most important ministries and social partners
New Zealand	All sectors	National qualification authorities + separate HE authority.
Scotland	All sectors	Independent Partnership Organisation (Ministry, National qualification authority, VET and HE bodies)
South Africa	All sectors	National qualification authority + schools & colleges, VET and HE authorities
UAE	All sectors	National qualification authority + VET and HE authorities
Wales	All sectors	Ministry

tance and undermined support for the initiatives. These experiences have led to general reassessment of the role of frameworks, pointing to the need to protect diversity.

The further implementation of NQFs in the coming years will show the extent to which countries move from the relatively modest ambition of communication frameworks towards the more challenging role of reforming frameworks. In particular areas, for example related to the introduction of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, NQF take the role of reference point for reforms in this field. This is exemplified by the German and Polish qualification frameworks which see the development of recognition as an integrated and important of framework developments. A third example is the French-speaking region of Belgium where the development of validation and framework goes hand in hand, and where significant progress has been made in the last few years. Given the adoption of the European Council recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning in December 2012, the link between framework and recognition will receive increased attention. This is already the case in India, where the Official Notification of the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) foresees a close co-development of the NSQF and the recognition of prior learning. NQFs have therefore a role to play

as reference point for national validation systems potentially open to all.

Associated functions | Some of the established frameworks have invested much effort in creating better conditions for progression. Scotland for instance has made significant progress in defining progression routes for learners in selected areas. Universities are obliged to reserve some of their places to those coming through non-traditional routes, e.g. without a school leaving certificate from general education. While this strategy goes beyond the remit and role of the framework, the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework levels are used to position people (and their prior learning) and to map possible learning pathways. A key challenge faced by countries wanting to go beyond strictly regulated formal education and training is to ensure that the new qualifications included in the framework can be trusted and that appropriate quality assurance criteria and procedures are put in place.

National or Regional | Regional frameworks cover qualifications in a number of countries in a particular geographical region. Table 2 lists the most prominent. The difference between national and regional frameworks is summarized in the following table (source Mike Coles).

Table 2: Comparison of national and regional frameworks

Areas of comparison	Types of qualification frameworks	
	National	Regional
Main functions	To act as a benchmark for the level of learning recognised in the NQS	To act as a translation device to enable comparison of levels of qualifications across member countries
Developed by	National governments in many cases through national agencies set up for this purpose	Countries in a region acting jointly, mostly facilitated by a regional body or a regional association.
Sensitive to	Local national priorities, e.g. level of literacy of LM needs	Collective priorities across member countries (e.g. enabling mobility of learners and workers across borders).
Currency/value depends on…	The extent of regulatory compliance required, the level of buy in from the key role players (such as industry, learning institutions and professional association), the perceived or real value to the broad population.	The level of trust between member countries: the transparency of the national quality assurance systems, mutually agreed national priorities.
Quality is guaranteed by	Adherence to nationally agreed quality assurance systems, exemplified in the practices of national bodies and learning institutions.	The common application of referencing criteria and guidelines as well as the robustness and transparency of the national referencing process, and the national QA systems.
The levels are defined by reference to…	National benchmarks which may be embedded in different learning contexts, e.g. school education, work or higher education.	General progression of learning across all contexts that is applicable to all countries.

4 Convergence and National Adjustment

In Europe, NQFs have mostly been designed as comprehensive frameworks, covering all levels and types of qualification; most countries have introduced eight-level frameworks where learning outcomes are described according to the knowledge, skills and competence (KSC) categories; convergence in structure underlines the countries giving priority to international comparability; NQFs are frequently seen as a part of national lifelong learning strategies, in many cases acknowledging qualifications awarded outside the formal, public system as well as promoting validation of non-formal and informal learning.

New concepts appear as part of the need to quality assure Lifelong Learning, in a context where the supply of qualification shift from a monopolistic offer (public systems aiming one category of beneficiaries) to a competitive offer targeting all types of beneficiaries. The training providers bear the load of delivering training programmes leading to real qualification and of getting people to employment. More importance is given to assessment and certification and to pathways. Many countries see dialogue and cooperation across education and training subsystems and with stakeholders outside education as a first step.

The countries that have tried to make a radical break with their previous qualifications systems have had the most acute difficulties. A radical break gives neither practitioners nor those involved in design any benchmarks to test the new ideas against their experience. Incremental approaches minimize the likelihood that ideologies will intervene, and as a result are more likely to avoid polarized positions. The problem with an incrementalist approach is that it is unlikely to appeal to governments who feel the situation of their country is one of great urgency, as in the case of South Africa. The point to remember, however, is that even if a more radical break is attempted, the structural constraints on implementation may well extend the implementation period anyway.

Consensus or agreement is the bedrock of trust and all qualifications depend on trust. Qualifications inevitably claim to represent more than they can demonstrate and therefore can only work on the basis of trust. Genuine consultation processes such as those that have been a feature of the Irish NQF are crucial and principled compromises such as that reached over the relations between the schools and universities and the NQF in New Zealand are important. The alternative which is typified by the rigid assertions followed by forced compromises over NVQs in England has meant that the whole idea of an NQF has tended to lose public and professional credibility.

Scotland demonstrates very well the importance of partial frameworks as building blocks for an NQF. Only when a range of partial frameworks – Higher Still, SCOTCAT, Higher National Diplomas and NVQs was in place, was the comprehensive Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework introduced. It was the existence of the .building blocks that established both the confidence in, and the practicality of, a broader more comprehensive qualifications framework (the SCQF). Here the term building block refers to specific levels (upper secondary or higher education) and sectors (vocational or academic or an industrial sector like engineering). It does not refer to the elements of a framework such as modules, units, standards, levels, and credits, although these may well form elements of partial frameworks.

The combination of the various features of NQFs can be summarised in Figure 1. Quality assurance tends to take the central role and the way it is implemented determines the features of the framework.

Conclusion

In many countries, the NQF has still to become visible to ordinary citizens and be part of the language of learning. Experience shows that a NQF does not have to be perfect before entering a real world. It is preferable to be pragmatic, to test out, to build support of a wide variety of potential users – rather than to try to launch a framework which is perfect in every detail. Seeking perfection before going public is understandable but the time it takes to achieve this may well build frustration amongst users rather than demand. Demand is built by having learners, teachers and employers as advocates of the national qualification framework because they have experienced its benefits. Such advocates will be far more effective in pushing forward implementation than a roomful of beautifully written policy papers.

Figure 1: Features of qualifications frameworks
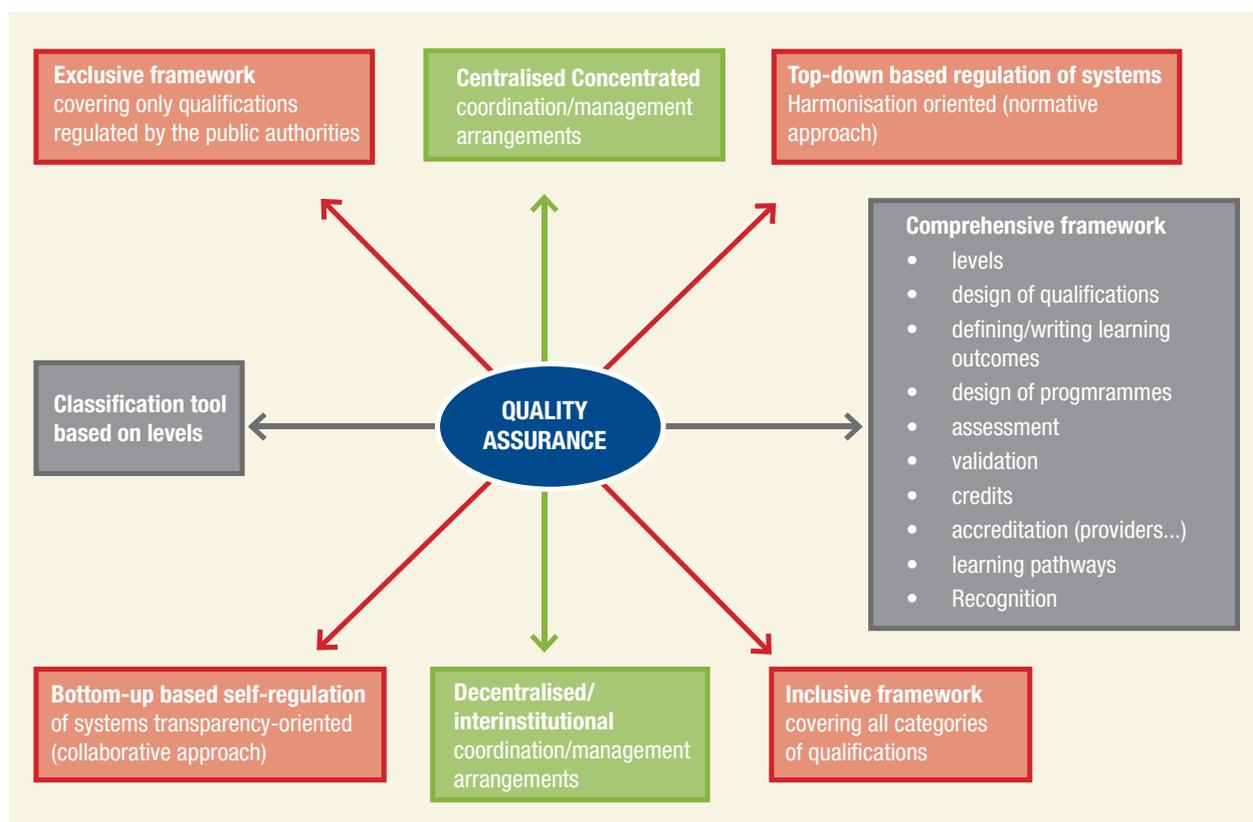
1. **The difference between qualification frameworks and qualification systems**
   - Levels are implicit in NQS but explicit in NQFs.
   - NQSs are based on learning inputs / NQFs are based on learning outcomes.
   - NQSs are based on institutional logic / NQFs on intrinsic logic.
   - an NQS is a real system / an NQF is a social construct.

2. **The primary objectives of National Qualification Frameworks**
   - establish national standards for the outcomes of learning and improve the social and/or economic value of qualifications.
   - improve the quality of qualifications and assessment, increase trust in qualifications and gain national / international recognition for workers' skills - relate qualifications to each other and improve access, progression routes and the possibilities of transferring learning (sometimes summarised as "improving learners' journeys").
   - provide a basis for co-operation between stakeholders in education and training in pursuit of some aspect(s) of national policy on social or economic development.

3. **The added value of qualification frameworks as policy tools**
   - Encouraging people to see qualifying as a process that starts in initial education and training and continues throughout their adult lives.
   - Improving opportunities for people to move between different types of qualifications (especially general and vocational) and between vocational qualifications for different occupational sectors.
   - Promoting informal learning and the links between informal and formal learning and improving opportunities for people to use their informal learning to gain recognized qualifications.

5. Skype Session
The Development of Qualifications: Theory and Practice (Arjen Deij)

(Arjen focuses on the 29 countries[1] which are in the mandate of the ETF as partners of the European union)

'Qualification' means different things in different countries, or even within them. There is no universal definition, or understanding, of 'qualification'. Linguistic differences apart, how qualifications are perceived and defined varies. The term 'vocational' is also open to interpretation, and in practice has quite different usage and meaning across countries. The International Standard Classification Of Education (ISCED) definition links qualifications to completion of a programme; By contrast, the EQF definition defines a qualification as 'the formal outcome of an Assessment and validation process, which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards'. In many parts of the world, governments, schools and em-

ployers now consider what a person has learned to be more important than what they have been taught. The EQF definition is now favoured in ETF partner countries. That said, many partner countries, while developing NQFs based on learning outcomes, have not yet redefined what 'qualification' means. Most use definitions which would not comply with the EQF one. In most cases, this is simply a practical matter. Reform is under way but not every part of the system will be reformed at the same time or systematically. Change is, in reality, piecemeal. Revising or introducing legislation is a cumbersome process, so we should not be surprised if practice is ahead of theory, especially where this is employer-led, as it is, for example, in Ukraine. Let us now look at some country examples.

EU instruments are central to shaping and channeling this policy and to driving substantial change. As well as the EQF, the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), Europass, Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020), the Copenhagen Process and the Bruges Communique all exercise their influence on countries' discussions and decisions. Learning outcomes are the conceptual common denominator of all these tools and policies. What we have found, is that definitions are often out of date in their intention, and sometimes, where reform is more advanced, in their practice. Some countries are reordering the relationship

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1   Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Hervegovina, Egypt, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Iceland, israel, jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosova, Kyrgystan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

of curricula to qualifications, so that qualifications are designed by learning outcomes and curricula are developed to facilitate achievement of these.

Countries vary in the levels at which their VET qualifications are available. In some cases a ceiling is applied, so that such countries do not, or do not yet, offer VET qualifications beyond the equivalent of EQF levels 4 and 5. In other cases, such as Turkey, or in the sectoral frameworks in Russia, VET qualifications are available at the upper levels. In others, the new NQF upper levels are equally open to VET qualifications but no qualifications in VET beyond levels 4 or 5 have yet been developed.

New Types of Qualifications are Emerging

NQFs are behind another key trend in the conceptual development and implementation of new or revised qualifications. Traditionally, vocational qualifications and programmes in most partner countries were almost exclusively offered in initial or secondary school. Adults, whether in work and retraining or not in employment and seeking to re-enter the workforce, were not catered for. But a more complex economy requires a wider range of qualification types to meet learner needs. Types are clusters or categories of qualifications, which share characteristics such as the sub-system they belong to (for example higher education or VET), their objectives, purpose, and the learner group they cater to. We can also think of types, in everyday language, as a way of indicating how qualifications can be like each other and how they can be different from each other, in duration, profile, content and so on. When countries define types of qualifications, this is integrated into the NQF, so that qualifications inserted in the NQF are first defined by type.

A variety of types of qualification is therefore essential. Partner countries are paying more attention to this issue now, recognizing that clear definitions and categories aid the design of qualifications and establish the relationships and pathways between them.

Unit-Based and Qualifications Based Frameworks

NQFs vary in terms of how qualifications are registered in the framework. The starting assumption, shared by most initial proposals for NQFs, is that qualifications should be unit-based; in other words the learning outcomes assumed to be necessary for a particular qualification are divided up into their basic elements or units. This process of unitisation draws on a familiar analytical type

of methodology and derives from the functional analysis that was common to much occupational psychology in the United States (Callaghan, 1961). Step 1 involves breaking down the skill and knowledge demands associated with a qualification into its smallest parts (units). Each unit is then assigned to a level and given a credit rating in terms of the notional hours needed to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge. Step 2 involves specifying the minimum constraints 5 on the ways in which the units can be combined together, as well as the number of units needed to gain a qualification. Step 3 then assumes that the user (employer and/or employee/trainee) chooses his or her set of units and accumulates enough credit to gain a qualification.

This approach to qualification design maximizes flexibility and choice for learners and employers to put together units in ways that suit their interests. In practice the unitisation model has created as many problems as it solves. Employers and employees (or students) invariably have different interests and the latter frequently lack the knowledge to make reliable choices. As a result the NQFs in both New Zealand and South Africa have moved away from registering units and the NQF is increasingly based on whole qualifications (like in France) with only limited opportunities for learners to choose individual units.

However, despite the trend to whole qualifications-based frameworks, the idea of unitisation remains extremely attractive to policy-makers.

The Lifelong learning paradigm has also encouraged a restructuring of qualifications, building on the new thinking about learning outcomes which has been influencing partner countries for six or seven years. More countries now look to build their qualifications on units. Of course, when qualifications were indistinguishable from curricula, there were no unit-based qualifications. Unitized qualifications can be offered to learners either in combinations or singly. We should not think of 'partial' qualifications, which implies something less than a full qualification. Instead, it is important to appreciate how units offer flexible options to learners. For example, comprehensive, unitized qualifications can be delivered via a regular, full programme in initial VET, while adult learners and those in retraining may prefer more readily manageable unit-by-unit learning, allowing for flexible and accessible assessment. In this way, units support a more adaptable workforce, and crucially are by their nature sympathetic to LLL. Countries usually specify criteria for qualifications design, including units, in their NQF requirements or guidance.

Occupational Standards – Ensuring Labour Market Relevance

Vocational qualifications should be developed from identified labour market needs. In ETF partner countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, this often means re-establishing links with labour markets that have been broken during the transition and upheaval of the past 25 years. Or, to be more accurate, it means building new links with today's greater diversity of enterprises and employers. In the past, VET systems in countries neighbouring the EU would often (to simplify) funnel graduates directly to assigned employers in a heavily regulated labour market; or, rather, demand and supply were so strictly regulated that there was not much of a labour market. Training was curricula driven and tended to be narrow and specialized, with little space for career planning or core skills. The transition to an open market ended many of these jobs and broke the VET–employer link. Curricula and qualifications have been slow to match these changes.

Three out of four of ETF's partner countries now use occupational standards to develop vocational qualifications. Both DACUM (developing a curriculum) and functional analysis approaches are in use: for example, Moldova, Serbia and Jordan use DACUM, while Russia, Ukraine and Egypt use functional analysis. The principal value of standards is in seeking to incorporate labour market needs. A standard is a measurable indicator of achievement. An occupational standard is a document which specifies the performance requirements in an occupation, and so links qualifications to employment. Most partner countries have traditionally used education standards to define qualifications. Education standards measure the quality of the education process and the outputs of an education system.

Occupational standards in ETF partner countries are often developed by sector skills councils (SSCs), chambers of commerce or international donors. In Turkey, tripartite sector committees develop the standards, supporting the labour market relevance of the derived qualifications. Moldova has devised its occupational standards via its SSCs.

Non-EU countries use occupational standards in different ways, of course, just as EU countries do. Turkey's NVQs are derived directly from occupational standards, so one standard leads to one qualification while information from several standards can be used to develop broader-based qualifications more suited to prepare secondary VET learners for several related occupations. Or units from occupational standards can be used to develop units of vocational qualifications for specific skills, especially in retraining. While the spread of occupational standards is welcome, too often many remain outside national qualifications systems, so that standards created or led by donors remain unused by qualifications developers in the country. Indeed, some countries have scores of occupational standards but only a handful of approved qualifications, as bureaucratic bottlenecks prevent the validation of more standards. Countries might seek to harness standards to national qualifications more efficiently by streamlining the approved development processes.

Figures 2 to 4 show how frameworks usually build on the skill demand (occupational standards). Figure 2 shows how qualifications have their roots in the labour market. Figure 3 shows how occupational standards diversify into qualification types with specific qualification standards and figure 4 how educational standards develop out of qualification standards.

Process of development of qualifications

Figure 2: Qualifications take their roots in the labour market

Labour Market

Anticipation of skill needs

OS1   OS2   OS3

*OS = Occupational standards

Figure 3: Qualification types reflect the level of responsibility in the Labour Market (LM)

Education policy objectives

Labour Market

Anticipation of skill needs

Access and progression

OS1 OS2 OS3

Qualification types

CBQ

OS = Occupational standards
CBQ = Competence-Based Qualifications
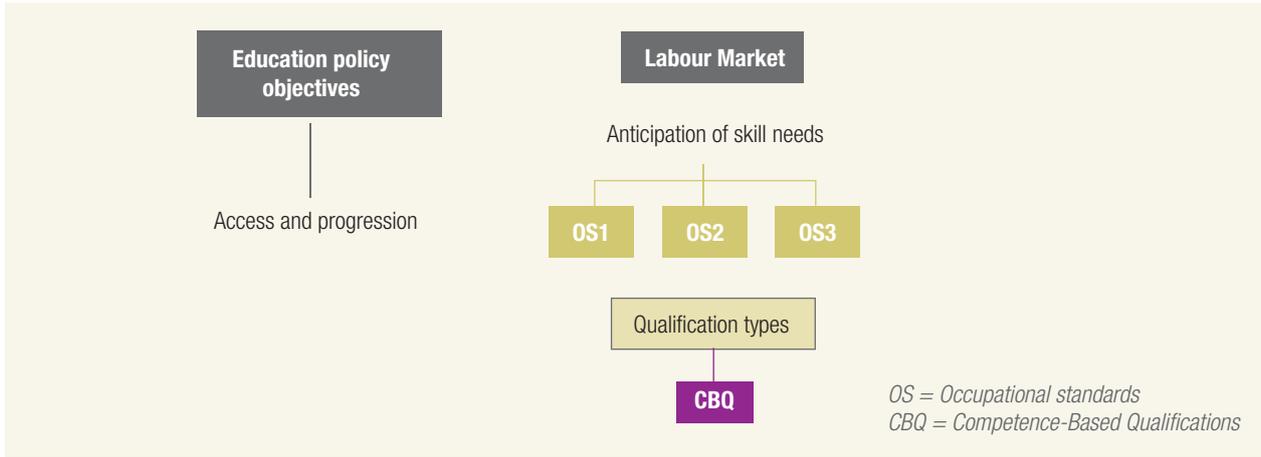
Figure 4: Professional standards are translated into educational standards

Education policy objectives

Labour Market

Anticipation of skill needs

Access and progression

OS1 OS2 OS3

Qualification types

Secondary VET qualifications

CBQ

Qualification Standard

OS = Occupational standards
CBQ = Competence-Based Qualifications
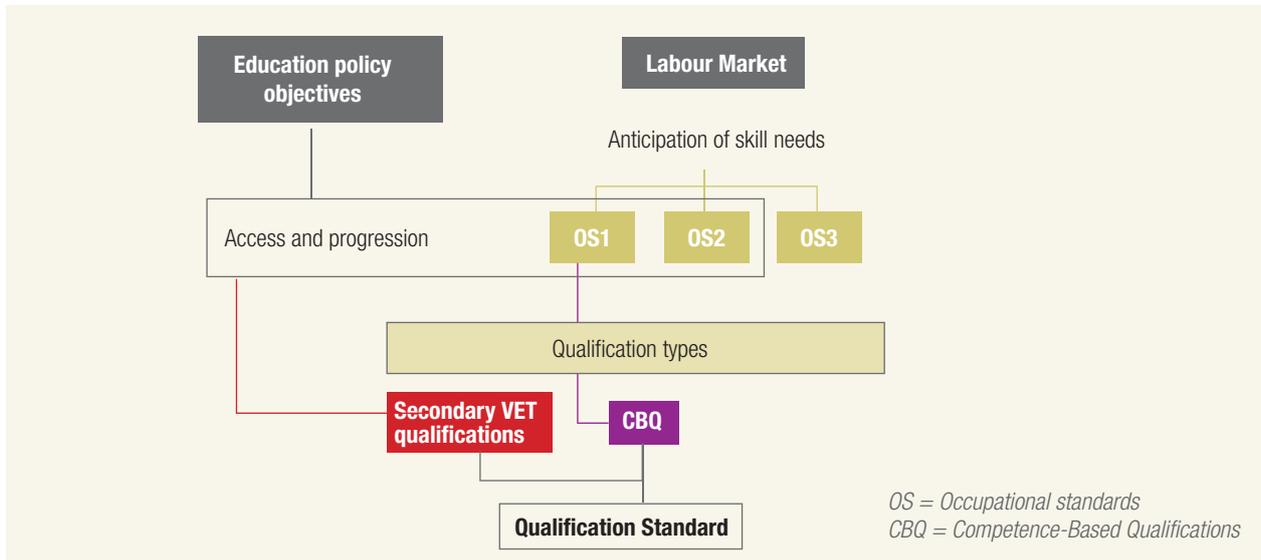
Figure 5: Educational standards are reflected in curricula
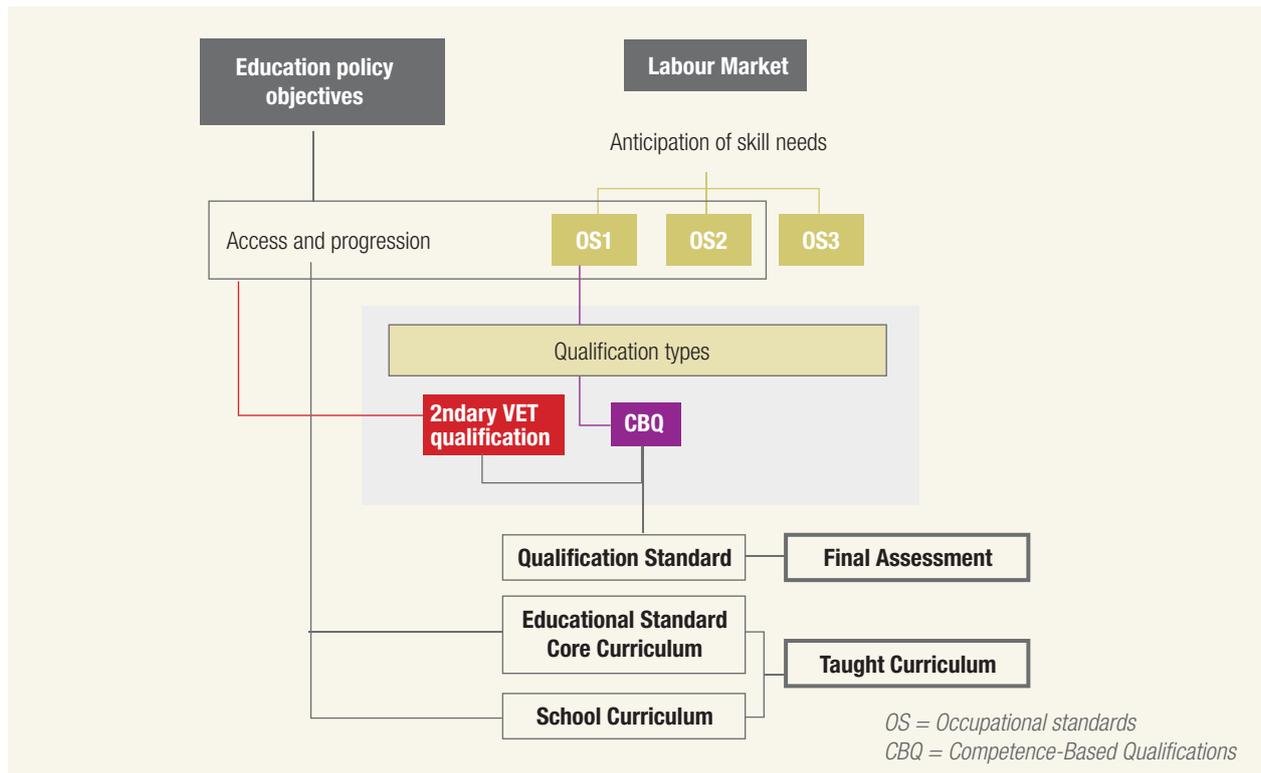
The figure above are indicative maps of how qualifications develop. On the ground, dialogue between stakeholders remains one of the most important factors in the implementation of frameworks. Where an active dialogue exists involving representatives from the world of work and from providers, co-ownership of proposed reforms and shared vision can empower stakeholders to act for a successful implementation of the framework.

FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 2

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

*   The Cedefop is the European Union Agency that helps policy makers improve vocational training systems and
     provides expertise on skills and qualifications.

1. Learning Outcomes

While the EQF definition of a qualification framework (QF) insists on the use of learning outcome as a way to classify qualifications,

"… a mechanism for classifying the qualifications which are awarded within a qualification system … according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved."

other definitions focus on the QF as a lever for quality

"All qualifications frameworks, establish a basis for improving the quality, accessibility, linkages and public or labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally."

or even as a lever for more radical transformation

"Modern NQFs can be described as 'instruments with a vision' questioning current education and training practices and challenging existing professional and sectoral interests."

Box 2: Origins of the outcome approach

Educational influences
1950s   Skinner – programmed instructional materials
        – Bloom – domains of learning (Cognitive, Psychomotor, Affective)
1960s   Mager – learning objectives
        – Glaser – criterion-referenced assessment
1970s   Bloom – mastery learning
1980s   Gardner, Sternberg, etc – theories of differentiated intelligence

HR/Training influences
1950s   Hay – job evaluation factors (know-how, problem-solving and accountability)
1960s   McLelland (McBer) – competence based on the performance of successful individuals
1970s   Spencer – soft skill competences
1980s   Mansfield & Mathews (UK) – the job competence model (skills, management skills & context-related skills)
        – Dreyfus & Dreyfus – model of skill acquisition (novice, competence, proficiency, expertise, and mastery)

Learning outcomes [Cedefop 2009: p. 141] are defined as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do after completion of learning. [cf Official NSQF Notification]. The learning may take place formally or informally (through experience gained in the community or workplace).

They are used:

- at a policy level (e.g. national curriculum policy)
- at a systems level (e.g. in qualification frameworks)
- at the level of qualifications (e.g. qualification standards)
- at the level of specific curricula and learning programmes

Example of policy-level outcomes

The Kosovo Curriculum Framework specifies six competences to be mastered during compulsory education:

- Communication and expression competence
- Thinking competence
- Learning competence
- Life, work and environment-related competence
- Personal competence
- Civic competence

Example of sector-level outcomes

The Scottish Qualifications Authority's Administration and IT qualifications provide practical opportunities to apply and develop organisational, administrative and IT skills. Learners develop IT skills and use technologies as tools to achieve organisational and administrative tasks.

Example of qualification/curriculum-level outcomes (SCQF)

Learning outcomes are similar to learning objectives. Learners will be able to:

- work co-operatively and collaboratively and assume shared responsibility
- operate within an administrative context
- prioritise tasks and work within deadlines
- acquire, extend and apply administration – and IT-related skills, knowledge and understanding
- create and present business documents to an appropriate and professional standard
- be involved in self- and peer assessment

Example of unit-level outcomes in the UK model.

- Use a spreadsheet application to interpret a given brief
- Use advanced functions of a relational database to interpret a given brief

- Use advanced functions of word processing to interpret a given brief

- Each outcome will be accompanied by performance criteria, which sets the standard for assessment.

In qualification frameworks, learning outcomes are classified in a hierarchical, way to form levels. They are not sector-specific and therefore provide a common language across sectors, and can apply to different kind of learning. They provide a link between curricula and social and employment requirement. Learning outcomes should not be treated as merely technical constructs, but need to reflect and respect the social and institutional contexts they are operating within.

The NQFs developed after 2005 differ in important respects from some of the first generation frameworks developed e.g. in England or South Africa. While differences in the number of levels and coverage immediately catch the eye, the main difference seems rather to lie in the interpretation and application of learning outcomes. Some of the early frameworks were based on what may be described as a radical learning outcomes based approach. Inspired by the English system of national vocational qualifications (NVQ) introduced in the late 1980s, these frameworks tended to specify learning outcomes independently from curriculum and pedagogy and tried to define qualifications in isolation from delivery mode, learning approach and provider. The countries in question have partly moved away from this radical approach.

Developments of national qualifications frameworks in Europe show that countries have adopted a more pragmatic and diversified approach to learning outcomes. While the principle is seen as crucial for increasing transparency and comparability, there is general understanding that learning outcomes must be put into a wider context of education and training inputs to make sense. When placing existing qualifications into a new framework structure, the focus on learning outcomes is frequently combined with consideration of national institutions and programme structures, accepting that mode and volume of learning vary and matter. The use of learning is an approach that is applied in diverse ways in different policy, teaching and learning settings. Learning outcomes are like a set of tools or keys, useful in different ways according to the context. There are therefore different kinds of qualification frameworks and different sometimes conflicting approaches to outcomes and domains

In the positive side, practitioners insist that they represent a shift of focus from what is taught to what is learned, a shift towards learner-centered method influencing teaching, training and assessment methods. By bringing transparency to training programmes, learning outcomes should make it easier to select the best programme for their need and, if possible to seek recognition of experience and prior learning. Also, as outcomes provide a basis for credit accumulation and staged learning, it shifts the focus away from time-serving. Learning outcomes approach adds a new important element to the 'old picture', making it possible to have a fresh look at the ordering and valuing of qualifications. This pragmatic use of learning outcomes – combining it with careful consideration of input elements – has been important for redefining the relationship between vocational and academic qualifications. Reviewing this relationship in terms of what a candidate is expected to know, be able to do or understand – instead of looking at type of institutions – has challenged accepted ways of valuing qualifications.

In the world of work, learning outcomes are a good basis for planning workforce development and for recruitment and selection for admissions or recruitment or for promotion.

Lastly, by making education and training systems comparable by creating a common language across sectors, which they were not under fully institution-based systems, learning outcomes allow for intra-national and international cooperation provide a basis for comparisons and benchmarking: " using learning outcomes as a common reference point, the Framework will facilitate comparison and transfer of qualifications between countries, systems and institutions and will therefore be relevant to a wide range of users at European as well as national level." (EQF Recommendations). Outcomes of learning are the basis for credit transfer systems.

In the less positive side, the critics are insisting on the narrowness and over-specification of outcomes. If learning outcomes are formulated in too narrow and restricted ways, they can limit rather than broaden expectations towards learners; if learning outcomes are used differently between institutions, sectors and countries, their ability to strengthen transparency and aid comparison is weakened. The extensive discussion of the third, 'competence' pillar of the EQF illustrates the need to reflect on the expectations signalled by the descriptors and the frameworks they are embedded in; are we broadening or narrowing down our education and training and lifelong learning strategies? The focus on comparability of learning outcomes weakens the national relevance, as it weakness the social dimension of learning and the focus on quality of teaching and learning. There is also a risk of

fragmentation – lack of understanding of how outcomes reinforce each other.

Box 3: Learning outcomes and competences

These terms are used in a number of different ways by different countries and authorities.

A learning outcome is a standardised statement of the knowledge and/or skills which has been/will be achieved by an individual who completes an education/training programme/qualification.

A competence is a specialised kind of learning outcome. It is a standardised statement of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to operate successfully in a specific work role.

The term "competency" seems to be used (i) as an alternative to "learning outcome", (ii) as an alternative to "competence", and (iii) to describe a component of a competence.

2   Identifying Levels and Domains of Learning

Each level in a framework is defined by a set of descriptors (domains) indicating the learning outcomes relevant to qualifications at that level. Levels are usually defined by reference to structure of the labour market (e.g. from unskilled worker – helper- operative- skilled worker – supervisor- trainer- specialist- manager levels), by reference to the structure of Education and Training system (secondary-post secondary-higher education levels) , or both. In the latter case, national arrangements state the correspondence between of learning achievements and occupations. Level descriptors for national qualifications frameworks have been derived from existing curricular requirements, training regulations and other inputs. They are really a combination of input and output-based approach. The learning outcomes approach adds an important element to the "old picture", making it possible to have a fresh look at the ordering and valuing of qualifications–not on the basis of the type of institution but on the basis of what a learner is expected to know, be able

to do or understand. A pragmatic use of learning outcomes –combining it with careful consideration of input element- has been important for redefining the relationship between vocational and academic qualifications.

Level descriptors are statements of generic outcomes which characterise the level. Level descriptors are intrinsically about the depth and complexity of knowledge, the range and sophistication of application/ practice, the degrees of integration, independence and creativity and the degrees of supervision/independence and responsibility for others' work. The level descriptors are not about the size of the qualification, the age of the learner, stages of education, where learning took place or wages/salaries.

All qualifications frameworks use level descriptors to peg qualifications on a hierarchical set of levels that number between 4 and 12, but mostly between 8 and 10.

Levels relate to factors such as:

- complexity and depth of knowledge and understanding
- range and sophistication of practical and intellectual skills
- degree of integration, independence and creativity required
- degree of complication and predictability of the context
- role(s) taken in relation to colleagues/fellow workers

Typical outcomes of learning at the level – i.e. someone with a qualification at this level should be able to … capable of …

But

a. a qualification need not match all aspects of the level descriptors

b. some aspects of the qualification may be at higher or lower levels

Figure 6: Qualifications take their roots in the labour market

NQF LEVELS

Education and training entry levels and exit qualifications → Work roles and profiles
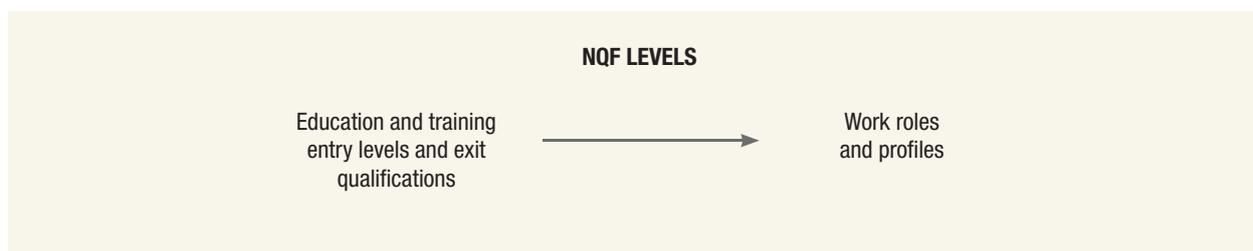
Level descriptors have to apply to all the types of qualification in the framework: highly academic, general, pre-vocational, workplace, etc

Operationally, level descriptors can be used:

- in designing qualifications

- to allocate learning programmes and qualifications to levels in the QF

- in validating qualifications and programmes

- in communicating with learners and other users about qualifications

- to map progression routes within and across the education and training sectors

- to set entry requirements/recommendations for programmes

Level descriptors need to be sufficiently detailed and multifaceted to capture the complexities of the national qualification system and to be of relevance to the labour market; they must be able to distinguish systematically between levels and to reflect how knowledge, skills and competences increase in breadth, depth and complexity as learners progress. And they must (increasingly) act as a reference point for international comparison.

Strategically, level descriptors can support:

- the creation of linkages between higher education and VET

- strengthening links between IVET/CVET and the labour market

- making the system more accessible

- establishing systems to validate non-formal prior learning

- establishing systems to give credit, exemptions, etc.

- actions to improve curricula (teaching and learning)

- the recruitment and workforce development by employers

- a shared and systematic approach to the quality of qualifications and certificates

Level descriptors

Most sets of level descriptors refer to knowledge, skills, applications, contexts and responsibilities but under different domain headings and with different linkages. The most common domains are Knowledge, Skills and Competence (influence of the EQF).

In the table below, a few examples of descriptors:

Table 3: Descriptors in selected countries

	EQF Factual and theoretical knowledge Cognitive and practical skills *- logical, intuitive and creative thinking* *- manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments* Responsibility and autonomy ('competence') *Some countries add 'attitudes', usually relating to work roles.*
	IRELAND Knowledge breadth of knowledge/kind of knowledge know-how & skill range/know-how & skill selectivity Competence Context/role/learning to learn/insight
	SCOTLAND Knowledge and understanding Practice: applied knowledge, skills and understanding Generic cognitive skills Communication, ICT and Numeracy skills Autonomy, accountability and working with others
	GERMANY Professional competence – knowledge Professional competence – skills Personal competence – social competence Personal competence – self-competence

3. How Levels can be Explained

The Case of India - NSQF Levels by Level Summary and Examples

NSQF LEVEL 1

Summary

This is the most basic level of employment in the framework.

Work at level 1 will be routine, repetitive, and focused on limited tasks carried out under close supervision. People carrying out these job roles may be described as 'helpers'.

Individuals employed to carry out these job roles may be expected to be able to read, write, add and subtract, but will not normally be required to have any previous knowledge or skills relating to the work.[2]

When employed, they will be instructed in their tasks and expected to learn and use the common terminology of the trade and acquire the basic skills necessary for the work.

Job holders at this level will be expected to carry out the tasks they are given safely and securely and to use hygienic and environmentally friendly practices. This means that they will be expected to take some responsibility for their own health and safety and that of fellow workers.

In working with others, they will be expected to respect the different social and religious backgrounds of their fellow workers.

NSQF LEVEL 2

Summary

Work at level 2 will also be routine and repetitive and tasks will be carried out under close supervision. The individuals will not be expected to deal independently with variables which affect the carrying out of the work. People carrying out these work roles may be described as 'assistants' and the range of tasks they carry out will be limited.

Individuals employed to carry out these job roles will normally be expected to be able to read and write, add and subtract. Their work may involve taking and passing on messages.

They may also be expected to have some previous experience, knowledge and skills in the occupation. When employed, they will be instructed in their tasks and expected to acquire the practical skills necessary to assist skilled workers and/or give a limited service to customers. They will learn about, and use, the materials, tools and applications required to carry out basic tasks in an occupation. They may have to select the appropriate materials, tools and/or applications to carry out tasks.

They will be expected to understand what constitutes quality in their job role and distinguish between good and bad quality in the context of the tasks they are given. Job holders at this level will be expected to carry out the tasks they are given safely and securely and to use hygienic and environmentally friendly practices. This means that they will be expected to take some responsibility for their own health and safety and that of fellow workers and, where appropriate, customers.

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2   In practice many workers at this level will have limited literacy and NOS and qualifications at this levels should reflect this – e.g. in relation to assessment.

In working with others, they will be expected to respect the different social and religious backgrounds of their fellow workers, but their contribution to team work may be limited.

NSQF LEVEL 3

Summary

Work at level 3 will be routine and predictable. Job holders will be responsible for carrying out a limited range of jobs under close supervision. Their work may require the completion of a number of related tasks. People carrying out these job roles may be described as 'partly-skilled workers'.

Individuals employed to carry out these job roles will be expected to be able to communicate clearly in speech and writing and may be required to use arithmetic and algebraic processes. They will be expected to have previous knowledge and skills in the occupation and should know the basic facts, processes and principles applied in the trade for which they are qualified and be able to apply the basic skills of the trade to a limited range of straightforward jobs in the occupation.

They will be expected to understand what constitutes quality in their job role and more widely in the sector or sub-sector and to distinguish between good and bad quality in the context of the jobs they are given. Job holders at this level will be expected to carry out the jobs they are given safely and securely. They will work hygienically and in ways which show an understanding of environmental issues. This means that they will be expected to take responsibility for their own health and safety and that of fellow workers and, where appropriate, customers and/or clients.

In working with others, they will be expected to conduct themselves in ways which show a basic understanding of the social environment. They should be able to make a good contribution to team work.

NSQF LEVEL 4

Summary

Work at level 4 will be carried out in familiar, predictable and routine situations. Job holders will be responsible for carrying out a range of jobs, some of which will require them to make choices about the approaches they adopt. They will be expected to learn and improve their practice on the job. People carrying out these jobs may be described as 'skilled workers'.

Individuals employed to carry out these jobs will be expected to be able to communicate clearly in speech and writing and may be required to use arithmetic and algebraic processes. They will be expected to have previous knowledge and skills in the occupation in which they are employed, to appreciate the nature of the occupation and to understand and apply the rules which govern good practice. They will be able to make choices about the best way to carry out routine jobs where the choices are clear.

They will be expected to understand what constitutes quality in the occupation and will distinguish between good and bad quality in the context of their job roles. Job holders at this level will be expected to carry out their work safely and securely and take full account of the health and safety on colleagues and customers. They will work hygienically and in ways which show an understanding of environmental issues.

In working with others, they will be expected to conduct themselves in ways which show a basic understanding of the social and political environment. They should be able to guide or lead teams on work within their capability.

NSQF LEVEL 5

Summary

Work at level 5 will also be carried out in familiar situations, but also ones where problems may arise. Job holders will be able to make choices about the best procedures to adopt to address problems where the choices are clear.

Job holders will be responsible for the completion of their own work and expected to learn and improve their performance on the job. They will require well developed practical and cognitive skills to complete their work. They may also have some responsibility for others' work and learning. People carrying out these jobs may be described as 'fully skilled workers' or 'supervisors'.

Individuals employed to carry out these jobs will be expected to be able to communicate clearly in speech and writing and may be required to apply mathematical processes. They should also be able to collect and organise information to communicate about the work. They will solve problems by selecting and applying methods, tools, materials and information.

They will be expected to have previous knowledge and skills in the occupation, and to know and apply facts, principles, processes and general concepts in the occupation.

They will be expected to understand what constitutes quality in the occupation and will distinguish between good and bad quality in the context of their work. They will be expected to operate hygienically and in ways which show an understanding of environmental issues. They will take account of health and safety issues as they affect the work they carry out or supervise.

In working with others, they will be expected to conduct themselves in ways which show an understanding of the social and political environment.

NSQF LEVEL 6

Summary

Work at level 6 will require the use of both standard and non-standard practices. Job holders will carry out a broad range of work which will require a wide range of specialised technical skills backed by clear factual and theoretical knowledge.

Job holders will be responsible for the completion of their own work and expected to learn and improve their performance on the job. They are likely to have full responsibility for others' work and learning. People carrying out these jobs may be described as 'master technicians' and 'trainers'.

Individuals employed to carry out these job roles will be expected to be able to communicate clearly in speech and writing and may be required to carry out mathematical calculations. They should also be able to collect data, organise information, and communicate logically about the work. They will solve problems by selecting and applying methods, tools, materials and information.

They will be expected to have broad factual and theoretical knowledge applying to practice within the occupation, and a range of practical and cognitive skills. They will be able to generate solutions to problems which arise in their practice.

They will be expected to understand what constitutes quality in the occupation and to distinguish between good and bad quality in the context of all aspects of their work. They will be expected to work in ways which show an understanding of environmental issues. They will take account of health and safety issues as they affect the work they carry out or manage.

In working with others, they will be expected to conduct themselves in ways which show an understanding of the social and political environment.

NSQF LEVEL 7

Summary

Work at level 7 will take place in contexts which combine the routine and the non-routine and are subject to variations. Job holders will carry out a broad range of work which require wide-ranging specialised theoretical and practical skills.

Job holders will be responsible for the output and development of a work group within and organisation. People carrying out these job roles are likely to be graduates. They may be described as 'managers' or 'senior technicians'.

Individuals employed to carry out these job roles will be expected to be able to communicate clearly in speech and writing and are likely to be required to carry out mathematical calculations as part of their work. They should also be skilful in collecting and organising information to communicate logically about the work.

They will be expected to have wide-ranging factual and theoretical knowledge of practice within the occupation, and a wide range of specialised practical and cognitive skills. They will be able to generate solutions to problems which arise in their work.

They will be expected to understand what constitutes quality in the occupation and distinguish between good and bad quality in all aspects of their work. They will be expected to work in ways which show a good understanding of environmental issues. They will take account of health and safety issues as they affect the work they carry out and manage.

In working with others, they will be expected to conduct themselves in ways which show a good understanding of the social and political environment.

NSQF LEVEL 8

Summary

Job holders who are qualified at level 8 will normally be responsible for managing the work of a team and developing the team. The work will involve dealing with unpredictable circumstances affecting the work.

Their work will require the use of comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the occupational field and a commitment to self-development.

They will normally need an ability to develop creative solutions to problems requiring abstract thought. They will be required to show intellectual independence and

a rigorous analytical ability. They will need to be good communicators.

NSQF LEVEL 9

Summary

Job holders who are qualified at level 9 will normally be responsible for complex decision-making in unpredictable contexts.

They will have to exercise senior responsibility in an organisation and show mastery of the issues in the occupation and the ability to innovate.

Their work will require the use of advanced knowledge and skill. They may make contributions to knowledge in their field through research.

NSQF LEVEL 10

Summary

Job holders who are qualified at level 10 will normally be responsible for strategic decision-making. The context of their work will be complex and unpredictable.

They are likely to be responsible for an organisation or a significant division of an organisation. They will have to provide leadership.

Their work will require highly specialised knowledge and problem-solving skills. They may make original contributions to knowledge in their field through research, scholarship or innovative practice.

 The strongest evidence for allocating a qualification to a level of the NSQF will be direct evidence of a match between the outcomes of the qualification and the descriptor for one NSQF level. Where a qualification is made up of clearly distinguished parts or components (such as modules, units or courses), the individual parts of the qualification can be at different levels. This means that it will be necessary to use indirect evidence and weighting.

4. Skype Session
The Writing of Learning Outcomes: main Challenges and Opportunities (Jens Bjornavold)

A learning outcome is a statement of what a learner is expected to know, be able to do and understand after having completed a learning process.

Cedefop's 2009 publication on learning outcomes showed a geographical difference and an institutional difference in the actual use of learning outcomes. Our (ongoing) study 2013-2015 demonstrates that the shift to learning outcomes is now gathering speed in national qualifications frameworks, for curricula and to orient teaching and training and for assessment.

The learning outcomes principle is – explicitly since 2004 – systematically promoted in the EU policy agenda for education, training and employment. It can be seen as the 'glue' binding together a wide range of initiatives taken during recent years, such as Europass, the EQF, ECTS, ECVET and ESCO… While the specific term may not have been used, learning outcomes are not new. What is new, however, is the high priority given to learning outcomes at European, national and local level.

- At policy level, learning outcomes serve the purpose of transparency, of increased relevance and quality of qualifications, of accountability and it is seen as a way to open up to non-formal and informal learning. But there are concerns: are learning outcomes a policy hype? Are they monitored and reviewed? Are they not a way to impose objectives top down, reducing local and institutional autonomy? Are they not mainly unnecessary bureaucracy?

- At the level of practitioners, LO sets clear targets for the learner which is a way to motivates to learning and to encourages flexible learning pathways: they are a guiding tool for teachers and for assessors. But there are concerns: Do we risk to reduce the scope and richness of learning? Do we undermine the vision of open and active learning? Do we decrease rather than increase transparency.

A Cedefop study 2014 – addressed the writing and practical application of learning outcomes. It was an analysis of learning outcomes based VET standards and Higher Education study programmes in 10 countries and of guidelines for writing learning outcomes in VET and HE in the 10 countries. The study founds that the definition of learning outcomes varies between institutions, education and training sectors and countries: the approach to learning outcomes in VET seems to be more harmonized than in HE.

The study also found that the structuring of learning outcomes descriptions vary, both as regards the horizontal description of domains of learning and as regards the vertical dimension, expressing the increasing complexity

of learning. There is no common format for describing learning outcomes, which reduces comparability. The level of detail (granularity) varies dramatically, reducing transparency and comparability.

Learning outcomes must be fit for purpose: The purpose of the LO description will influence the level of detail (granularity) of the description, moving from the general to the more specific that is from full qualifications/programmes to programme or qualification units and to assessment criteria. All have to use ACTION VERBS, identify the relevant OBJECT and describe the CONTEXT of the learning process.

Figure 7: Writing learning outcomes – the essential role of action verbs

Action verbs are used to express growing complexity and help to distinguish between learning domains

Create, estimate, interpret, justify, rearrange, reconstruct

Apply, choose, distinguish, explain, employ, Illustrate, practise, produce, use

Memorize, recall, repeat. reproduce, duplicate
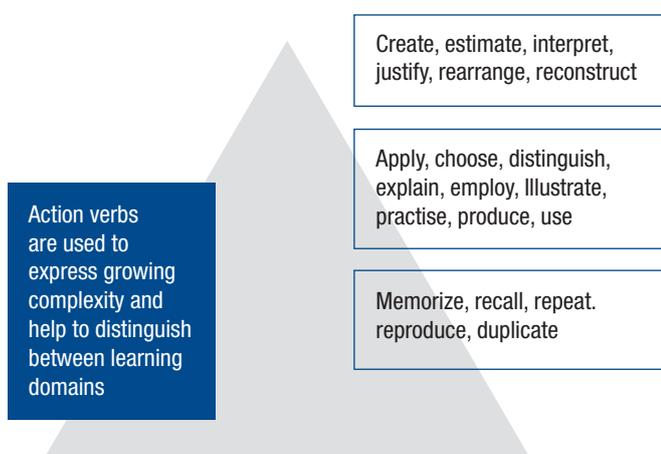
Can learning outcomes facilitate recognition/validation of prior learning?

A 2012 EU Recommendation stresses that validation of non formal learning should build on the same learning outcomes based standards as those used for traditional qualifications.

■ How can LO descriptions be written to capture the diversity of non-formal and informal learning? How can we balance generality and specificity?

■ How can LO descriptions be written to capture the relevant learning domains? How can we balance requirements to, for example, knowledge and skills? How can overview and a holistic approach be expressed?

■ How can performance requirements and criteria be written in a way which appreciates non-standardised learning?

Can learning outcomes facilitate validation/recognition of prior learning?

The experiences from writing assessment criteria are relevant. What is key is the lack of ambiguity, the reflected choice of action verbs (Brief statements - one action verb) and the focus on observable learning and explicit manifestations of learning. There is a risk that statements become too detailed and prescriptive and not open to non-standardised learning and a risk that 'observable' learning be defined too narrowly – failing to capture the richness and diversity of non-formal and informal learning?

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MODULE 3

GOVERNANCE OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

*   National Committee For Professional Certification, Its mission is among others to list the offer of vocational certifications (national register of vocational certifications), to inform people and companies about the certifications listed in the national register and the certifications recognized in the member states of the European Union and to check the coherence, complementarity and renewal of diplomas and qualification documents, together with their adaptation to evolution in qualifications and work organisation).

1. Implementation of National Qualifications Framework and models of governance

All countries implementing an NQF have faced problems. The issue of governance of the NQF is one of the most difficult areas to address because many stakeholders are involved. See for example in Box 4, the list of stakeholders mentioned in the 2013 NSQF Notification.

Box 4: Stakeholders involved in the NSQF in India as mentioned in the 2013 Notification

- Government
- National Skills Qualification Committee
- National Skills Development Agency
- Central Ministries
- State Skill Development Missions
- Regulatory bodies (e.g., UGC, AICTE, NCVT, Technical and School Boards)
- Sector Skills Councils
- Industry
- Institutions providing education and training
- State governments
- Public sector enterprises
- Industry
- Learners
- Other stakeholders

Governance concerns several levels.

Strategic level: Governance is the process/structure which leads to the establishment of policies for the implementation and development of the NQF, and ensures the continuous monitoring of their proper implementation by the relevant agencies.

So the NQF Strategic Responsibilities and & High-level Co-ordination functions are to:

- Ensure that the framework meets its stated aims
- Undertake strategic planning
- Carry out monitoring and evaluation
  - ensuring that the framework structure is suitable

  - ensuring that the operational principles of the framework are appropriate
- Ensure that the operational principles of the framework are kept to
- Develop and maintain national and international links

Operational level: Governance includes maintaining an overview of the mechanisms required to meet the requirements for running the NQF and to keep these in balance with the needs of government, society, the economy and corporate and individual stakeholders.

The NQF Operational management functions are to

- Support change and build capacity
- encourage the development and use of outcome-based specifications for all qualifications
- support providers to modularise programmes
- support practical and quality assured assessment
- support changes in record-keeping and certification
- support the use of credit
- identify and promote existing and new pathways
- The governance of NQF can be centralised (Ireland), co-ordinated (South Africa) or devolved (Scotland)

The implementation of NQF often creates a shift in the balance of power. Stakeholders from the provision side have to surrender some control over the content of qualifications and how they can be obtained, while stakeholders from the world of work gain influence. The creation of NQF brings new issues: how to balance strong central controls and fast local responsiveness? How to balance effective risk management and the enduring need for innovation. It also brings the question of the costs of compliance with the value it brings.

Dialogue and coordination are necessary over the following questions of governance:

- Ministry or independent agency?
- Coordination and management – together or separate?
- One ministry/agency or multiple ministries/agencies?
- How to maintain transparency and avoid chicanery
- Rights and responsibilities of stakeholders?
- Maintain quality and avoid bureaucracy?

Three models of Organisational Structure

Centralised Structure - IRELAND

QUALITY AND QUALIFICATIONS IRELAND (QQI)
Incorporates previous operational bodies:
- Higher and Further Education and Training Awards Councils
- Universities Quality Board

Ministry of Education and Skills

State Examinations Commission

Expert Committees of the QQI Board

Statutory & Voluntary Scrutiny

Statutory & Voluntary Scrutiny
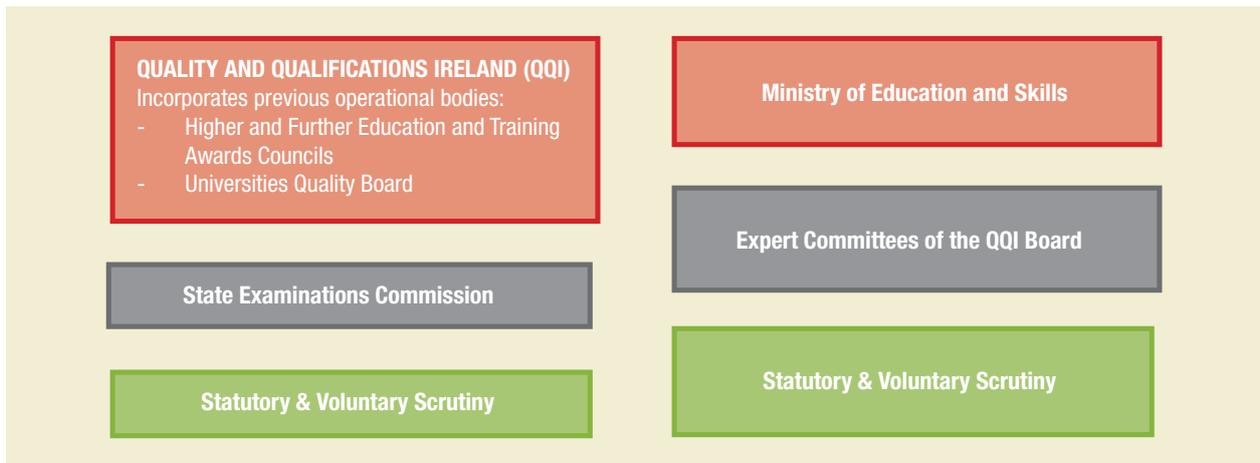
Co-ordinated Structure – SOUTH AFRICA

Co-Ordinating Authority

Ministry of Higher Education & Training

NQF Forum & CEO Group

National Consultative Processes

3 SECTORAL COUNCILS
- **General & Further Edn & Trng**
- **Higher Education**
- **Trades & Occupations**

Sectoral Consultative Processes

Statutory & Voluntary Scrutiny
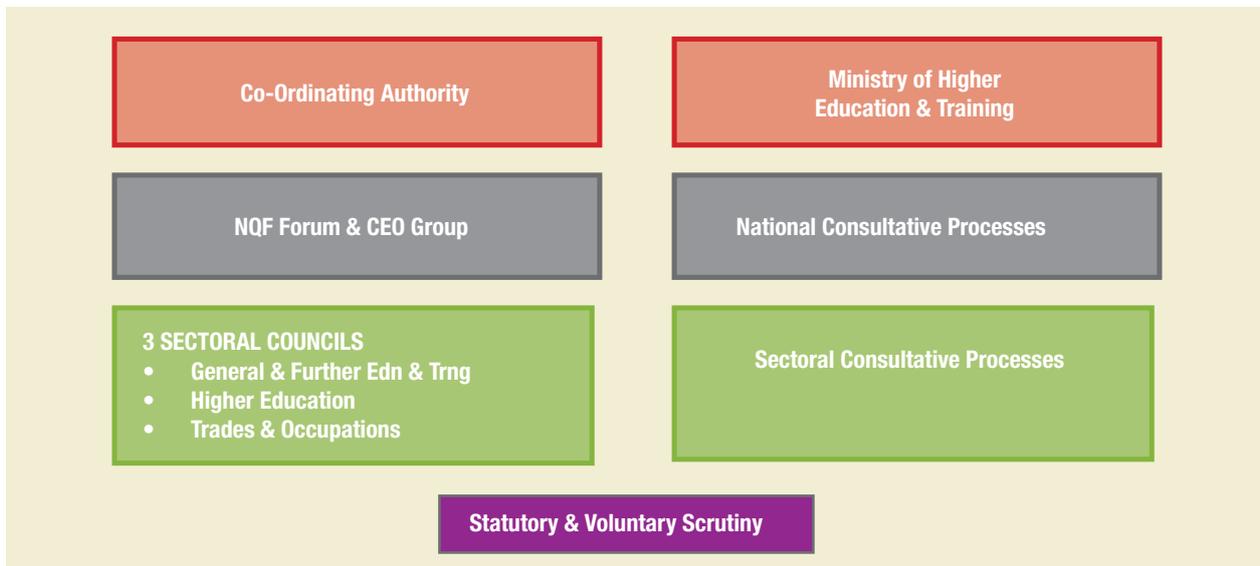
Devolved Structure - SCOTLAND

Co-Ordinating Authority

Ministry for Education & Lifelong Learning

NQF Forum & CEO Group

SCQF QUALITY COMMITTEE
Independent Experts

SECTORAL BODIES
- **The Quality Assurance Agency (HE)**
- **Universities Scotland**
- **Colleges Scotland**
- **The Scottish Qualif'ns Authority**

SCQF FORUM
(Stakeholders)

Statutory & Voluntary Scrutiny
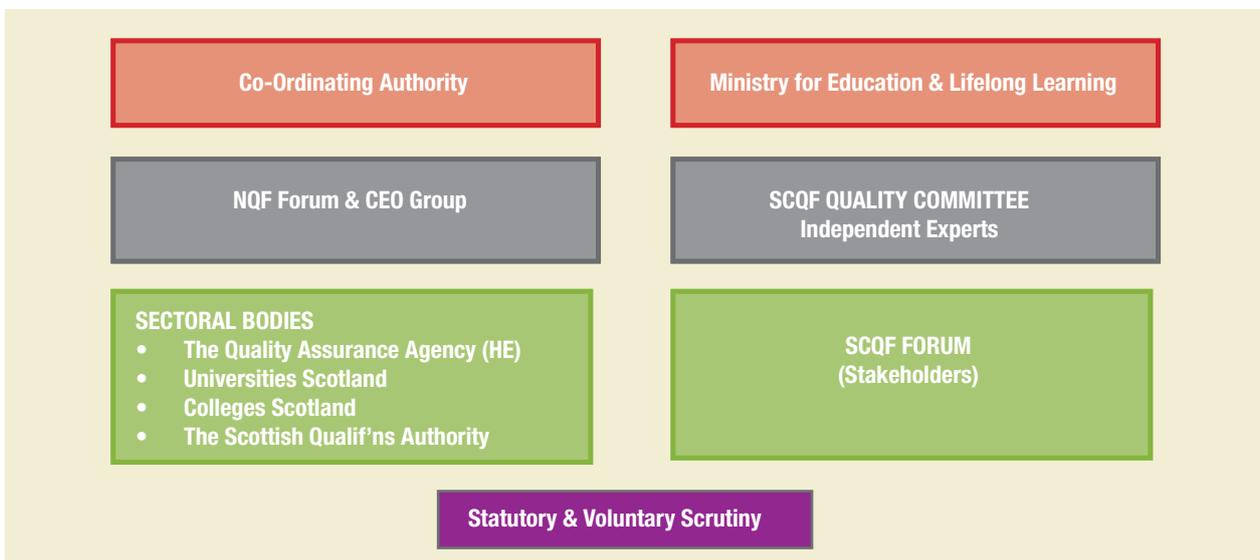
Many stakeholders need to work together in the building of a framework. With global development and demographic changes, lifelong learning systems are emerging, opening up what had been virtually states monopoly on qualifications. There are more institutions, and a greater range of providers have emerged such as professional bodies, municipalities, private companies, employment services, non-governmental organisations, private schools and international providers, offering different kinds of qualifications. This makes it more important to regulate that are offered by different bodies to different target groups, in order to reduce the proliferation of qualifications, and to protect the interest of citizens and employers by strengthening confidence in the value of qualifications.

2. Changing Institutional Arrangements

To be successful, qualification-system reform require that all stakeholders are mobilized and involved and take ownership of the changes. It is unlikely that all changes happen voluntarily and though mutual agreement. Legislation is often needed to create new conditions, stimulate new developments and regulate roles and responsibilities, in particular in market-oriented or state-led systems where governance of such systems is not determined by such dialogue.

Legal traditions certainly influence how qualifications are regulated. In the English speaking world, where common law has been built incrementally around individual cases, governments have been less inclined to legislate prescribe) what qualifications should look like. In countries that have a civil code, the tradition of state regulation based on logical principles has facilitated the creation of ruling principles for qualification rather than letting qualification systems evolve around individual cases (Merryman, 1985). In Central European countries such as Germany and Austria, where social partners play an important role in setting the conditions for qualifications, and the entitlements that can be obtained from holding a qualifications, qualification standards for the dual vocational education system are compulsory and have the power of law. Civil effect, the legal entitlements qualification can provide once they are recognized as equivalent to existing ones, is an important issue for countries where qualifications are subject to government regulation.

Qualifications are not only important as formalized outcomes of education and training systems. In the Soviet Union and Yougoslavia, qualifications were an integral part of the labour market regulatory system, determining the jobs people were assigned to, as well as salaries, pensions and opportunities for career development and mobility. These regulated labour market functions of qualifications are again becoming an issue in current qualification system reforms, with the introduction of labour market specific qualifications to certify competent workers. In Estonia, more than 15 per cent of the labor force has already obtained professional qualifications based on occupational standards by the time they leave the education system. In Turkey, certification of unqualified workers in more than 100 occupations is currently becoming compulsory.

In practice, legal arrangements start from many angles

They are often linked with making a specific body responsible for the implementation. The first relevant piece of legislation in England was the act to establish the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in 1986, although it took until 2000 before the NQF became a reality. The Education Act of 1989 in New Zealand defined the responsibilities of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The NQF in South Africa started with the South African Qualifications Authority Act (No. 58, 1995). In France, the Law on Social Modernization (2002) created the National Commission for Professional Certification under the authority of the ministry responsible for vocational education, which established the NQF through a national register (RNCP). In Montenegro, the Law on National Vocational Qualifications (2008) preceded the Law on the NQF in 2010. In Turkey, a Law on the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) (5544/2006) was the start, although only in the Amendment Law on VQA of 2011 was there reference to developing the NQF. In Ukraine, a government decree on the NQF (2011) started the legislative process, as it did in Armenia (2011), while, in Croatia, a Law on the Croatian Qualifications Framework was adopted (2013). These first acts often set the objectives, indicate the NQF levels and reference special institutions that may have a role in supporting the implementation of the NQF.

Legislation is important in many countries as the official authorisation to begin implementation of the framework. However, what really counts is not these single acts, but how the NQF is starting to filter through in all relevant legislation. Without reference to the NQF in other legislation, its impact is limited. The NQF decree in Ukraine only sets the general objectives and the ten-level framework.

In 2012, however, this was followed by legislation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, which was developed further in 2013 and 2014. A first step to identifying the qualifications to be part of the NQF was made in 2014 with a Law on Higher Education. Current discussions on a new legislation on education (the Previous law dates back to 1991) and on vocational education should complete this.

Identification process

When the NQF features in important legal documents such as a new law on education questions as to its status and wider implications are raised. The NQF can affect labour law as well as education legislation. In Kazakhstan, the NQF has gained particular importance since it has been adopted as a tool in the labour code. Another indicator of the wider legal impact of the NQF can be the timeframe within which the legislation is reviewed and improved. In Kazakhstan and Georgia, the original acts to adopt NQFs are already under revision, though only a short time has passed since their introduction.

One area that is particularly important in legislation is the institutional arrangements and the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. Existing institutional capacities are often insufficient to put the ambitions of the national qualifications system reform policies into practice. This applies to the coordination processes, to ensuring coherence in approaches, and to quality-assuring assessment of qualifications, but, most of all, it applies to the lack of capacity to develop sufficient new occupational standards, qualifications and training programmes to influence delivery. These deficiencies can mean that NQFs remain empty promises. Dedicated institutions with competent staff can speed up implementation.

Different institutions can steer the development of new qualifications and the review of existing ones. Many countries have decided to develop sector skill councils (SSCs) to support the identification of sectoral skill needs, the development of occupational standards, developing and reviewing qualifications, the assessment of candidates, the identification of companies for work-based learning, funding arrangements and other aspects. A number of countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (the Russian Federation, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) have established sectoral qualifications frameworks under their NQFs, to identify occupational standards and sector-specific qualifications. In Kazakhstan, each of these sectoral frameworks is legally established under the coordination of the line ministry dealing with that sector.

This division of coordinating, quality assurance and developmental functions seems very logical. The coordinating function is about bringing stakeholders together on a common platform to agree how to develop and implement the framework. It is therefore separate from a more technical 'controlling' quality-assurance function, ensuring the different actors follow the rules of the game. The development of qualifications is a responsibility that is best delegated to those actors that have an interest in ensuring that these qualifications meet the identified needs of the future holders. Analysis of the formal functions of eighteen especially established institutions that play a role in implementing qualifications systems reform in a number of European Union member states and neighbouring transition countries shows that these arrangements are complex.

Most of the institutions analyzed were established relatively recently. Eleven of the eighteen institutions were established after 2010, although three of these are building on the experience of similar agencies. Only three institutions were established before 2000 (during the late 1990s). The institutions concerned are either private initiatives (such as NARK, the National Agency for Qualifications Development of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs), established as tripartite institutions (such As MYK, the vocational qualifications authority in Turkey) or governmental agencies (such as ANC, the Romanian qualifications authority). Governmental executive agencies are in the majority.

Table 4 provides a comprehensive list of the functions and task of these agencies.[1]

None of them carries out all the functions listed, but seven agencies clearly deal with supporting the provision of education and training as well as managing the qualifications systems. Specialized bodies performing public duties in the space between central government and the implementing institutions are often more susceptible to change than ministries. This is also true of qualifications agencies or authorities. All the institutions involved in the first qualifications frameworks have undergone significant changes; indeed, with the exception of the SQA in Scotland, all of them have been restructured and, in many cases, replaced by completely new organisations. In England, NCVQ was replaced by QCA in 1997, which in turn was replaced by Ofqual in 2010. In Australia, the AQF Council was created in 2008 and abolished in

1   Albania (AK-AKP), Belgium Flanders (AKOV), Croatia (ASOO), Georgia (NC EQE), Ireland (QQI), Kosovo (AKK-KS), England (OfQUAL), Estonia (Kustekoda), Netherlands (SBB), Portugal (ANQEP), Russian Federation (NARK), Scotland (SCQF, Partnership,SQA), Slovenia (CPI), Turkey (MYK), France (CNCP), Romania (ANC), Ukraine (IPQ)

Table 4: Functions and tasks of qualifications agencies and authorities (Source ETF)

Functions	Tasks
Further NQF Development	Maintain NQF Structures
	Prepare Policy Decisions
	Link NQF to Occupations in the Labour Market
Facilitate Cooperation & Coordination	Formulate Agreed Positions
	Facilitate Debate
	Address Transversal Competencies
	Work with Regional and Sectoral Bodies
Identify Needs & Prioritise	Identify New Occupations
	Organise Development/ Review of Occupational Standards
	Identify Qualifications on Offer that could Enter the Qualifications Framework
	Address Proliferation/ Overlaps of Qualifications
	Invite Stakeholders to Develop Specific Standards /Qualifications
Communicate, Inform & Advocate	NQF Info Dissemination at Home and Abroad & Website
	Use of Common Language
	Navigation Tools
International Positioning	Align with Qualifications Framework of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
	Act as Contact Point (EQF, EHEA, EUROPASS, National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC))
	Compare International Qualifications
Manage Registers/ Databases	Manage NQF Register of Qualifications, Units, Occupational Standards, Awarding Bodies, Assessment Centres, Experts, Graduates, Educational Programmes, Training Providers, Training Companies, Teachers and Trainers, Students, Issued Certificates in order to Authenticate
Assistance, Capacity Building & Guidance	Support Sector Skills Councils/ Professional Bodies /Awarding Bodies with Standards & Qualifications Development
	Guidance for Qualification Types, for Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning & for Training Programmes
Assure & Enhance Quality	Accredit Awarding Bodies, Standards, Qualifications, Learners
	Enhance Coherence and Relevance of Qualifications
	Widen Access and Alternative Pathways
	Enhance the Quality of Assessment/ Assessors/ Verifiers
	Enhance the Quality of Providers
	Monitor and Evaluate Different Actors
Research the Functioning System	What is the Impact and Effectiveness
	Gather Systematic Feedback
Support Training Providers	Support Internal Quality Assurance Processes
	Development of Curricula
	Support Education and Training Provision
	Training of Teachers and Trainers

2014; in South Africa, after a review of the NQF, three sub-frameworks were established under three quality councils; while in Ireland the national qualifications authority, NQAI, and the awarding bodies, FETEC and HETEC, merged into one organisation, QQI.

Conclusions

Legislation is often required to start NQF implementation, but legislation is an unpredictable process, and is bound to change during implementation.

In reality, the functions and tasks of these institutions vary and are difficult to predict. The functions and structures of these supporting bodies alter over time, depending On the changing priorities for the implementation of the frameworks. Apart from enabling legislation and specialized institutions to support the implementation of the qualifications frameworks, dialogue between stakeholders remains one of the most important factors in the implementation of frameworks. Where an active dialogue exists involving representatives from the world of work and from providers, co-ownership of proposed reforms and a shared vision can empower stakeholders to act without overly prescriptive guidance from the central level, reducing bureaucracy and strengthening impact on learners and in the labour market.

3. Skype Session
On the French Register of Qualifications (Brigitte Bouquet)

Are registered in the French Register (RNCP):

- Qualifications and not training courses

- Qualifications and not personal awards

- No partial qualifications

So the Register is not a quality assurance tool for the courses. There are other ways to check the QA of training courses, such as International labels (bachelors, MBAs...) also exist. Some training courses are developped after international norms (ISO...). What is registered is the result of some training courses expressed in terms of learning outcomes and based on standards which can allow the recognition of prior learning. That means Vocational certification after initial learning, also continuing learning or after professional and personal experience through the VAE (validation of formal and informal learning-compulsory. It is the same certification, with

the same value). Certifications recognised are registered in the **Répertoire National des Certifications Professionnelles (RNCP)** and classified:

- by a 5 levels grid (Levels I, II, III, IV, V)

- by learning domains (national nomenclature, linked with ISCO)

The certification have common features: standards which are known and elaborated after the consultation of stakeholders, including the social partners. It is important that experts take part in the drafting of certifications. It is compulsory that three types of stakeholders are involved: the public Authorities, the Social Partners (employers) and the trade unions.

What do we mean by qualifications? An individual is considered as "qualified" when he or she has to show (demonstrate) a set of knowledge, know-how and abilities giving the insurance that he or she is able to achieve tasks and activities (expected in the "standard of activites") by combining the three dimension of competences (K,KH,A) in a large professional context with a level of responsibility and autonomy previously defined. Certification implies (i) a procedure to check and validate that learning outcomes are in accordance with the standards, (ii) An authority attesting that the procedure is conform to what was expected, and awarding quality assurance is othe certification to the applicant and (iii) A standard describing the assessed learning outcomes.

The CNCP in plenary commission is composed as follows:

Figure 8: Composition of CNCP

President and Rapporteur General (2)

Qualified Personalities (11)

Representatives of the state (16)

Regions (3)

Chambers (3)
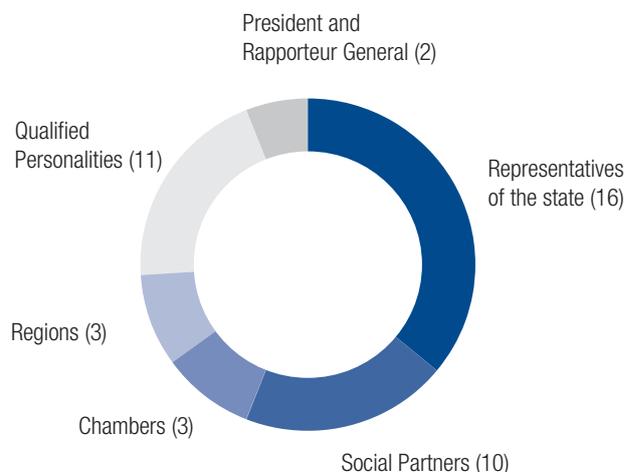
Social Partners (10)

- Representatives of the state (16) the ministry in charge of HE belongs to the committee)
- Social partners (5 employes, 5 employees)
- Economic Chambers (3)
- Regions (3)
- Experts (11) (do not vote)
- Chairman
- General reporter and his or her assistant (do not vote)
- (A vice chairman chosen by the representatives of the employers, another by the employees); can replace the chairman)

There are 3 kinds of certifications

1) Vocational diplomas (degrees) and titles delivered by public authorities "in behalf of the State", under the responsibility of the ministry – including all the Higher education degrees from Universities

2) Vocational Qualification Certificates elaborated by economic sectors under the responsibility of social partners: no level

3) Titles or certificates delivered by economic chambers, public or private institutions in their own names (ministry as well for example: Defense Ministry, ministry of the Interior)

And two ways to allocate a certification to the Register

- the registration "by law", where there is no protocols, only law and official texts . It concerns Diplomas (or degrees) delivered by public authorities "in behalf of the State" through different ministries in charge of Education, Agriculture, Social affairs, Employment, Youth and Sports, Health and Culture at secondary and higher education levels, and elaborated by a ministry through a process that involves social partners as well. The registration is done without an instruction by the CNCP but the diploma was checked and accredited by other officials authorities, such as Commissions including social partners were consulted.

Registration on demand

For non-public certification, if social partners were not consulted, the CNCP plays this role and becomes an accrediting body. The certification is analysed by a rapporteur whose report is presented to an hoc commission (half social partners-half state - before the advice of the plenary commission). The report is about the following:

What is the link between the certifications and the labour market

Why is it created?

Is it really fitted with the needs of the sector?

Does it take into account the evolution of the certification

Have possible former recommendations by the CNCP been taken into account?)

How is the certification quality-assured to keep the qualification in line with the needs of the labour market?

The certification is then presented to the "conseil de perfectionnement" (a commission of practionners and trainers) for advice.

The certification standards which **all certifications** must meet concern:

- Standards of activities
- Description of tasks and competencies associated to the activities
- Competences and tasks which will be evaluated
- Standard and criteria of evaluation
- What will be checked: grids for the evaluation, sheets with the signature of applicants, report of
- Examination sessions…

PROCESS OF REGISTERING OF QUALIFICATION TO THE FRENCH REGISTER
(Registration on request)

Regional Processing **National Processing**

Information and Guidance

Information to the providers on the process
Orientation of the Registration request

Processing Body

Drafting of the qualification file

Creation of the file by the Applying Provider

Regional Processing   National Processing

Application to the CNCP

Region Executive Chief

- Relevant Ministry in the Vocational Field Concerned by certification or the Ministry of Vocational Education and Training
- CNCP with copy to the relevant Ministry

Processing

Processing Body:
- Analyses the file
- Can ask for the expert advice or the state department
- Drafts the summary document of the file

Notification

Coordination Committee
Regional Department of the Ministry of Vocational Education and Training

Preparation of the CNCP Notification

Specialised Committee of the CNCP

Notification

CNCP (as a whole)

Decision

Ministry of Vocational Education and Training
Notification to the Official Gazette

Construction of qualifications

Quality of the standards, and especially of the assessment of competences is especially important to the CNCP. If it is only a training course, without coherence between all the elements, it is refused by the commission. So the CNCP look at the analysis of statisitics cohorts to check if they fit with the levels, with the kind of jobs held, the salaries, whether the level of the job role corresponds to the level of the qualification.

All certification in the Register must include validation of prior learning. The CNCP looks closely at the description of the qualification and at the composition of the board of examiners.

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MODULE 4

THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

* Chief Executive of the Scottish Credit Qualification Framework

1. The Trends Towards Regional Frameworks

In the EU Member States and in the European Neighborhood, much of the impetus for developing national frameworks has come from the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) adopted by EU Member States in 2008 and the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area, part of the Bologna process, adopted in 2005. EU Member States and countries wanting to join the Union see NQFs as a practicable way to manage their diverse national qualifications systems and to link them to the EQF. Indeed, most ETF partner countries have opted for an 8-level NQF, modelled on the EQF and based on learning outcomes. This applies most strongly to those countries which are candidates or potential candidates to enter the EU but also applies to those which will not be EU States.

The EQF also exercises a particular influence on other regional or transnational frameworks. Regional initiatives such as the Southern African Development Community Framework, the Caribbean Qualifications Framework, the Southern Pacific Register, the Transnational Qualifications Framework of the Small States of the Commonwealth, the GCC initiative for a Qualifications Framework for the Gulf Countries and the debate on the designated the ASEAN Qualifications Framework are influenced by the EQF (a finding of the ETF study published in 2010, "Transnational Qualifications Frameworks"), and some are seeking to link to the EQF. In some cases, individual countries are actively pursuing links with the EQF - New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United Arab Emirates are examples.

The EQF is an example of a QF whose effect has been to encourage (even if this was not intentional in its design) convergence of systems – many new-generation NQFs resemble each other. They often have 8 levels, are lifelong learning in scope and, fundamentally, based on a foundation of levels descriptors written in learning outcomes. Other TQFs more directly promote harmonisation, and in some, such as the Caribbean Qualifications Framework, common qualifications are developed. We can probably expect greater convergence, partially pushed by globalisation and closer international cooperation. TQFs are both responses to globalisation and themselves globalising instruments.

As already mentioned, a rapidly emerging development is the cooperation in many world regions to, in turn, link these national frameworks to each other on a transna-

tional basis. The EQF is perhaps the best-known Transnational Qualifications Framework ("TQF"), or regional framework, but not the only one, as illustrated by the list in box 5:

Box 5: Transnational frameworks

- European Qualification Framework.
- Qualification Framework for the Countries of the Gulf Co-operation Council
- Southern African Development Community (SADC) Framework
- The Caribbean Qualification Framework
- The Southern Pacific Register
- The Transnational Qualifications Framework of the Small Sates of the Commonwealth
- The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Framework
- East African Community
- South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

2. European Qualification Framework: Overview

Strategic Context: Education and Training 2020 "Education and Training 2020" (ET 2020) is a new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training that builds on its predecessor, the "Education and Training 2010" (ET 2010) work programme. It provides common strategic objectives for Member States, including a set of principles for achieving these objectives, as well as common working methods with priority areas for each periodic work cycle.

The EQF is unfolding in this strategic framework that provides 4 common strategic objectives for Member States, including a set of principles, common working methods and priority areas:

- making lifelong learning and mobility a reality (linked to the EQF)

- improving the quality and efficiency of education and training

- promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship

- enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship

The following EU benchmarks for 2020 have been set for education:

- At least 95% of children (from 4 to compulsory school age) should participate in early childhood education;

- fewer than 15% of 15-year-olds should be under-skilled in reading, mathematics and science;

- the rate of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 should be below 10%;

- at least 40% of people aged 30-34 should have completed some form of higher education;

- at least 15% of adults should participate in lifelong learning;

- at least 20% of higher education graduates and 6% of 18-34 year-olds with an initial vocational qualification should have spent some time studying or training abroad;

- the share of employed graduates (aged 20-34 with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1-3 years ago) should be at least 82%.

Progress on these benchmarks is assessed in each EU country through a yearly country analysis, with the EU also providing recommendations. Drawing on the conclusions from the stocktaking, a 2015 Joint Report will identify key priority areas and concrete issues for future work at the European level.

The EQF is one of several tools developed by the EC in the area of education and training to achieve these common goals, as represented in the figure below.

Figure 10: Tools supporting the ET 20120 strategy
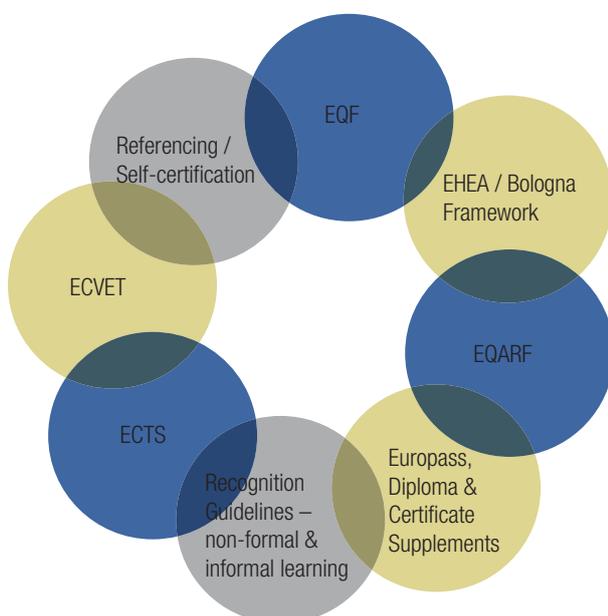
EHEA: European Higher Education Area

EQF: European Qualification Framework

ECVET: European Credit in Vocational Education and Training (See Chapter 5)

ECTS: The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is a tool that helps to design, describe, and deliver study programmes and award higher education qualifications. The use of ECTS, in conjunction with outcomes-based qualifications frameworks, makes study programmes and qualifications more transparent and facilitates the recognition of qualifications.

EQARF: European Higher Education Quality Assurance Register

EUROPASS: It includes five documents to make skills and qualifications clearly and easily understood in Europe:

- Two documents freely accessible, completed by European citizens: the Curriculum Vitae and the Language passport (a self-assessment tool for language skills and qualifications).

- Three documents issued by education and training authorities: the Europass Mobility records the knowledge and skills acquired in another European country; the Certificate Supplement describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of vocational education and training certificates; the Diploma Supplement describes the knowledge and skills acquired by holders of higher education degrees (see below).

EQAVET: The European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) is a reference instrument designed to help EU countries promote and monitor the continuous improvement of their vocational education and training systems on the basis of commonly agreed references. The framework should not only contribute to quality improvement in VET but also, by building mutual trust between the VET systems, make it easier for a country to accept and recognise the skills and competencies acquired by learners in different countries and learning environments. EU countries use the framework to improve their quality assurance systems in a way that involves all relevant stakeholders. This includes:

- setting up national reference points for quality assurance;

- actively participating in the relevant European-level network;

- developing a national approach aimed at improving quality assurance systems and making the best possible use of the framework.

EQAVET is a voluntary system to be used by public authorities and other bodies involved in quality assurance. Particularly relevant here, the European QA for VET includes a 4-phase cycle - planning, implementation, assessment and review, with quality criteria and indicative descriptors for each phase and common quantitative and qualitative indicators for assessing targets, methods, procedures and training results. EQAVET is fostering a culture of quality improvement and responsibility at all levels.

The fundamental principles underpinning validation of learning are as follow:

- Validation must be voluntary.

- The privacy of individuals should be respected.

- Equal access and fair treatment should be guaranteed.

- Stakeholders should be involved in establishing systems for validation.

- Systems should contain mechanisms for guidance and counselling of individuals.

- Systems should be underpinned by quality assurance.

- The process, procedures and criteria for validation must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance.

- Systems should respect the legitimate interests of stakeholders and seek balanced participation.

- The process of validation must be impartial and avoid conflicts of interest.

- The professional competences of those who carry out assessments must be assured.

The work on the Framework started in 2004 at the behest of the Member States. Initial proposals were developed by an expert group. The 3 descriptors defining the 8 levels of the EQF were developed between 2003 and 2008 in an extensive process building on research and widespread consultation involving experts and policy makers from all countries involved. The EQF was adopted in 2008.

EQF is in essence a common European reference framework to be used as a translation device to make qualifications more readable and understandable across different countries and systems in Europe. Because Europe's education and training systems are so diverse, a shift to learning outcomes is necessary to make comparison and cooperation possible. The levels are described in terms of learning outcomes. In the EQF a learning outcome is defined as a statement of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. This means a change from a focus on inputs "such as length of study" or types of provider institution.

The learning outcomes which define the reference levels are specified in three "categories": knowledge, skills and competence. This signals that qualifications capture a broad scope of learning outcomes - in different combinations. Qualifications may include theoretical knowledge, practical and technical skills, and social competences where the ability to work with others will be crucial.

There are two principal aims to the EQF instrument:

- to promote citizens' mobility between countries

- to facilitate their lifelong learning

The EQF has 8 reference levels which "span the full scale of qualifications from basic to advanced". It "encompasses" general, vocational and academic education and training PLUS it "addresses" qualifications acquired in initial and continuing education and training.

The basic structure of the EQF descriptors is shown below:

Knowledge	Skills	Competence
Factual	Cognitive	Autonomy
Theoretical	Practical	Responsibility

- Level 1 may be thought of as receding workplace competence

- Levels 1-8 are concerned with "work or study"

- Levels 5-8 are "comparable" with the descriptors for Higher Education

Lev.	Knowledge	skills	competence
1	basic general knowledge	basic skills to carry out simple tasks	work or study under direct supervision in a structured context
4	Factual and theoretical knowledge in broad contexts within a field of work or study	a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems in a field of work or study	exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change + supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities
3	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 + take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups.

An important function of learning outcomes-based level descriptors is to increase the transparency of qualifications in the labour market. This was one of the objectives pursued by the EQF, and is also visible in work at national level. It is possible to see the emphasis on transversal skills and competences and a holistic competence approach as linked to this need. It has been argued that the EQF level descriptors have a number of weaknesses, reducing their ability to act as 'mirror of the world of work'. Particular concern is expressed over the ability of the descriptors to differentiate between levels of competence, pointing to inconsistencies in the use of terms (how to express a degree of complexity, the articulation of change and predictability/unpredictability, the role of context, etc.).

3. EQF Referencing Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF

The EQF Recommendation invites countries to refer their national qualifications levels to the EQF. To ensure that the referencing process is designed in such a way that

it can be understood and trusted by stakeholders in all countries involved, the EQF Advisory Group has agreed on a set of criteria and procedures to guide this process. In addition to listing the 10 criteria/procedures agreed by the EQF Advisory Group, this note contains a brief explanatory part clarifying context and intentions. Further clarification will be brought by debate within the EQF Advisory Group, based on work by its thematic subgroups and on the experience gathered through the practice of referencing. The 10 criteria have been developed on the basis of the criteria and processes used in the self-certification process for the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area. They were adopted by the EQF Advisory group in 2009.

In the recommendation, the referencing process concerns the Member States and is limited to them. The success of the EQF around the world has encouraged a number of non-EU countries, if not to be part of the process of referencing, in any case to ask for an alignment of their qualifications framework. Australia, Hong Kong and New Zealand are in this case. These are countries with a mature framework with whom the technical dialogue is not only possible but mutually enriching. But it will take a new Recommendation to allow the referencing process as such to be extended to non-EU countries.

Action by Member States (MS)

In order to carry out the referencing process, the MS had to establish National Coordination Points (NCP). The NCP would be responsible for relating national qualifications systems to the European Qualifications Framework. The initial timeline was 2010 but it was extended. The NCP would use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications. The MS would have to include EQF levels in all new qualification certificates, diplomas and "Europass" documents and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning in accordance with the common European principles. In order to be referenced against the EQF, the Member States need to present a referencing report to the EQF Advisory dealing with the 10 criteria adopted in 2012.

Action by the Commission

The EC has established a European Qualifications Framework advisory group and promote close links between the European Qualifications Framework and existing or future European systems for credit transfer and accumulation in higher education and vocational education and training. The EC role is one of facilitating and

fostering action at EU level as it is not a decision making body in terms of education in training.

The EQF referencing process is a process by which national authorities responsible for qualifications systems, in cooperation with stakeholders responsible for developing and using qualifications, define the correspondence between NQF and the EQF. The remit of the EQF Advisory Group is to assist the Commission in the implementation of the EQF pooling the knowledge of the E&T 2010 countries, social partners and Commission and to follow up the Council recommendation on the validation of non formal and informal learning. There are 48 members:

- 28 representatives of EU Member states

- 12 pan-European organisations

- 8 representatives of candidate countries / other states

There are also criteria and procedures for self-certification against the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area: (EHEA)

Overall, the referencing process has been running smoothly, illustrating that countries have taken on board the key elements of the EQF descriptors. So, while the German level descriptors, for example, are based on a different concept of competence from the EQF descrip-

tors, it is still possible to identify linkages and compare levels. It is interesting to note that no country has argued that the use of 'responsibility' and autonomy' by the EQF is irrelevant or wrong; the argument is rather that these categories are insufficient to reflect fully national and international reality.

The following figure shows how the European Qualifications Framework is used as a reference system. The referencing process created many rich discussions within and between countries on how relevant were the domains (descriptors) for them.

Figure 11: EQF as reference system
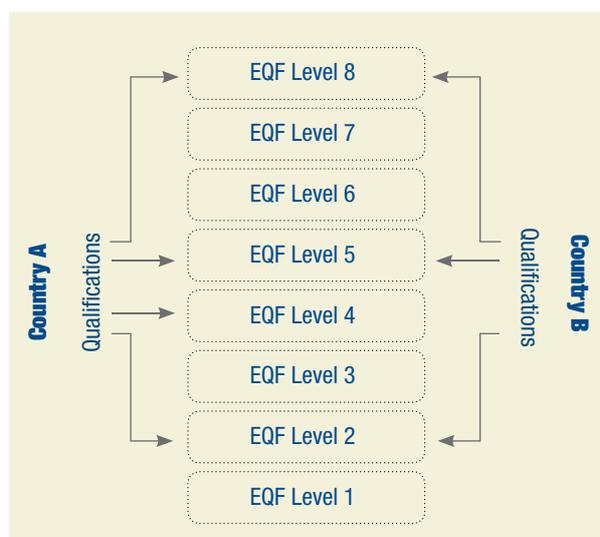
Box 6: The debate on learning outcomes and European descriptors (Source CEDEFOP).

With regard to the learning outcomes, the EU countries which have undergone the process of referencing can be divided into 3 categories

Aligning with the EQF descriptors

"A first group of countries use the EQF descriptors directly or align closely to them: Estonia, Austria and Portugal are examples of this. Most of these countries have, however, prepared additional explanatory tables or guides with more detailed level descriptors in order to be able to use the frameworks. Estonia has prepared detailed level descriptors for four sub-frameworks (higher education, general education, vocational education and training and occupational qualifications). Portugal has drafted guidelines ('Understanding the NQF') in which a more detailed and fine-tuned description of knowledge, skills, attitudes and context is provided. The approach is exemplified by 'knowledge' where a distinction is made between 'depth of knowledge'17, 'understanding and critical thinking'18. The skills and know-how domain is characterised by depth, breadth and purpose. The third column covers attitudes (defined as autonomy and responsibility). The context column (defining context of

application, predictability and complexity) has been added. The frameworks of Croatia, Greece, Malta, and Slovakia are also closely aligned to the EQF descriptors, starting from the three main pillars of knowledge, skills and competence and only introducing limited changes to the detailed descriptors. For instance, Croatia has emphasised social skills besides cognitive and practical skills.

Broadening of the EQF descriptors

A second group of countries is influenced by the EQF descriptors, but has broaden and (partly) reprofiled the 'skills' and the 'competence' columns. Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Poland, Romania and Sweden are examples. All the countries in this category refer to 'knowledge' and 'skills' but have mostly renamed the third 'competence' column. The Netherlands refers to 'responsibility and independence', Norway to 'general competence', Poland to 'social competence' and Romania to 'transversal competences'. While all these countries include autonomy and responsibility in their interpretation of 'competence', they generally tend to incorporate additional transversal skills and competences like critical thinking, creativity and entrepreneurship,

learning to learn, communication and cooperation. Many countries, for instance Finland and Iceland, have made an effort to integrate the EU key competences19 in their level descriptors: the same is true of the Maltese and Norwegian NQFs. The inclusion of the term 'evaluation' in the Finnish and Polish frameworks underlines that individuals must be able to reflect on own knowledge, skills and competences and also be able to judge how to improve. In Latvia the terms 'analysis', 'synthesis' and 'assessment' point in the same direction. Poland uses the term 'social competences' instead of 'competence': this is understood as 'identity' (participation, responsibility, models of conduct), 'cooperation' (including team work, leadership, and conditions) and 'responsibility' (which includes individual and team actions, consequences and evaluation). It is interesting to note that Ireland, having defined level descriptors prior to the EQF, uses four substrands to define competence: context, role, learning to learn and insight.

This redefinition of the competence descriptors can be interpreted as an implicit criticism of weaknesses in the original EQF design, as described above. However, the redefinition must also be seen as an effort to reflect national objectives and priorities.

Challenging the EQF descriptors

The second group of countries has paid particular attention to the concept of 'competence' and the question of how to translate this into operational level descriptors. This focus is even stronger in a third group where 'competence' is used as an overarching concept, significantly influencing the way learning outcomes are defined and described. Examples of countries in this group are Belgium (Dutch, French as well as German speaking regions), Germany, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovenia and Switzerland. All these countries emphasise the holistic character of the term 'competence'. Knowledge, skills and attitudes are not 'atomised' entities which can be judged in isolation from each other; individuals have to combine and apply them in the concrete contexts provided by work and learning. The ability of an individual to act in a self-directed way is seen

as crucial to the understanding of 'competence' and allows differentiation between levels of competence. Méhaut and Winch (2012, p. 376)21 state that competence '…. entails a capacity for independent action that goes far beyond positioning in a managerial hierarchy.' It focuses on the ability of a person to use knowledge, skills, attitudes and other personal, social and/or methodological abilities – in a self-directed way – in work and study situations and to deal with complexity, unpredictability and change.

The practical implication of this perspective is well illustrated by the German qualification framework where the term 'Handlungskomptenz' (action competence) is understood as 'the ability and readiness of the individual to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and methodological competences and conduct himself or herself in a considered and individually and socially responsible manner.' (Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung und der Kultusministerkonferenz, 2011, p. 3)22. Consequently, the German level descriptors differentiate between professional and personal competence and show how knowledge (of varying depth and breadth), skills (instrumental and systematic, linked to judgement), social competence (communication, teamwork, leadership and involvement) and autonomy (autonomous responsibility, learning and reflectiveness) come together in defining the overall competence of the individual.

In the Netherlands the competence concept is also understood as integrative, aiming to cover a wide range of human abilities to cope with complex tasks. According to Westerhuis (2011, p. 76)23, (the term) 'Integrative stands for the fact that (a) competences are multidimensional and (b) competent performance is only possible if all dimensions are addressed accordingly to a set of standards.' The Belgian-Flemish framework defines competence as 'the ability to apply knowledge, skills and attitudes when performing social activities, and integrate these into one's actions'24. The Flemish descriptors introduce context as separate, underlining that knowledge and skills have to be applied in life, work or study to count as competence"

4. Irish Referencing Report

Process

The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) established a steering committee comprising Qualification and curriculum bodies and 3 international experts. The Draft report was discussed with a wide group of stakeholders, including providers and learners, ministry departments and social partners. The Final report was then prepared and agreed among national quality assurance bodies and the Ministry of Education and Science.

Findings

There are different purposes between national frameworks and regional framework, since the INQF designed before the creation of the EQF, so national purposes was more important than comparability. Yet, the Irish acknowledge similarities in terms of their architecture, including the categorisations of knowledge, skill and competence, and a common understandings of learning outcomes. The irish framework was among the first to be referenced to the EQF and to recognize a clear rational for comparing the sets of Levels in NFQ and EQF.

INFQ and EQF share core design features.

- They are comprehensive and integrated

- They are neutral in terms of formal/non-formal/informal learning

- NFQ level indicators and EQF level descriptors read across all strands of learning outcomes – the strands interrelate

- In both Frameworks the outcomes for a given level build on and subsume the outcomes of the Levels beneath.

- Key words or phrases are introduced as "threshold or distinguishing factors in the description of learning outcomes at each level.

5. Building on the Referencing Process

Some lessons have been gained from the on-going referencing processes involving all european countries. As analysed in the global Inventory, there seems to be different attitudes towards the EQF and in particular towards the learning outcomes which are sometimes challenged. This redefinition of the competence descriptors can be interpreted as an implicit criticism of weaknesses in the original EQF design but also as an effort to reflect national objectives and priorities. The level descriptors of the early national qualifications frameworks were designed to serve national purposes. Their task was to show how qualifications can be differentiated in terms of complexity and expected outcomes, as well as how they relate to each other. In contrast, the level descriptors of the new NQFs have, from the outset, been designed to combine national relevance with international comparability; the three approaches outlined signal different ways to approach this balancing act. The first group of countries above, aligning their national level descriptors to the EQF, emphasises international comparability as an ultimate goal, but runs the risk of limited national relevance.

The EQF descriptors – on purpose using a general language – may not be able to capture the complexities of a national qualification system. This limitation is illustrated by the fact that countries like Portugal and Croatia have developed lengthy guidelines to support the use and interpretation of the national levels. The second group of countries, broadening descriptors to include transversal skills and competences, does this to strengthen the national relevance of descriptors and to promote particular policies; the inclusion of key competences in the Finnish and Icelandic descriptors exemplifies this last aspect. The third group of countries insisting on a holistic approach, largely expresses national traditions, concepts and values and may fear that the current use of learning outcomes - in particular the distinction between knowledge, skills and competence - may be applied in a way which leads to a 'narrowing down' of education and training and lifelong learning strategies. This is an important point as it underlines that learning outcomes and qualifications are not merely technical constructs but must be understood in a social and political context as well.

The referencing process reveals common tasks to be carried out by EU countries with regards to their NQF:

- managing their qualifications frameworks: what is and what is not acceptable as a qualification? are partial qualifications to be included in the register, if there is one? are new qualification types necessary to clarify the difference of levels or categories of qualifications?

- establishing more progression within the NQF. Is the framework allow vertical and horizontal mobility. How much integration is possible.

- communicating about qualifications: is the language of learning (learning outcomes, assessment, quaity assurance) being disseminated or does it remain the language of a few.

- evaluating how learning outcomes are understood and used in the framework: learning outcomes should not be treated as merely technical con-

structs, but need to reflect and respect the social and institutional contexts they are operating within. If learning outcomes are formulated in too narrow and restricted ways, they can limit rather than broaden expectations towards learners.

- explaining and using qualification levels in different contexts: if learning outcomes are used differently between institutions, sectors and countries, their ability to strengthen transparency and aid comparison is weakened.

- extending the forms of recognition of qualifications

- securing the involvement and commitment of stakeholders

- establishing quality assurance systems which are the basis of trust between countries

6. SKYPE SESSION
The European Qualifications Framework Experience (Aileen Ponton)

a. EQF descriptors

b. Current reflections on the use of EQF outside Europe

c. The Scottish experience

a. EQF Learning Descriptors

They are Knowledge (Theoretical or Factual), skills (cognitive and practical) and Competence (Responsibility and Autonomy).

Box 8: The Scottish and Indian levels descriptors

SCQF LD	INDIA LD
Knowledge and Understanding	Process required
Practice/applied Knowledge	Professional knowledge
Generic Cognitive Sills	Professional skills
Communications/ICT/Numeracy	Core skill
Autonomy/Working With Others	Responsibility

EQF Definition
http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/Using_learning_outcomes.pdf

In the broadest sense, the use of learning outcomes has a technical purpose, for example, to make existing standards (expectations in terms of knowledge, skills and

wider competence) clearer than is currently the case. This can facilitate the involvement and feedback of labour market stakeholders regarding the relevance of the qualifications standards for the labour market.

Learning Outcomes features:

- Statements of what a learner can be expected to know, understand and/or do as a result of a learning experience.

- Student learning outcomes are properly defined in terms of knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of higher education experiences.

- Learning outcomes are statements that specify what a learner will know or be able to do as a result of a learning activity. Outcomes are usually expressed as knowledge, skills, or attitudes.

- Learning outcomes (are) specific measurable achievements

- Reflections on the use of EQF for non- EU countries

EQF REFERENCING CRITERIA were developed to broadly compare with the self assessment process for Bologna and higher education. They have not changed but the guidance in working with them has evolved. What follows is a draft process for third countries to use them to "align" or "benchmark" as part of a pilot project

b. Current reflections on the use of EQF outside Europe

Current EQF criterion

1. **The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process, including the National Co-ordination Point, are clearly determined and published by the competent public authorities. In addition the structure of the education and training system is described**

Proposed amplification guidance

WHAT

The Government of the country should set out clearly which organisations have responsibility for the develop-

ment and maintenance of the QF and for the quality assurance associated with it.

The essential structure of the system covering ages, stages and pathways of education and training, including formal, non-formal and informal learning should be described in outline. Linkages between these pathways and major progressions should be clear. If possible some general statistics should be included.

WHY

This is so that the EQF AG can see that there is political will and support and can also understand the roles and responsibilities of the main actors. Secondly the addition is so that a clear understanding of the educations system and its structures is provided.

2. **There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European Qualifications Framework.**

WHAT

Technical work needs to be undertaken to show the alignment of the levels of the QF to the EQF.

WHY

This is the fundamental basis for referencing. It will demonstrate to the AG that firstly the QF has clear and well written level descriptors and it also indicates a good technical understanding of what level descriptors can and cannot do. It needs to also demonstrate and understanding of the purpose of the EQF level descriptors. Finally it allows a comparison to be made of each level within the QF which helps understanding of qualifications and how they fit

3. **The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems**

WHAT

The qualifications within the QF must use learning outcomes. Where the use of learning outcomes is not well established the policy and the implementation plan for full use of LOs must be made clear.

WHY

It has been agreed as one of the key principles of the EQF that the use of learning outcomes supports many other measures such as assessment, mutual trust, links to informal and non-formal learning, mobility.

WHAT

Where credit and recognition systems exist the QF and its qualifications must demonstrate how it links to and uses systems for credit and for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning. Where these do not exist, the plans for further work must be made clear. Given the fact that Member states have used ECTS and ECVET to underpin this, in which measure does the Third Country need to make reference to this and explain similarities and differences to this approach?

WHY

The EC has produced a later recommendation on the Recognition of Informal and Non Formal learning and so all Member States countries are considering how they will meet this recommendation. In that spirit therefore it is important that third countries do so as well. If credit is used it is important to understand how it fits with individual qualifications and with the QF as a whole.

4. **The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent**

WHAT

The country needs to explain in some detail how qualifications get into the Framework. This explanation needs to be detailed and include relevant criteria, rules and associated guidance. It also needs to be explicit about whether the same rules are used for all types of qualification.

WHY

For mutual trust to exist countries need to see and understand the rules, criteria and methodology used to determine the level of a qualification and place it in the QF.

5. **The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).**

WHAT

The quality assurance processes which underpin each category of qualification in the Framework needs to be clearly explained along with an explanation of the quality assurance associated with the overall QF.

WHY

Again in order to support mutual trust Member States need to understand what processes are in place to ensure quality of each type of qualification as well as the Framework. It is also important to know which organisations perform that role and how these organisations relate to one another. Given the EQAVET recommendation the criterion asks that this explanation relates to those principles. However the country will wish to explain its own principles.

6. **The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality assurance bodies.**

WHAT

The final report of the referencing needs to include confirmation from those relevant quality assurance bodies that the explanation of their role and the description of their processes is correct. They also need to confirm their agreement to the referencing outcomes overall.

WHY

This is needed to support mutual trust and to give a formal agreement from the quality assurance bodies.

7. **The referencing process shall involve international experts.**

WHAT

The referencing process not only technical work should involve a Technical Working Group made up of EU Members States plus the Commission plus Cedefop.

WHY

This will allow for mutual information sharing, discussion of technical detail, analysis of outcomes and reporting to the EQF AG

At this stage, there is yet no final referencing report.

8. **The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national qualifications framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately each of the criteria.**

WHAT

The final report needs to address all of the above points, needs to demonstrate the buy in and agreement of key actors and social partners and should be produced in a user friendly format to aid understanding by other countries. It needs to include information on the consultation processes used and agreement reached.

WHY

Only those members of the Technical Working Group will have been involved all the way through the process. For the majority of members of the EQF AG it will be the written report, supplemented by questioning and discussion, that they will rely on to help them reaching a decision.

Scottish Referencing Process

SCOTLAND Contracted with an expert consultant to undertake technical referencing in April 2008. We established a Steering Group comprising main stakeholders and including 2 international experts in June 2008 who raised awareness of pending consultation August 2008. We issued final referencing report and consultation document to key groups and individuals in early September 2008 and put a final referencing report and consultation on web for open consultation in early September 2008. The Consultation closed end November 2008. A Quality Assurance digest was prepared October 2008 – January 2009 and discussed by Steering Group in February 2009 along with final report structure. The final report was published in July 2009. We are revisiting the process and content in light of 6 years of reports n 2015.

CHALLENGES experiences in the process are several

- Scope and size of consultation
- Weighting of responses
- Co-ordination across the UK
- Concerns in Scotland re lowest level of EQF and messages for learners

- Communication of NQF

- Links to sectoral frameworks

- Potential for overtrading/misunderstanding

CURRENT POSITION- the SCQF Database now shows SCQF and EQF levels for all programmes. Scotland is contributing to the dialogue around third country alignment – technical expert for Australia – but this is early days. We are also contributing to the work looking at international or "stateless" qualifications. We provided expert support to Poland, Belgium, Estonia. Scotland has signed a MoU with Hong Kong and with Bahrain.

FURTHER READING

- EQF Recommendation 2008

- Global Inventory of Regional And National Qualifications Frameworks, 2015 Or

- Mehaut, P and Winch, C, 2012, the European Qualification Framework: Skills Competences or Knowledge European Educational Research Journal, vol 11, n° 3

MODULE 5

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK AND CREDIT SYSTEMS

* Chief Executive Officer of JET Education services, South Africa

1. Credit Systems

To implement a credit system, it is necessary that qualifications are described using learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are grouped to create units. Assessed learning outcomes constitute credit. Credit is the basis for enabling the transfer between learning contexts and for the accumulation of learning outcomes. In a credit system, learning outcomes are used as a basis for credit transfer and accumulation. Learning outcomes are not dependent on the learning process, the content of teaching or the learning context in which they have been achieved and there- fore it is possible to use them to identify whether what the learner has achieved in one learning setting or context is comparable to what s/he is expected to have achieved in another setting or context.

*A **unit** is a component of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of knowledge, skills and competence that can be assessed and validated.*

Units enable progressive achievement of qualifications through transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes. They are subject to assessment and validation which verify and record that the learner has achieved the learning outcomes expected. Depending on the existing regulations, units may be common to several quali-fications or specific to one particular qualification. Units are accumulated based on the requirements to achieve qualifications. These requirements may be more or less restrictive depending on the tradition and practice of the qualifications system and the way qualification standards are designed. Units can also be used to structure the for-mal education and training programme. Box x develops the difference between units and modules.

CATS means Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme/ System. It is a tool/mechanism which gives a numerical value to the outcomes of learning and makes it easier to give recognition to the learning – "to make the learning count". A CAT scheme can work within a single institution or qualification system or between collaborating institutions or qualification systems. It can be linked to a qualification framework or stand alone.

A credit system adds some features to a framework: it establishes new relationships (equivalences/ comparabilities) between outcomes of learning, supports RPL and reduces restrictions on the place, pace and mode of learning and it provides new ways of designing qualifications, improve recognition of previous learning and create new progression routes.

Box 9: Units or Modules

Most NQFs have been associated with developments variously referred to as unitization or modularization. Both are concerned with breaking up qualifications into smaller components known as modules or units. The evaluation literature suggests that these processes do introduce greater flexibility both for learners and users such as employers, but offers little support for the claim that they are mechanisms for broadening the distribution of, and access to, qualifications. Unitized qualifications are often proposed for slower learners on the assumption that they will find it easier to learn in (what in the UK has become known as bite-sized chunks). It is important to make a distinction which is sometimes blurred between modularization and unitization. Modularization is best seen as a teacher-led or institution-led process in which the curriculum or teaching programme is the starting point; modules are a formalisation and standardisation of the informal sequencing that any teacher undertakes. Modules divide up a programme into discrete but coherently linked components or modules, with specific opportunities for students to make choices. Modules may, or may not, be linked to specific assessments. Unitization is a more radical departure from traditional approaches to the curriculum; it refers to the break up of qualifications not the curriculum, and is concerned with assessment rather than teaching. Traditional qualifications assume that all students or trainees begin together and are assessed at the end of a programme.

Unitized frameworks treat units as the building blocks of many different qualifications and each unit is assessed and given credit separately. Instead of the teacher deciding the sequencing of the programme in a specific field, the student or trainee registers for units and then combines the units achieved to make up a qualification. The standard setting body lays down the rules of combination of units that lead to different qualifications. In a unitized framework it is units not whole qualifications, that are registered on the framework for the purposes of quality assurance. Unitization maximizes flexibility and choice, but minimizes coherence and the importance of structure in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Many kinds of knowledge in general education (such as physics), and many skills (such as cabinet making) that are important in vocational qualifications, depend on a particular sequencing of learning defined by subject specialists and may not be amenable to unitization.

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1   Chief Executive Officer of JET Education services, South Africa

CAT can unfold at different levels

CAT Schemes

Institutional	eg in a single University an a single awarding body
Sectoral	eg with the Tertiary sector a single occupational sector
National Comprehensive	A common standard used across and between sectors
Institutional	Used as a basis for collaboration within sectors

And within different types of qualification frameworks:

Qualification Frameworks

Sectoral	eg Higher Education TVET Single occupational sector
National Comprehensive	Single, unified framework Tightly linked subframeworks Loosely linked subframeworks
Regional/ Transnational	Mainly used as points of reference / for comparisons

The table below shows how credit systems combine with qualification frameworks

Table 7: Qualifications Framework and credit systems

Credit Schemes (CS) and Qualification Frameworks (QFs)

1. QF — Qualifications Framework (no Credit System)
2. QF ↔ CS — Qualifications Framework (no Credit System)
3. CS — Sectoral Credit System
4. CQF — Integrated Credit & Qualifications Framework
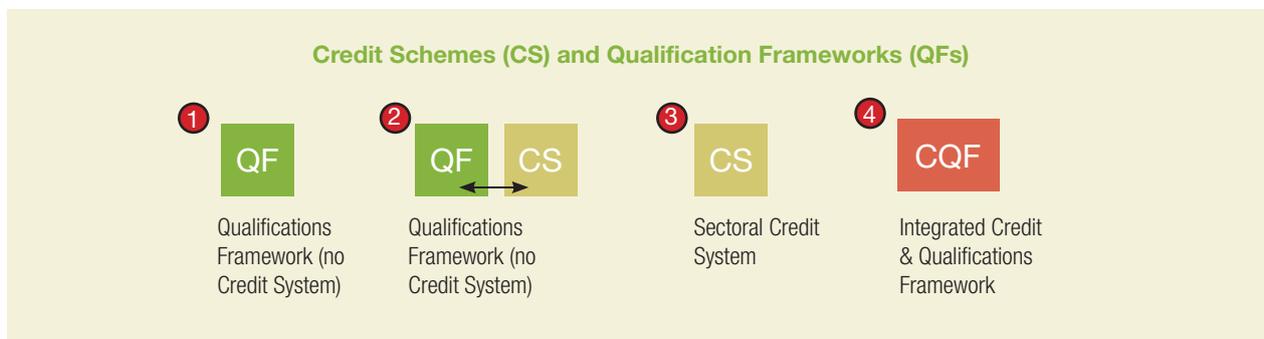
The NSQF Notification "supports credit transfer and progression routes within the Indian education and training system. The NSQF will allow people to move between education, vocational training and work at different stages in their lives according to their needs and convenience."

A Credit is (normally) an indication of the "volume" or "weight" of the outcomes of learning which make up a qualification. It can also be seen as points awarded at a level, as a quantified means of expressing an equivalence between programmes of learning and as an award made to a learner in recognition of the verified achievement of (implied or) designated learning outcomes at a specified level

Considered as a "currency", Credit is usually expressed as a numerical value linked to (notional) learning time – ie all learning activities required for the achievement of a set of outcomes. Commonly 1 credit point is allocated for 10 notional hours of learning.

By bringing all learning within a common system, credit give systemic value to non-formal and experiential learning allowing previous learning to count as qualifications.

The principles governing credit-rating must be tightly defined. The process itself should be as loose as is consistent with assurance of reasonable consistency. Overall it also need to be as transparent as possible. There must be an understanding that the CAT system cannot guarantee that all learning will be fully and automatically recognised in all circumstances.

The process of Accumulation is a process where learners are able to register learning outcomes achieved in one programme at one time and have them counted towards the full programme later on. Accumulation is built in to a system or sub-system (eg programmes /qualifications offered by a department, a faculty, an institution, an awarding body). It should be automatic. The credit accumulation value (general credit) – based on notional learning time. System Credit relates to how long an average learner will take to achieve outcomes

The process of Credit Transfer is a process where learners are able to register learning outcomes achieved in one qualification at one time and have them counted towards another qualification later on. Credit Transfer works between systems or sub-systems (especially between institutions and sectors). The credit transfer value

(specific credit) – is the value of prior learning relative to the qualification into which it will be transferred. Credit in practice is based on the match between learning outcomes already achieved and the learning outcomes required for a qualification. The indian NSQF foresees the implementation of a CAT system (box 9).

Both are practical (pragmatic) judgements, not scientific measurements. Both require processes based on expert judgement and open to scrutiny and appeal.

Box 10: NSQF Notification on credit transfer

Credit transfer can be made in various ways such as allowing a learner to drop a subject already studied or take the next level course in that subject, direct admission to higher-level such as direct second-year admission, etc. This could also take the form of reservation of seats for students coming with prior learning background. The credit transfer system in each industry sector or academic domain needs to be detailed out by the NSQC, with the inputs from the respective institutions/ universities/Ministries/ regulators, etc. at the time of registration of qualification, so that students undertaking the qualification are clear about the possible credit transfer opportunities available to them.

How to allocate credit to outcomes

Credit Rating Process can be done either from scratch based on the outcomes plus experience of delivery (teaching, learning and assessing) or from comparisons with other programmes drawing on previously credit-rated programmes. It involves discussion by expert panels and validation by use and acceptance. The following needs to be taken into account:

- "distance" between recommended entry and assessable outcomes

- breadth & depth of knowledge, skills, broader competences

- kinds of learning activities required (including assessment, formal teaching/training, supervised and unsupervised practice work, private study and revision, remediation, being counselled or mentored, reflection)

Managing Credit Rating

Implementing a CAT System requires first that the system is explained. Capacity building must be ensured on general credit-rating, on managing credit in practice: designing and delivering articulated pathways, and giving formal recognition to packages of learning outcomes

Figure 12: Requirements for credit rating

Agreed principles
Tight definitions

Transparency
& scrutiny

Common features
Flexible processes
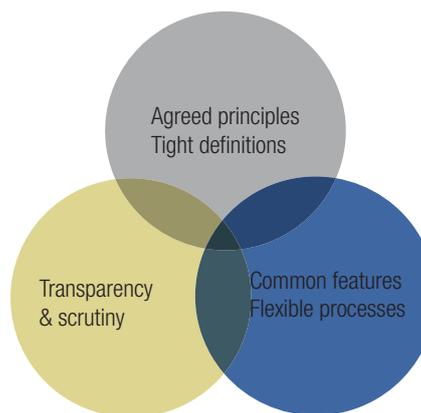
and Identifying and providing bridging courses. A CAT system requires national and local planning, monitoring and evaluation and that are taken to minimize bureaucracy.

2. The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training ECVET

ECVET is a transnational/regional Credit System aiming at bringing together National Systems through a credit exchange mechanism. The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training is a technical framework for the transfer, recognition and (where appropriate) accumulation of individuals' learning outcomes with a view to achieving a qualification. Guided by a European-level Recommendation, ECVET tools and methodology comprise a description of qualifications in terms of units of learning outcomes, a transfer and accumulation process and series of complementary documents such as learning agreements, personal transcripts and user guides. ECVET is intended to facilitate the recognition of learning outcomes in accordance with national legislation, in the framework of mobility, for the purpose of achieving a qualification.

ECVET aims to support the mobility of European citizens, facilitating lifelong learning (formal, informal and non-formal learning) and providing greater transparency in terms of individual learning experiences, making it more attractive to move between different countries and different learning environments. At a systems level, ECVET aims towards better compatibility between the different vocational education and training (VET) systems in place across Europe, and their qualifications.

From a geographical mobility perspective, ECVET aims at facilitating validation, recognition and accumulation of skills and knowledge acquired during a stay in another country, with a view to ensuring that such experiences contribute to the achievement of vocational qualifications. ECVET was designed as one of a series of European instruments (others include Europass and the European Qualifications Framework) that target improvements in recognition and transparency.

ECVET is a tool that can assist lifelong learning by improving the transfer, recognition and accumulation of that which has been learned in the past, irrespective of the learning environment. It can ease the development of individualised and flexible lifelong learning paths which enable peo¬ple to gain knowledge, skills and competence, and ultimately a qualification. ECVET supports a range of learning, and individual learner, scenarios including:

- Learners wishing to upgrade or extend their qualifications through part-time study.

- Learners wishing to study for additional qualifications that complement or build on those already held.

- Learners seeking qualifications for career progression.

- Learners returning to education or training.

ECVET relies on a series of common goals, principles and technical components, that centre on the recognition of learning outcomes and achievements for European citizens undertaking vocational education and training, irrespective of the learning context, location or delivery method. ECVET works hand in hand with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) to provide greater transparency in European qualifications, promoting the mobility of workers and learners, and facilitating lifelong learning. ECVET brings together a wide range of actors, at both national and European levels, with a view
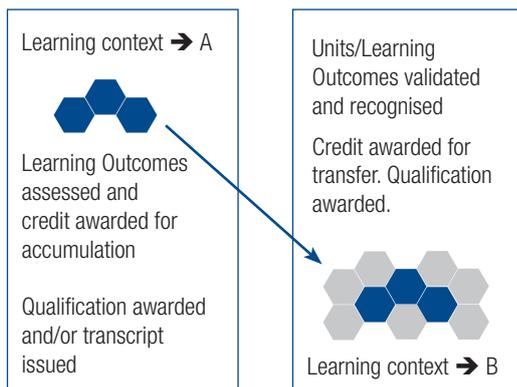
to encouraging wider implementation and use, particularly in learning mobility.

Allocating ECVET Points

Factors counting in the allocation of points are the Importance, the complexity, scope and volume of the learner effort. "A unit may have different weights in different qualifications." Points are independent of the mode of learning.

Figure 14: Allocating ECVET points
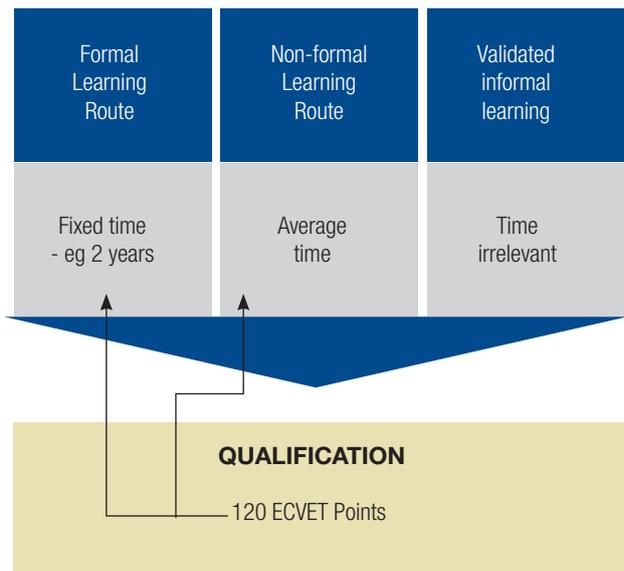
To be taken into account a unit specifications should include:

- the unit title

- the title of the qualification(s) to which the unit relates

- NQF/EQF level and ECVET credit points of these qualification(s)

- the learning outcomes contained in the unit

- the procedures and criteria for assessment of the learning outcomes

- the ECVET points (& EQF Level?) of the unit

- the currency/"validity in time" of the unit, where relevant.

The credit system can translate from one country to another (figure 15).

Figure 13: ECVET Model

Figure 15: Translation of credit system between countries.

Country A	EQF + ECVET	Country B
12 levels	8 levels	10 levels
120 credits per year	60 credits per year	150 credits per year

2X   2.5X
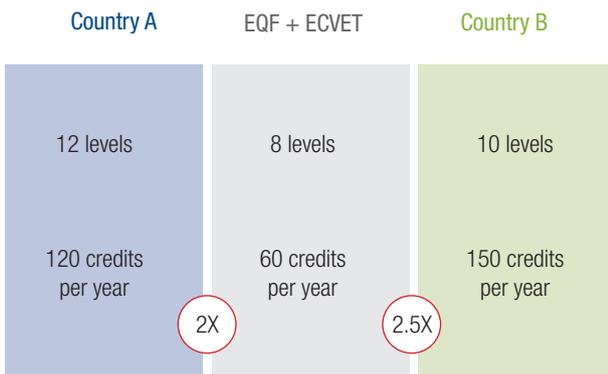
Country A A Points	Country B B Points
"Diploma in Management" 120 A-points at level A11	Advanced. Diploma in Management" 150 8-points at level B9
"Diploma in Care" 300 A-points at level A8	"Certificate in Care" 375 8-points at level B6
"Carpentry Certificate" 36 A-points at level A4	"Introductory Award in Carpentry" 45 8-points At level B3

Country A Levels	EQF	Country B Levels
	EQF level 8	
A level 11	EQF level 7	A level 8
	EQF level 6	
A level 7	EQF level 5	A level 6
	EQF level 4	
	EQF level 3	
A level 4	EQF level 2	A level 4
	EQF level 1	

Country A Levels	EQF + ECVET	Country B Levels
	EQF level 8	
"Diploma in Management" 120 A-points at level A11	60 ECVET points @ EQF level 7	"Adv. Diploma in Management" 150 B-points at level B9
	EQF level 6	
"Diploma in Cares" 300 A-points at level A8	150 ECVET points @ EQF level 5	"Diploma in Cares" 300 A-points at level A8
	EQF level 4	
	EQF level 3	
"Carpentry Certificate" 36 A-points at level A4	18 ECVET points @ EQF level 2	"Intro. Award in Carpentry" 45 B-points at level B3
	EQF level 1	

Transferring ECVET Points

Arrangements for the transfer of credits between different VET systems will be agreed in a "memorandum of understanding" which will specify the scope and range of transfer. The credit transferred in practice may be different from the systems credit value of the learning.

NSQF NOTIFICATION

Credits can be used to assist learners to transfer between programs. This can happen only when awarding bodies determine how much credit can be transferred into which of their programs. This decision will depend upon the nature/content of the learning for which the credit has been given and the requirements of the program into which transfer is being sought. This will also facilitate multiple entry and exit pathways at each level (or within a level) with the bundle of credits earned clearly certified by assessment and certification bodies which have been authorised to do so.

There are barriers to credit transfer, such as

- structure of provision – inappropriate or inadequate
- lack of clarity/transparency about processes
- suspicion between sectors and/or agencies
- insufficient or inappropriate quality assurance
- lack of trust – being too demanding
- lack of will

Conclusion a National Credit & Qualifications Framework will be established when

- All qualifications are reformed to be composed of units of learning outcomes which accord to National quality standards

- All qualifications are awarded on the basis of appropriate (competence-based) assessment standards and processes

- All units of learning outcomes are allocated to a level in the Framework according to approved benchmarks for evidence

- All qualifications and units of learning outcomes are credit-rated following Nationally agreed procedures

- All qualification and units are entered in the national register

- Links are identified between between qualifications (formal-formal, nonformal-nonformal, formal-nonformal) and pathways

- Means of recording assessed learning outcomes and credit in personal transcripts are set up

- Standards for the validation of learning outcomes between systems and the consequent award of credit to the learner are agreed and in use

- Processes for giving formal recognition for transferred credit are working

- Measures to support individual learners are in place

- National Guidelines for setting up generic Memoranda of Understanding between awarding bodies and specific articulation agreements between institutions are established and implemented

Figure 16: A question of balance

Usefulness
Flexibility

Credibility
Rigour

3. Skype Session
Developing a Policy on Credit Systems (James Keevy)

Structure of presentation: 1.Policy process 2. Conceptual basis 3. Policy overview

South African Qualifications Authority is mandated to develop, after consultation with the Quality Councils, national policy for Assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Accumulation and Transfer. The National Qualifications Framework Act No. 67 of 2008 was issues following a series of consultations represented in Figure 17 below.

Figure 17: Layer of Consultation

- Public comment period

- In and after consltation

- Drawing in credible and reliable experts in the field

- External workshop where necessary

- Ownership remains with SAQA

- Conceptual basis

The NQF is a single integrated system which comprises of three co-ordinated qualifications sub-frameworks:

1. General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) overseen by Umalusi

2. Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) overseen by the CHE

3. Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF) overseen by the QCTO (Quality Council for Trade and Occupations)

The sub-frameworks were determined on 14 December 2012. The HEQSF and GFEQSF policies were gazetted on 30 August 2013. The OQSF policy was gazetted on 30 July 2014.

Table 8: The South African Qualifications Framework

Level	Sub-framework and qualification types	
10	Doctoral Degree Doctoral Degree (Professional)	*
9	Master's Degree Master's Degree (Professional)	*
8	Bachelor Honours Degree Postgraduate Diploma Bachelor's Degree	Occupational Certificate (Level 8)
7	Bachelor's Degree Advanced Diploma	Occupational Certificate (Level 7)
6	Diploma Advanced Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 6)
5	Higher Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 5)
4	National Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 4)
3	Intermediate Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 3)
2	Elementary Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 2)
1	General Certificate	Occupational Certificate (Level 1)

CAT involves many related practices not always explicitly defined as 'CAT': Admission, RPL, Advanced standing, Credit transfer, Curriculum mapping, Etc. Much research has been used in the process.

Core Principles

- A description of qualifications in terms of learning outcomes in relation to the level descriptors of the NQF

- The allocation of credits for the achievement of learning outcomes

- Other principles are illustrated by Figure 18.

Figure 18: Core principles

- Transparency
- Supplementarity
- Comparison based on credible methods
- Articulation by design
- Access for success
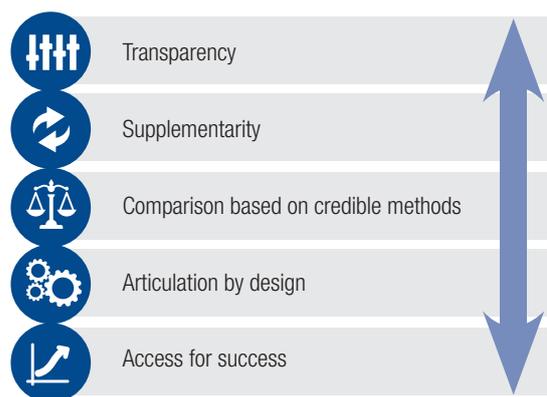
Policy Overview

The purpose of this policy and criteria is to facilitate the development of credible, efficient and transparent CAT processes within and between each of the sub frameworks of the NQF

- Provide for the development and implementation of CAT as an integral component of qualification design within the NQF and its sub frameworks

- Position CAT in relation to the objectives of the NQF to support lifelong learning in South Africa

- Directly address CAT-related challenges faced within the education and training system

- Specify the roles and functions of bodies involved in CAT

A Culture of Articulation

The Legislation national policy sets a formal requirement within the education and training system as well as Formal and informal agreements between specific institutional types, guided by guidelines, policies, and accreditation principles

The responsibility to implement CAT is shared among stakeholders: CAT is the joint responsibility of the Department of Higher Education and Training, Department of Basic Education, SAQA, the QCs, education institutions and skills development providers, recognised professional bodies and workplaces

Responsibility of SAQA

1. Develop national policy and criteria, after consultation with the Quality Councils, for CAT

2. Develop national CAT guidelines for inter-institutional collaboration

3. Support the development of collaborative partnerships across the sub frameworks of the NQF

4. Co-ordinate the sub frameworks of the NQF, including the alignment of sub framework policies on CAT, and articulation across the system.

5. Establish and manage an adjudication process to monitor unfair exclusionary practices related to CAT, including a review of admission criteria

6. Set up and provide support to a permanent sub-committee of the CEO Committee for CAT

7. Oversee research to improve CAT in collaboration with the Quality Councils

8. Promote and enable the use of a common language to communicate credit system arrangements

Responsibility of Quality Council

- Collaborate with the other QCs

- Formalise principles and conditions for CAT

- Initiate and oversee incubation projects

- Develop a policy on CAT for their sub frameworks, taking into account the relevant national SAQA policies, and the broader context of their specific sub frameworks and related policies

- Participate in the adjudication process of SAQA to monitor unfair exclusionary practices related to CAT

- Undertake systematic work on the development of sectoral credit schemes within their specific sub frameworks.

- Promote the collaborative development of curriculum and qualification pathways

- Actively promote the recognition of workplace experience for CAT

- Develop linkages for articulation and progression to promote CAT

Responsibility of Providers

- Demonstrate that their policies and practices for all types of articulation support the principles

- Seek accreditation by the relevant Quality Council(s)

- In the case of private education providers be registered by the Department of Higher Education and Training

- Avoid unfair exclusionary practices related to CAT

- Collaborate to offer diverse and mutually recognised qualifications

- Set fair and transparent admission criteria that is consistent with national policy

- Undertake collaborative approaches to curriculum development across different institutional types to advance CAT

- Initiate and participate in partnerships with education and training providers to promote CAT

- Develop and maintain an information management system

Responsibility of Recognized Professional Body

- Comply with the SAQA Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation on the NQF

- Including not to apply unfair exclusionary practices in membership admission to the body or when recognising education and training providers

- Initiate and participate in partnerships with education and training providers to promote CAT

Responsbility in Workplaces

- Adhere to the principles and responsibilities as outlined in this policy

- Proactively engage with education and training providers to contribute to the acceptance of new qualifications and a general awareness of the role and function of CAT

- Actively promote the recognition of workplace experience and provide for CAT in collaboration with the Quality Councils

Conclusion

- The relationship between CAT and an NQF must be clearly defined:
  - Do the two systems exist alongside each other?
  - Is CAT part of the NQF (as in South Africa or in India)?

- Adequate consultation results in effective implementation

- A strong conceptual basis must underpin the policy

FURTHER READINGS

- EUROPA - Education and Training - Socrates programme - ECTS - European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

- Erasmus Mundus credits" (PDF). University of Salford. Retrieved 20 May 2012.

- Ordinance 21/30 September 2004 for Application of Credit Transfer and Accumulation System in Higher education institutions, Ministry of education and science, Bulgaria, page 2". Retrieved 15 April 2014.

- ECVET Pilot projects www.cevet.project.eu/ FAQ, Accessed 6 July 2015

- Linking Credit systems and qualifications frameworks- An international analysis. 2010 CEDEFOP publications

MODULE 6

UNDERSTANDING QUALITY ASSURANCE

* Helena SEBAG is Project Manager at DEQA-VET, the German reference point for quality assurance in vocational education and training.

1. Approach

Building an integrated qualification and skill system requires clear linkages between industry needs and skills outcomes for individuals. In VET systems, the quality assurance framework is likely to have four key objectives:

- Improve employability of the workforce (both potential and actual)

- Better matching between training supply and demand

- Better access to VET, in particular to vulnerable or disengaged groups

- Raising the status of VET (bringing some equity with academic/general education)

Quality assurance has proved to be a decisive tool for both modernising and improving the performance and status of VET systems in Europe and elsewhere. In order to ensure VET systems are responsive to labour market skills needs, outcomes must match demand and this requires the supply side of VET systems to be closely linked to industry and to deliver what industry needs through training programmes and qualifications (see box 8: Why focus on quality?).

A common QA framework needs to:

- Cover all aspects of planning, implementing, evaluating and reviewing VET at all levels in the system

- Have an appropriate way of reviewing performance, including self-assessment; and feeding this back into the system in order to ensure continuous improvement

- Include monitoring (external) at both national and state level

Box 11: What is Quality

- Quality is not an easily and well defined concept:
- In general terms, a service or a product is considered of high quality, if it fulfills or even surpasses our expectations ie: is it fit for purpose?
- Different stakeholders with different interests and expectations perceive quality in different way
- In skills systems around the world quality is defined, understood and measured in different ways
- Skill systems make choices about the indicators used to measure their efforts to achieve quality and what relative priority will be placed on the different chosen indicators

- Provide the appropriate measuring tools so that states and providers can monitor and evaluate their performance

2. What is Quality Assurance?

Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) equips people with knowledge, skills and/or competences required in particular occupations or more broadly in the labour market that are recognized as indispensable for meaningful participation in work and life. **Quality assurance** is a component of quality management and is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled' (ISO 9000:2006 norms specifies Quality management systems fundamentals and vocabulary). **Quality control** is a component of QA defined as a set of activities or techniques to ensure that all quality requirements are being met. In order to achieve this purpose, processes are monitored and performance problems are solved. Quality improvement refers to anything that enhances an organisation's ability to meet quality requirements.

The concept of Quality is evolving from 'conforming to the standards and specifications of a product' to quality is to fulfill the requirements of customers and satisfy them'. While quality control fits assembly line control - 'product-focused' –in supply led system, quality assurance is user-oriented: quality is determined and controlled at all stages of the whole product lifetime - fitness for purpose of user as judged by the users

Quality assurance integrates the 'hard side' elements (that is, statistical methods, quality control tools, process standardisation, and improvement, etc.) with the 'soft side' aspects (that is, quality concept, employees' participation, education and training, and quality culture, etc.)

Reform of TVET towards excellence necessitates that TVET decision makers, policy developers, providers and key stakeholders consider three core QA functions:

- defining quality
- measuring quality and
- improving quality

A TVET Quality Framework describes how the system and components of the system:

- define quality - inputs (e.g. training of teachers/trainers) -processes (e.g. how access to TVET is

promoted, teaching) - outcomes (e.g. how VET responds to the changing demands of the labour market

- Measure quality– Current TVET performance against expected standards

- Continually improve quality – closing the gap between current and expected levels of quality - continuous learning

- keep the methodology as simple as possible

- Is sustainable economically, ecologically, socially

TVET QA framework strengthens relevance of TVET outcomes to meet industry and employment requirements and improves the overall system, eventually an improvement in the status of TVET overall as consistency in TVET graduate outcomes - important factor in improving perceptions of TVET by assuring consistency of outcomes. A TVET Quality Assurance Framework places emphasis on the improvement and evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of TVET in terms of increasing employability, improving the match between demand and supply, and promoting better access to lifelong learning, in particu-

lar, for disadvantaged people. It states clear objectives for further development, which need to be continuously reviewed and adapted, according to experiences gained in technological and pedagogical innovations and ongoing evolution of work. A quality framework (Figure 19) presupposes agreement on several methodological and procedural principles, which will guide its implementation.

Figure 19: Features of a Quality Framework

Mission Statement	How do we define Quality? What is our concern?
Process Management	What are our core processes and how do we design them?
Evaluation	How can we check the results?
Continuous Improvement	How can we continuously improve our results?

A unified QA framework that can be used as a common reference across states, sectors and ministries and provides the structure within which all bodies operating across the VET system in India operate is a fundamental requirement. Examples of such frameworks can be found in VET systems across the world and each has a set of common components.

The first and most important component is a set of **objectives** to which all those with responsibility at any level in the system sign up to and which are strategic enough to reflect the policy objectives for the skills system in India. These objectives must be supported by and closely linked to a set of quality **principles**. Without a clear set of objectives it is not possible to build a unified approach to quality and quality assurance. The objectives provide the basis for all other components within the system and importantly can be referenced to ensure that the QA framework and operational systems that support it are meeting national objectives.

Quality Objectives: The purpose of the quality objectives is to specify what the quality assurance system aims to achieve. The objectives are more specific than goals and should serve as the basis for creating policy and evaluating performance at a national, state or organ-

isational level. The quality objectives should act as basic tools that underlie all planning and strategic activities.

Quality Principles: Quality Principles form the framework underpinning the quality assurance system. They are statements, based on the objectives, that should be applied to all schemes and strategies that support quality and quality improvement including quality standards and operating processes.

National Standards

Quality Standards operating nationally act as the benchmark for all activity in vocational education and training systems and form basis of quality assuring qualification frameworks. These provide national reference points for all those bodies operating within the system and against which performance is set.Most systems are based on a detailed set of standards against which activity is measured and in some cases these form the framework for regulation and inspection. The issue of regulation is dealt with later in the paper.

The standards can cover the following:

- Assessment and Certification (Module 7)
- NQF Qualifications (Module 8)
- Teachers and Trainers (Module 9).
- Training Providers (Module 10)

National Indicators

National Indicators provide a tool to measure performance at a national, state or local level. The indicators can be used to assess the quality of provision and the extent to which it is meeting the quality objectives. Year on year they can provide a useful measure in order to monitor improvement.

The indicators give one measure , they are not sufficient on their own to describe what might be happening across the whole VET system, They can form the basis for developing more detailed performance measures and reporting systems that relate to the over-arching objectives for the NSQF and VET. They can provide the basis for describing organisational performance at provider level, the direction and achievements of the system at state and national level and help in the further development of skills policy in order to improve outcomes for the VET system.

Implementing the indicators at system and provider level will need to be introduced in stages as the NSQF

and associated quality assurance mechanisms are introduced. Data collection and reporting systems based on outcomes and outputs rather than input measures will be required in order to make full use of the indicators and these will need to be integrated into operational processes required at both provider and systems level over time so that improvements can be measured and evidence based.

Quality indicators are statistical measures that give an indication of output quality. However, some quality indicators can also give an indication of process quality' (EUROSTAT 2010). The Cedefop (1996) defines them as 'formally recognized figures or ratios used as yardsticks to judge and assess quality performance' . Just as quality assurance mechanisms can be categorised into front-end (input) and back-end (output) mechanisms so can quality indicators:

- those that focus on the inputs to and process of training (front-end)
- those that focus on outcomes or outputs of training (back-end).
- Different quality indicators provide different information so the choice of what indicators to use will depend on the priorities of the QA system

Outcome indicators are a wide range of indicators used to measure quality in skills systems at both the level of training providers and the system as a whole. They are the "harder side" of quality assurance as they are mainly measured quantitatively. Most common indicators include:

- Participation - how many from certain target groups
- Completion - how many finish a program
- Attainment - how many receive a qualification
- Progression - how many move from one program or level to another
- Employment - how many are employed
- Satisfaction - how satisfied are students and employers

Process indicators are the "softer side" as they are assessed qualitatively. They apply to all aspects of the skills system:

- Qualifications / Certification – trust in consistency, robust processes
- Competency Standards – wide consultation, measurable outcomes

- Curriculum and Courses – learning strategies, industry linkages

- Delivery & Assessment – relevance and flexibility, pre-assessment moderation activities, consistency in assessment decisions

- Training Providers - ongoing professional development of staff, able to respond quickly and flexibility to industry

3. The Quality Cycle and the Components of the Quality Assurance Framework

Quality systems are primarily shaped by national characteristics and context. This includes (i) the governance structures, (ii) mechanisms and cultures of the nation state including the institutional capacity and the priority given to reforms, (iii) the structure, processes and cultures of education and training systems, (iii) the location of the 'ownership' of TVET and industry and occupational standards between occupational communities, government and other agencies, (iv) the perceptions of crises (or lack of) in education and training system, (v) the relevance of trans-national and/or regional TVET systems and (vi) available resources.

In order for the QA framework to have an impact the components must be operationalized across the system and there must be clear linkages and **lines of accountability**. The need to ensure that quality and quality assurance is embedded across the whole system, whether re-engineered with new bodies or using the existing structures, is critical. Accountability may be enforced through legislation and/or regulation – either backed by legislation or through a process of self-regulation by participants in the system. The benefits of **regulation**, particularly if changes are made systematically to the existing system, are that a regulatory framework can guide and shape the outcomes. Discussion at the working group meetings indicated a range of views. International experience indicates that in complex systems some form of regulation may be the best tool for providing assurances that the system is operating to a minimum national standard that works towards achieving the objectives set. A set of regulatory requirements or criteria, particularly with regard to qualifications is a common feature where qualification frameworks exist. The nature of regulation, whether statutory of through a self-regulatory mechanism varies.

Other implementation tools commonly include approval/licencing of bodies operating within the system, monitoring or inspection of providers and accreditation of courses and qualifications. All of these are operating to some extent already within the Indian system but currently are not uniform or co-ordinated so that a number of agencies may be operating these processes against different requirements and in different ways. Bringing some degree of commonality to these processes through a clear set of functions that are required and identifying more clearly the roles and responsibilities of each organisation needs to be undertaken if a QA framework is to have an impact on skills outcomes. A trend across VET systems internationally is for the establishment of **a single national body** which sets the national standards and requirements and oversees the system, sometimes using regulatory instruments and the proposal for the NSDA would effectively fulfil this role.

Both the functions required for a robust approach to QA and the nature of the organisations that would be required. There was considerable debate around responsibilities for the various functions identified but all groups agreed that a national qualification body with a regulatory function across the qualification system was required. In working through the outcomes of the group's activities and deliberations the following sections summarise key aspects that have broad agreement.

Figure 20: The quality cycle

The quality cycle of the Eropean Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training

1. Purpose and Plan
Set up clear, appropriate and measurable goals and objectives in terms of policies, procedures, tasks and human resources.

2. Implementation
Establish procedures to ensure the achievement of goals and objectives (eg. development of partnerships, involvement of stakeholders, allocation of resources, and organisational or operational procedures).

4. Review
Deeelop procedures in order to achieve the targeted outcomes 3 ncl.'or new objecuees. after processing feedback key stakeholders conduct discussion and analysis in order to devise procedures for change.

3. Assessment and Evaluation
Design mechanisms for the evaluation of achievements and outcomes by collecting and processing data in order to make informed assessment

1. Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers
   - Share of providers applying internal quality assurance systems defined by law at own initiative
   - Share of accredited VET providers
2. Investment in training of teachers and trainers
   - Share of teachers and trainers participating in further training
   - Amount of funds invested
3. Participation rate in VET programmes
   - Number of participants in VET programmes, according to the type of programme and individual criteria

4. Completion rate in VET programmes
   - Number of persons having successfully completed attended VET programme, according to the type of programmes and individual criteria
5. Placement rate in VET programmes
   - Destination of VET learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and individual criteria
   - Share of employed learners at a designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and individual criteria

6. Utilisation of acquired skills in the workplace
   - Information on occupation obtained by individual after completion of training, according to the type of programme and individual criteria
   - Satisfaction rate of individual and employers with acquired skills competences
7. Unemployment rate
   - According to individual
8. Prevalence of vulnerable groups
   - Percentage of participants in VET classified as disadvantaged groups (in a defined region or catchment area) according to age and gender

   - Success rate of disadvantaged groups according to age and gender
9. Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market
   - Information on mechanism set up to identify changing demands at different levels
   - Evidence of their effectiveness
10. Schemes used to promote better access to VET
   - Information on existing schemes at different levels
   - Evidence of their effectiveness

4. Key Requirements of TVET QA Systems

The table below identifies the key requirements for a functioning QA system:

Table 9: Key requirements for a functioning QA system

Key component	QA Functional Requirement	QA Body Role and Responsibilities	Key Processes
NOS/job description	Provide up to date relevant skills standards that meet employer needs in a particular sector Produce standards that can translate into relevant learning outcomes and competence requirements for courses and qualifications	Ensure standards reflect the needs of employers and are useable and used to underpin skills provision in VET	Collaboration with employers Use of up to date LMI Regular monitoring and review of outcomes and sector needs analysis Updating of standards
Accredited Learning Outcomes and Qualifications	Provide up to date relevant qualifications and accredited learning outcomes that meet employer needs (as reflected in NOS and LMI)	Ensure accredited outcomes and qualifications meet required standards and policy objectives for VET including NSQF requirements and specifications Ensure accredited outcomes and qualifications meet the needs of employers and provide opportunities for students to acquire knowledge and skills needed to succeed Ensure accredited outcomes and qualifications are robust and maintain public and employer confidence in outcomes for students	Standard setting Regulation and/or accreditation of course and qualification developers National Qualification register/database Collaboration/engagement with NOS developers and employers Monitoring/inspection and review (data, reporting)

Key component	QA Functional Requirement	QA Body Role and Responsibilities	Key Processes
Education and training Providers and course delivery	Provide relevant, up to date and high quality teaching and learning opportunities for students Provide processes for continuous improvement of training and assessment based on outcomes and equity for students	Ensure all accredited VET providers are securing the best outcomes for students through high quality and relevant teaching and learning Ensure the quality of both inputs and outcomes in all areas of teaching and learning through processes of accreditation, assessment, monitoring and reporting	Standard setting Regulation and / or accreditation of providers Register accredited providers Monitoring/Inspection Self- assessment Review and reporting (data and reports)
Assessment and Certification	Provide accessible assessment opportunities that are focussed on skills and competence as well as underpinning knowledge Provide accessible assessment opportunities for students that meet their circumstances and requirements including for RPL Provide assessment opportunities that are relevant to NOS and NSQF requirements Provide a robust certification scheme that incorporates outcomes from a range of assessment opportunities including RPL	Ensure assessment is appropriate, robust and accessible to all learners Ensure quality processes are in place to ensure validity of outcomes across VET Ensure the security of the validation and certification scheme/s for VET Ensure the status of certification and public confidence in this	Standard setting Accreditation of certifying bodies Monitoring/ inspection Review and reporting
Student Outcomes	Student outcomes are relevant and of high quality	Ensure all student outcomes from both accredited provision and qualifications is relevant to employers and provides a platform for progression either to further education, training or employment.	Data collection on outcomes Continuous review against skills requirements (LMI and NOS)

In summary the key functional requirements to secure a robust QA framework are:

For NOS and competency standards the establishment of a QA process of planning, implementation and review that ensures only approved bodies which meet national standards are responsible for:

- Development of quality assured, up to date, relevant skills standards that meet employer needs in a particular sector

- Development of standards that can translate into relevant learning outcomes and competence requirements for courses and qualifications

- Maintenance and regular review and updating of NOS

For accredited courses the establishment of a QA process of planning, implementation and review that ensures only approved bodies which meet national standards are responsible for:

- Development of accredited courses based on NOS or units of competency as defined by industry and with clearly specified learning outcomes

- Ensuring courses are designed to lead to a recognised NSQF qualification or certificated outcome

- Ensuring courses are competency based, providing opportunities for students to develop workplace skills, competencies and attributes

- Monitoring and regular review and updating of courses

For NSQF Qualifications and accredited outcomes the establishment of a QA process of planning, implementation and review that ensures that only approved bodies which meet national standards and regulatory requirements are responsible for:

- Development of quality assured, up to date, relevant qualifications and accredited learning outcomes that meet employer needs (as reflected in NOS and LMI)

- Development of qualifications that meet the requirements for the NSQF including assigning a level within the NSQF, assigning credit (where relevant to qualifications and units/modules) and titling and other technical requirements specified by the NSQF

- Development of accredited outcomes and qualifications and associated assessment requirements that meet NSQF standards and policy objectives for VET

- Maintenance and review of qualifications and qualification outcomes to ensure accredited outcomes

and qualifications are robust and maintain public and employer confidence in outcomes for students

■ Provision of accurate and timely data on qualifications and student achievement

For training providers the establishment of a QA process of planning, implementation and review that ensures that only approved providers which meet national standards for delivery, including teaching and learning are responsible for:

■ Providing relevant, up to date and high quality teaching and learning opportunities for students

■ Establishing processes for continuous improvement of training and assessment based on outcomes and equity for students

■ Ensuring the quality of both inputs and outcomes in all areas of teaching and learning through processes of teaching and assessment

■ Monitoring and regular review of teaching, learning, assessment and student outcomes

■ Provision of accurate and timely data on student outcomes and satisfaction ratings

For assessment and certification the establishment of a QA process of planning, implementation and review that ensures that only approved bodies which meet national standards are responsible for:

■ Development of assessment opportunities that are focussed on skills and competence as well as underpinning knowledge

■ Provide accessible assessment opportunities for students that meet their circumstances and requirements including for RPL

■ Provide assessment opportunities that are relevant to NOS and NSQF requirements

■ Ensure quality processes are in place to ensure validity of outcomes

■ Provide a robust certification scheme that incorporates outcomes from a range of assessment opportunities including RPL

■ Ensure the status of certification and public confidence in this

■ Monitoring and regular review of assessment requirements and certification processes

Quality improvement-focused organisations

■ Provide staff the training and tools they need to measure and improve services, consultations, training and assessment provision

■ Use a team-based approach to prioritize improvements and implement them

■ Develop and agree on a plan on how the improvement activities will be implemented

■ Involve stakeholders/ clients since they bring valuable ideas based on their experiences in receiving and delivering services

■ Build motivation for quality improvement - a vision for quality

■ Establish quality improvement teams

■ Dedicate time to measure performance

■ Provide time to openly discuss successes and failures

5. Quality Assurance in the Indian Context

There are many arrangement currently existing in India, which can be used as a basis for a national QA system. A national policy and guidelines are being proposed by the India-EU project and are currently under consideration. Interim arrangements can be based on improvement of current approaches, whilst not slowing down training and assessment provision. There are 'low hanging fruit' that can assist in getting started. Some indicators are already used. The main issue is coordination: working together.

The current arrangements for QA across all aspects of vocational education and training in India are complex. There are 3 key structural elements that make this the case:

■ The current separation of vocational education (largely undertaken through the MHRD) and vocational training (now under the Ministry of skills)

■ State autonomy versus national requirements

■ Differences in practice between the public and private provision of VET and the formal and informal skills and employment sectors

The policy requirements now in place to meet challenging skills targets for all sectors puts an additional pressure on ensuring that not only are targets met in relation to volume but that the reforms and changes improve the quality and relevance of skills training in India. This is not a unique set of circumstances. The reform of VET across Europe and elsewhere has required consideration of autonomous systems already in place across nations and states.

There are currently a number of validating and accrediting bodies, at both national and state level across the sector. Many are well established and have a system for quality control that is understood by those that use it. Others are newly established, for example, the SSCs and are building their approach to qualifications and skills under NSDC guidance. There is therefore a need to take an approach to a unified system that takes account of the context and environment that currently exists, that recognises the work already in train and that brings together organisations in a logical manner and that can evolve in a way that ensures those that use it and are affected by it understand and can apply the measures it requires. Any new approach must be one that improves the quality of outcomes in relation to VET across the system. The work to introduce a unified NSQF is a significant one and its success will be dependent on bringing together, through a unified quality assurance framework, all aspects of its implementation, delivery and outcomes. The existing QA infrastructure focusses largely on quality control of the inputs to VET with an emphasis on validation and accreditation of providers and provision that seeks to ensure products (courses and qualifications) can be delivered. The system is developing in some areas but there is evidence already of overlapping functions across organisations and lack of clarity in relation to national standards and accountabilities. A real and pressing challenge is how to incorporate practice across both the public and private sector and across the rural and urban areas for the benefit of all. At the moment, 10% of workforce receives skill training, of which 2% is formal training and 8% is informal training. there is a huge need for multi-skilled workers.

Although outputs in terms of examination successes and student numbers are measured and accounted within the current systems, measurement of outcomes (that is the quality and relevance of delivery and student outcomes) is less visible. It is this aspect of quality that is increasingly important so that, combined with a unified qualification system that has direct relevance to the skills employers need, both the quantity and quality of skills outcomes is raised across all areas of VET.

However there is a strong emphasis on reforms with the PM calling for greater cross Ministry /agency coordination and 30 crore people to be trained for India and overseas work. International comparability is a key objective throughout the system. Reforms include removing some regulatory burden, meeting the motto One Nation, One standard.

6. Skype Session: The Success Story of the Dual System (Helena Sebag)

- DEQA-VET is a point of contact and service office for questions relating to all aspects of quality assurance and quality development in vocational education and training (VET), DEQA-VET. It pulls together information and expertise, instigates projects and initiatives, and organises events relevant to quality. As the node of the European EQAVET network, it

- Ensures a flow information between national stakeholders and the EQAVET network on each other's QA activities and development.

- Supporting the implementation of the EQAVET work programme.

- Develop concrete measures to support QA and quality development in the German VET sector.

- Raise awareness among national stakeholders of the benefits of applying the principles, methods and tools of quality assurance in VET.

DEQA-VET purpose is the promotion of a "culture of quality " through the application of quality assurance in VET and networking of VET stakeholders and institutions at the German and European level. In DEQA-VET, there are on ne hand 4 staff member at the BIBB (Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training) in Bonn/1 person at the DIPF (German Institute for International Educational Research) in Frankfurt, and on the other hand a national advisory group with representatives of the social partners: employer and employee associations, chambers, Federal and state governments (consultative). The target beneficiaries are social partners, companies, vocational schools, full-time vocational schools, providers of VET, education policy and administration bodies of the Federal and state governments, certification bodies for initial and continuing vocational education and training, VET research institutions.

DEQA-VET is committed to promote the EQAVET indicators which are as follows:

1. Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers

2. Investment in training of teachers and trainers

3. Participation rate in VET programmes

4. Completion rate in VET programmes

5. Placement rate in VET programmes

6. Utilisation of acquired skills in the workplace

7. Unemployment rate

8. Prevalence of vulnerable groups

9. Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market

10. Schemes used to promote better access to VET

The Success-Story of the Dual System …

The success of the Dual system is expressed by EQA-VET indicators

- Participation Rate in VET 54,9% (EQAVET Indicator 3)

- Completion Rate in VET 90% (EQAVET Indicator 4)

- Youth-Unemployment Rate 7,7% (EQAVET Indicator 7)

The legal requirements made to Providers are stated in the Vocational Training Act (BBiG). They include for each training course

- The occupational proficiency

- Development of training regulations and their continuous modernisation, containing

  - Title of the training occupation

  - Period of apprenticeship

  - Training profile

  - Framework training plan

  - Examination standards

- Counselling, monitoring and supervision by the competent bodies:

  - Training aptitude of the company

  - Training aptitude of its training staff (AEVO)

- Documentation of the training

- Training contact and training programmes

- Formulation of basic standards

But there are challenges ahead, such as:

Demand for Skilled Labour

Do we qualify for the right jobs?

How to increase permeability?

Demografic Trends

How to increase the attractiveness of VET?

Social Integration

How to decrease the Transition System and integrate disadvantaged youth?

How to decrease the drop out rate?

European Educational Area

How to increase transparency and mobility?

The Minimum content of a training regulation is as follow:

- Title of the training occupation

- Duration of the traineeship

- Training profile

- Framework training plan

- Examination standards

There is a quality assurance system within the Dual system

FURTHER READINGS

- CEDEFOP, 2009. The relationship between quality assurance and VET certification in the EU Member States. Luxembourg, EU Publication Office

- CEDEFOP, forthcoming. Quality assurance of certification in vocational education and training

- UNESCO, 2005. Guidelines in quality provision in Cross-border Higher Education

- W. Van den Berghe, 1996, Quality Issues and Trends in Vocational Education and Training in Europe. Publication of the CEDEFOP.

MODULE 7

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ASSESSMENT CERTIFICATION

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1. Relation Between Quality Assurance and Certification

Quality assurance of certification processes is fundamental to ensuring that qualifications are generally valued and accepted. It is essential that the players in recognition (certification) systems be subject to quality assurance standards. This ensures consistency across the systems and helps to maintain the legitimacy and value of the system to the individuals participating in it, and to the wider society. It also ensures that those participating in recognition systems are held to the same standard. Inconsistency in developing standards against which individuals are assessed, how they are used across assessment centres or educational institutions and how they are communicated to the user may undermine the confidence of the system. The term certification describes the multiple (and sometimes intermingling) processes of assessing, validating and recognizing learning outcomes, which lead to a qualification. This understanding of the certification process is closely related to the definition of the term qualification used in the NSQF Notification which refers to the issue of qualifications by competent bodies.

While the above definition of qualification refers to the term 'competent body" (like the EQF definition of a qualification), the term 'awarding body' is used as a descriptor of an institution that awards qualification certificates (documents) formally recognizing the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) of an individual, following an assessment and validation procedure.

To judge that a learner has attained a pre-determines level, he/she must be assessed in some form or other and the outcomes of the assessment process must then be validated to establish whether the performance of the learner satisfies the set standards. Consequently, learners are awarded a grade or a pass/fail. If the validation is positive, learning outcomes may be recognised through the award of a qualification or of its component (a unit) by issue of a certificate, document, title or diploma. However, converting a learner's performance on an assessment to a clear indication of attainment (such as a grade or pass/fail), is not as simple as might be thought.

VET qualifications also pose a unique set of challenges related to certification. When compared to general or academic education, these processes are different in VET because of:

- the variety of awarding bodies in VET: ministries, examination boards, VET providers, social partners, sectors skills councils, chambers, etc.,

- the range of actors potentially involved in assessment and validation: these can be VET providers and awarding bodies, but also employers or social partners;

- the nature of learning outcomes to be assessed and validated: compared to academic or general qualifications, learning outcomes in VET are closely related to vocational and occupational activities and evidence of them is diverse and may only be ephemeral or fleetingly available to the assessors themselves.

The process of certification can be seen to encompass 3 sub-processes: Assessment, Validation and Recognition, which can be, or not, carried out by the same organisation. It follows that to quality assure the certification process, each of these sub-processes must also be quality assured.

- with regard to quality assurance of assessment (methods and processes used to establish the extent to which a learner has attained particular knowledge, skills and competence), methods include use of centrally defined assessment criteria/ methods/ precise specifications, use of external examination centres or examiners, use of assessment committees or multiple assessors, and systematic training of assessors;

- quality assurance of validation (the process of confirming that certain assessed learning outcomes achieved by a learner correspond to specific outcomes which may be required for a unit or a qualification) as an independent stage from that of assessment make use of validation committees involving multiple stakeholders to reach consensus or to moderate judgments, and use of centrally set evaluation grids or grading keys to grade performances. The key is that the original judgment is subject t independent third party scrutiny before being confirmed.

- quality assurance of the recognition (the process of attesting officially achieved learning outcomes through the awarding of units or qualifications) stage of the process mainly involves appointment of one or more awarding bodies recognised as competent to award a qualification, which were either appointed, selected or approved by one or more regulatory bodies, or were themselves the regulatory body or bodies.

The way in which certification standards (which form the basis of the overarching QA framework for certification) are developed, as well as their focus (educational, assessment, occupational, etc.) also varies considerably from country to country. While the methods by which these standards are maintained also differed, they rely on two, ostensibly opposite factors: regulation and binding guidelines one the one hand and trust and autonomy on the other. What tends to vary from country to country was the balance between the level of regulation and the level of autonomy. So it is possible to categorize quality-assurance systems of certification into models along a continuum based on the division of responsibilities. It is possible to describe three broad (and inevitably overlapping) models:

The prescriptive model

This model represents one end of the continuum . There may be VET qualifications in some countries whose assessment methods are entirely designed by one awarding body, from design of the assessment criteria, to specification of the exact methodology and content of the assessments. Further this same body may be responsible for marking (scoring) the assessment, quality assurance of the marking, validation (grading) of the qualification and its quality assurance, through to the recognition (awarding of a certificate and the quality assurance (through self or external regulation) of the recognition process. Under such a system, the education provider, while potentially having a great deal of responsibility in other important areas such as teaching, mentoring and even curriculum development, in terms of the certification processes is little more than a conduit between the individual learner and the awarding body. In practice, it is comparatively rare to find such extremes in terms of the division (or lack of) of responsibilities, but the scenario does illustrate the point.

In Germany most VET qualifications come with three certificates; one from the vocational school, one from the employer and one from the chamber. All three are quality assured differently. Probably the most important certificate, the one issued by the chamber which allows learners to practice within an occupational field, is entirely under the jurisdiction of the examination boards, although these are, in turn, regulated by the chamber. The qualifications obtained in vocational training institutes (IEKs) in Greece also fit this model of quality assurance. While some of the practical assessments occur within providers' establishments, they are designed by the Organisation for Vocational Education and Training

(OEEK), assessed by examiners appointed by OEEK and are standardised and graded by those examiners.

The cooperative model

To some extent, this model represents the approximate mid-point of the continuum. Here, for example, while there are some awarding bodies that retain the responsibility of designing assessment criteria and broad methodological boundaries, decisions concerning the exact form and content of the assessments is left to individual providers. The education providers may also be responsible for marking or even grading the examinations but this responsibility is closely overseen by the examinations body, who may themselves be overseen by a regulatory authority. Providers may have to submit their activities to scrutiny, or remain within certain guidelines. They may be required to train their staff to take on some of the quality assurance processes and even to grade learners directly, but the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the quality of the certification process lies within the hands of an external agency. The model essentially relies, therefore, on an element of mutual cooperation and trust, both in formulating practices and in undertaking those practices. This model does often involve separation of responsibilities between the quality assurance of assessment and the quality assurance of validation, even if exactly where the separation occurs varies.

The Irish system of VET quality assurance is very close to the cooperative model. The assessment process is based on qualifications standards that are defined in the national framework of qualifications (NFQ). The Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC, the main awarding body for VET qualifications) sets certain requirements concerning the range of assessment methods that are accepted as valid and reliable or the need to put in place certain process (the internal and external verification process). However, the assessment methods and criteria, and the assessment programme, are defined by the provider together with the training programme. These are than approved by FETAC, which also monitors how they are implemented.

In the UK-England, the best example of the cooperative model is national vocational qualifications (NVQs) and apprenticeships. These are based on achieving learning outcomes consistent with national occupational standards. However, the quality assurance of assessment and validation are responsibilities shared by accredited providers and awarding bodies, all overseen by Ofqual, which reports directly to the Parliament, and (in the case

of NVQs), in accordance with a code of practice for quality assurance.

The self-regulated model

This model seems the antithesis of the prescriptive model, lying at the opposite end of the continuum of division of responsibilities. In this case, the VET provider is also the awarder of the qualification certificates, taking on the responsibility of quality assuring all aspects of the certification process, without deferring to any higher governmental or sub-governmental agency.

An example of the self-regulated model would appear to be that of apprenticeships in Greece, which tend to be entirely under the regulation of the providers, from training and curriculum decisions through to grading and accreditation. It is likely that the quality assurance of private (non-State-funded) CVET in many countries in the EU follows this model. Such a model prevails where the identification of needs tends to be specific to an employer/occupation and that the provision is privately funded given the kudos associated with the branding of the certificate. – be it a professional body or a well-known employer.

Perhaps the most common example of the self-regulated model, alongside that of CVET in many countries, is VET at a tertiary level in universities. Most universities in the EU appear to be unitary awarding authorities in their own rights, acting as providers and awarders of qualifications. While some are overseen by other external bodies, often (as in the case of Ireland and the UK-England) this arrangement is mostly voluntary, with universities working.

together and with the external agency (in Ireland the National Qualifications Authority and in UK the Qualifications Assurance Agency) to provide self-determined quality assurance principles and practices.

2. Assessment Unpacked

Defining assessment

Assessment is the process of measurement. It is a process by which evidence is gathered and judged/evaluated by an Assessment Practitioner in order to decide whether an individual has demonstrated the required skills, understanding and knowledge when compared with a pre-determined standard.

The outcome of the assessment - or measurement - will only hold value if it is measuring what it is supposed to measure (ie it is valid) and that it is done so in a secure, robust and reliable manner (ie it is reliable).

In the education and training sectors, policy drivers influence the approach taken when designing assessment strategies. For example, if the purpose is to select, rank order or sift according to learner achievement then the assessment will be largely norm-referenced, whereas if the policy is to confirm mastery, ie that the learner can do, does know, does understand, then the assessment will be standards-referenced. In the skills sector, as in most countries, India has adopted a standards-referenced model.

With standards-referenced models of assessment, the process of assessment is to establish that candidates have met the required industry-defined standards (the NOS or other nationally-adopted skills standards) and the outcomes reported as 'competent' or 'not yet competent'.

Assessment principles

Irrespective of the chosen assessment strategy and selected method/s of assessment, assessment systems and practice should adhere to a common set of Assessment Principles. The Principles should allow for flexibility in their interpretation according to the variety of purposes for which assessment is used. They should also reflect international norms: important, given the NSQF ambition to achieve international equivalency.

Assessment principles

- *Validity* (that the selected assessment method attests to the pre-determined content, skills, behaviours)-

- *Reliability* (the assessment generates the same outcome over time and place, irrespective of the personnel making the judgement/decision)-

- *Comparability* (the assessment decisions/judgements align wherever multiple assessment bodies are assessing against the same standards/benchmarks) –

- *Manageability* (the assessment is manageable and practical for all concerned and remains cost-effective as well as efficient and is capable of scaling-up)-

- *Accessibility* (the assessment avoids placing unnecessary barriers to the demonstration of attainment)

- *Transparency* (the assessment criteria and methodology are clearly identified and shared with teachers/trainers and candidates; similarly, assessment practice is open to external scrutiny).

To support the embedding of these Assessment Principles into current assessment practice, it is assumed that organisations and individuals with responsibility for assessment will:

- demonstrate high levels of integrity and accountability- commit to the avoidance of conflicts of interest and be independent of the employer or training organisation-

- support the development of a high quality, professional community of assessment bodies and professional assessment practitioners.

Uses of assessment

Assessment may be used in different ways and on different occasions according to its purpose. Such uses of assessment (with clarification) include:

- Diagnostic (finding out what's known and what gaps there might be.

- Formative (checking that learning is happening)

- Summative (tying in all aspects of learning through a final application)-

- Internal/External (allowing the teacher/trainer/supervisor, as assessor, to make judgments v. an independent, third party judge)-

- High stakes/Low stakes (leading to License to Practice v. recognition to motivate)-

- Work-based/simulated (performance in the workplace/simulation requiring integrated technical and soft skills)

Depending on the purpose or use of assessment, then the choice of assessment method or tool might vary as well as the relative importance of each of the Assessment Principles.

Assessment methods/tools

There are a variety of means by which learners' knowledge, understanding and the practical application of acquired skills may be assessed. In the case of NSQF qualifications the choice will usually be prescribed by the standard-setting body.

Assessment methods/tools include:

- Observation – of individual performance and/or within a group (of process, attitudes, behaviours and application of skills).
- practical assessment (of completed artefact).
- witness/third party evidence (from workplace/from trainer oral and written questioning- simulation (role play, scenario-building to replicate work-place).
- course work (structured in line with pre-determined standards of performance) – assignments/reports/projects.
- professional discussion.
- Evidence of own work from the work-place.

Each assessment method has its advantages and limitations; it is the experience and expertise of the Assessment Practitioner, in making the selection, who builds on the advantages and overcomes the limitations.

Figure 21: Stages in assessment (the assessment life cycle)
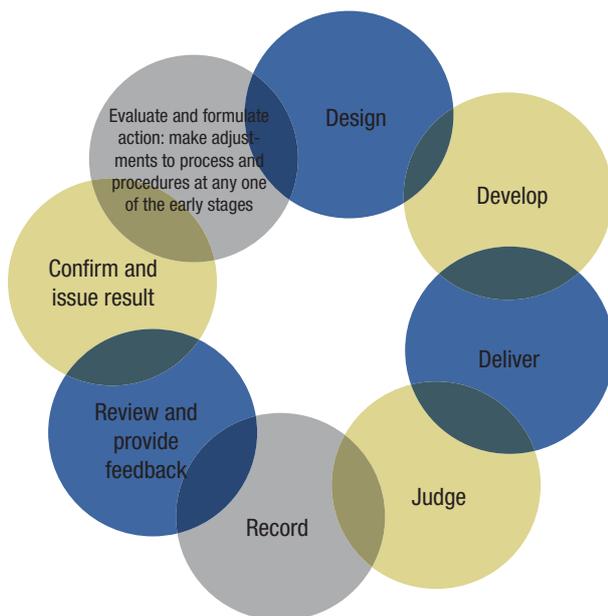
To support Assessment Bodies and Assessment Practitioners in their understanding of how the Assessment Principles may be applied to their work, it is useful to consider assessment in terms of a series of stages or, given the inclusion of evaluation & action planning, a lifecycle. (This lifecycle will form the basis of the standards required to be evidenced by Assessment Bodies seeking accreditation within the NSQF Quality Framework).

Each stage in the cycle is briefly described below together with an indication of which Assessment Principles must be given particular attention:

Design – the stage where the assessment strategy/framework, assessment criteria and selected methods are determined by the purpose of the qualification, the level of demand required by the NSQF Level and are in line with all the Assessment Principles - all Principles, but Validity is paramount. (Where relevant, the assessment strategy must align with the agreed industry standard and, as appropriate, the international standard)

Development – where the chosen assessment tools/methods together with supporting documentation required by both Assessors and candidates are developed and, as required, specific guidance for the organisation of the assessment session (Reliability, Minimising Bias and Manageability uppermost)

Delivery – the stage where the assessment tools/methods are deployed. This includes standardisation of Assessors prior to the live assessment sessions to agree acceptable variations in performance, remove ambiguities and establish confidence that the appropriate standard of performance will be recognized and recorded. (Reliability, Minimising Bias, Comparability, Transparency uppermost).

Judging – at this stage Assessors exercise their professional judgement in line with the required standards of performance and in line with the guidance given at the pre-assessment standardisation event (Reliability, Validity uppermost)

Recording – the stage at which Assessment decisions are recorded (Reliability and Validity uppermost, but all relevant)

Reporting – this stage will follow procedures and protocols laid down by the assessment and/or certifying body

Standardisation/validation – the stage where assessment decisions are independently reviewed in line with pre-determined standard of performance. (Reliability, Validity and Transparency uppermost)

Confirmation and issue of results – (All Principles)

Evaluation and Feedback – this stage requires a systematic review of how assessments have performed with adjustments, as required, being made to procedures & processes at any one of earlier stages, including the identification of training needs (how the Assessment

Principles have been reflected in each of the previous stages will form the basis of such evaluations)

A quality assurance model underpins the working of the lifecycle, hence the final stage of evaluation and feedback. Each stage should have defined processes which are to be followed, with documentation and records available for external scrutiny. Such records will be used to deal with requests for information in line with Complaints and Appeals.

Notwithstanding the importance of quality assurance, the role of the assessment practitioner engaged atevery stage of the lifecycle is critical. This staged approach allows for the clear articulation of functional responsibility which, in turn, may be grouped into defined job roles and responsibilities.

Quality control and quality assurance

Quality control

Assessment Bodies should define the processes they will use to control the quality of work at each stage of the lifecycle. Where assessment tools are being developed, however, quality control becomes critical. Tools should be developed in line with the Assessment Principles and should comprise both the assessment itself and the necessary accompanying rubric/marking guide for Assessors. This applies to all assessment methods: theory papers, observation, assessment of completed artefacts, etc. Both the assessment tool itself and its accompanying rubric/marking guide should be cross-referenced to the pre-determined learning outcomes/standards. (In the case of NOS-based assessments, there should be clarity of cross-referencing to the PCs/Units.)

First versions of the assessment tool and accompanying rubric/marking guide should have a minimum of one external/independent review before final approval as well as internal sign off by senior Assessment Practitioner.

Prior to the first live assessment session, it is essential that a pre-assessment standardisation exercise takes place in which Assessors will become familiar with the requirements of the rubric/marking guide and agreement reached on what permissible variations there might be when arriving at judgments of meeting the required standard.

Quality control is also practiced at the point of review of initial results, standardisation/validation of results and final confirmation. There should be clear lines of responsibility for sign off at each stage prior to the result being forwarded, as appropriate, to the relevant certifying body.

Quality Assurance

All processes within the assessment lifecycle, as previously indicated, will be subject to an overarching QA model operated by the Assessment Body.

In addition, a quality assurance model will operate at the level of Assessment Practitioners, covering their recruitment, training, standardisation activity, deployment, monitoring, reviewing and, finally, the evaluation of their performance. For each activity, clearly articulated processes and criteria will be in place against which Assessment Practitioners will be managed and supported.

Where Assessment (and Certifying) Bodies seek to work within the requirements of the NSQF, then their internal QA processes will be required to align within the NSQF Quality Assurance Framework.

Building a community of professional Assessment Practitioners

Given the high premium placed on assessment, it is important that a national Assessment Guidelines supports the development of a community of professional assessment practice at the organisational as well as at the level of the individual.

This means that:

- Accredited Assessment Bodies have clearly defined assessment policies and systems that are embedded and owned by management Accredited Assessment Bodies have demarcated roles and responsibilities for their Assessment Practitioners.

- Accredited Assessment Bodies support the ongoing professional development of their permanent and contractual employees.

- Assessment practice, wherever it takes place, adheres to the Assessment principles

- Assessment decisions are appropriately documented, recorded and issued and that responsibility and accountability for such decisions is transparent in the system

- Assessment Practitioners have opportunities to achieve qualifications and have clear routes for career progression

3. Current Practice and Proposed Actions in India

Practice of current system	Proposed intervention
1. Are SSCs designing fit for purpose assessment strategies?	PURPOSE OF INTERVENTION
2. Are VTPs ensuring trainees are appropriately prepared for assessment?	To ensure the system is robust enough to scale up the system is capable of continuous improvement the certification process is rigorous, defensible, holds value & status confidence & credibility in the system the system is capable of achieving its goal of international equivalence/recognition
3. Are the assessment tools fit for purpose?	
4. Are A/bodies following robust/documented procedures for development of assessment tools?	
5. Are A/bodies ensuring consistency/security of delivery of assessment?	• Draft an Assessment Guidelines capturing the required stages of the lifecycle
6. Where more than one a/body involved, how do we know the assessments are comparable?	• Review & evaluate existing practice re robustness, scalability, continuous improvement
7. Are the Assessment practitioners appropriately trained & supported?	• Train assessment practitioners in line with acknowledged good assessment practice
8. Are the posted results valid & reliable?	• Introduce systematic reporting to assist accountability & transparency
9. Where more than one a/body involved, how do we know the assessments are comparable?	• Use standardised procedures & documentation with regard to assessment practitioners: recruitment, training, deployment, monitoring
10. Are the Assessment practitioners appropriately trained & supported?	• Monitor and review practice
11. Are the posted results valid & reliable?	• Promote informal networking of assessment bodies and of assessment personnel
12. Where more than one a/body involved, how do we know the assessments are comparable?	
13. Are the Assessment practitioners appropriately trained & supported?	
14. Are the posted results valid & reliable?	

4. Regulation of Qualifications in the UK: A Briefing Note

(To note that there is no single over-arching regulatory system in the UK: responsibility for this is delegated to the level of the country concerned, although, in practice, each regulator follows similar, if not identical, practice. This background briefing note refers to the regulation of Vocational Qualifications in England)

Regulation

Regulation of qualifications in England is effected via the regulation of the organisations that design, develop, operate and award the qualifications. The focus of regulation is therefore strategic, putting the onus on the organisation to prove that it meets - and continues to meet - the regulatory criteria. The regulator, Ofqual, exercises oversight through initial approval and on-going audit, including a requirement that regulated organisations submit annual Statements of Compliance. Regulated organisations are known as awarding organisations. Once regulated - recognised is the official term - the awarding organisation then submits its qualifications on to Ofqual's central qualifications' register.

The regulator is independent of government: the Chief Regulator - head of Ofqual - is accountable to Parliament, in the same way that the Chief Education Inspector, the head of Ofsted, the independent monitoring/review body of publicly funded education & training, is accountable. Both bodies, therefore, are seen to provide an invaluable, independent role by overseeing the quality of publicly funded education, training & the certificated outcomes achieved by learners and trainees.

There are almost 200 regulated organisations in England. These vary from small, specialist, sector-specific awarding organisations to very large, multi-sector, international organisations, such as Pearson. They are all required, however, to demonstrate compliance in line with Ofqual's requirements.

The awarding & qualifications' sector in England - and the UK generally - operates as a market. Educational and training providers, including employers, exercise choice when selecting the most appropriate qualification to meet the needs of their learners/trainers/employees. If the course is to be funded from the public purse, however, then the provider must ensure the qualification chosen is both one offered by a regulated awarding organisation and is on the central government's list of 'approved' qualifications.

Central Government's role in the qualifications & awarding business - beyond policy development - is limited to that of determining which qualifications- and courses - it will fund from the public purse. The funding is for both the course delivery and payment of the qualification fee. Two government departments are relevant here: the Dept for Ed (DfE) which has responsibility for 14-18 learners and the qualifications they take, as well as shared responsibility for Apprenticeship programmes and the associated qualifications; the Dept for Business, Innovation & Skills, (BIS), which shares responsibility for Apprenticeships and has sole responsibility for adult training, skills development and the qualifications/courses considered critical for older learners. Both Depts publish annual lists via their agencies of which qualifications are eligible for public funding. In practice, the content of such lists reflects Government's current education/skills development priorities.

It follows, therefore, that most awarding organisations seek to get their qualifications on to the relevant lists managed by government departments and their relevant agencies. (BIS has an agency, Skills funding Agency, SfA, which is responsible for this). To do so, they must not only meet Ofqual's regulatory requirements but also any further requirements laid down by the Gov Dept. In both cases, where the qualification is deemed to meet a training, skills development need, the demonstrable involvement of industry/employers in the design, development and delivery of the qualification is essential.

For awarding organisations to operate successfully in the market, therefore, it is critical that their qualifications, as a minimum, are attractive to the customer, ie the education, training provider and employer by meeting the following requirements:

- being regulated and on 'a list', therefore eligible for public funding

- demonstrate evidence of demand, ie endorsement by industry and/or HE

- provide for progression (clear sign posts for successful candidates to where the qualification might lead)

- ease of delivery, manageability of assessment, good support materials

- excellent customer service in support of course & qualification delivery

- affordability

In recent years, the evidence that awarding organisations need to provide in support of their submission of qualifications to Ofqual's qualification register as well as to the approved lists operated by both DfE and BIS, has focussed more and more on the nature and extent of employer involvement/engagement in the design & development process of the qualification. The onus is therefore on the awarding organisation to put considerable effort into establishing, maintaining and enhancing their direct links with industry, at the level of both individual employer as well as their representative bodies, such as SSCs.

The role of the regulator, Ofqual, and the additional requirements laid down by the government of the day via its 'approved for funding lists' are, between them, intended to safeguard the public when making choices in the awarding & qualification market.

Isabel Sutcliffe (Isabel.Sutcliffe@Pearson.com)
13/2/15

5. SKYPE SESSION
The Role of OfQUAL
(Julie Swan)

The English context: in England, Awarding organisations design, develop, deliver and award qualifications. They are responsible for assessment and for certification. They are not responsible for teaching, although many awarding organisations provide materials to support teaching and learning. In many sectors/for some qualifications awarding organisations compete with each other for business, for a share of the market. Regulation is 'optional' – unless public funding for providers/students is sought. Many awarding organisation seek regulation even when it is not needed for funding. OFQUAL regulate about 160 awarding organisations (AOs) which between them make available about 20,000 different qualifications – some are taken in very large numbers, some are very specialist. Awarding organisations include professional bodies, commercial organisations, charities. Some offer a wide range of qualifications, others provide qualifications in one niche area only. OFQUAL do not regulate degrees.

OfQUAL aims to intervene to address unhelpful market pressures - eg a 'race to the bottom', to intervene so qualifications are comparable when they need to be, to allow people to access information that will help them decide which qualification is best for them and finally to enable awarding organisations to be innovative and responsive and to avoid unnecessary burden - we focus our regulations on outcomes not process.

How do we regulate

We 'recognise' organisations to award regulated qualifications, if we are satisfied with their Identity, constitution and governance, their integrity, their Resources and financing, their competence. Once recognised we hold awarding organisations to account for the quality and standards of their qualifications

Once recognised an awarding organisation must comply on an on-going basis with our Conditions of recognition. he Conditions cover both the organisation's governance and resources and the lifecycle of a qualification. We check their compliance by looking both at the way an awarding organisations designs, delivers, marks and awards qualifications (its systems) and by looking at individual qualifications.

We try to target our intervention. When we decide where we direct our resources we consider the impact- if something went wrong with a qualification and/or an awarding organisation, taking into account how a qualification is used (what it's for), the market factors (e.g. are there multiple providers competing to provide similar qualifications), the employment sector (e.g. strength of institutions/mechanisms to drive the right content for occupational qualifications), the underlying funding – private vs public purchasersand the internal drivers for high standards (e.g. professional body oversight)

We can take action if an awarding organisation breaches or is likely to breach a Condition. We can, for example direct the organisation to comply, fine the organisation, withdraw recognition and we can also use other forms of influence to bring about the changes needed. We are increasingly focusing on the validity of qualifications. Validity is the degree to which it is possible to measure

Figure 22: The general conditions of recognition

Part 1: The awarding organisation		
A: Governance	A1	Suitability for continuing recognition
	A2	Establishment in the EU or the EFTA
	A3	Safeguards on change of control
	A4	Conflicts of interest
	A5	Availability of adequate resources and arrangements
	A6	Identification and management of risks
	A7	Management of incidents
	A8	Malpractice and maladministration
B: The AO and Ofqual	B1	The role of the responsible officer
	B2	The annual statement to Ofqual
	B3	Notification to Ofqual of certain events
	B4	Notice to provide information to Ofqual
	B5	Representations regarding qualifications
	B6	Cooperation with Ofqual
	B7	Compliance with Regulatory Documents
	B8	Compliance with undertakings given to Ofqual
C: Third Parties	C1	Arrangements with third parties
	C2	Arrangements with Centres
	C3	Arrangements with publishers
Part 2 - The regulated qualification		
D: General requirements for regulated qualification	D1	Fitness for purpose of qualifications
	D2	Accessibility of qualifications
	D3	Reviewing approach
	D4	Responding to enquiries and complaints procedures
	D5	Compliance of qualifications with Regulatory Documents
	D6	Compliance of units developed by others with Regulatory Documents
	D7	Management of the withdrawal of qualifications
	D8	Making available information to meet Teachers' needs

E: Design and development of qualifications	E1	Qualifications having an objective and support
	E2	Requirements on qualification titling
	E3	Publication of a qualification specification
	E4	Ensuring an assessment is fit for purpose and can be delivered
	E5	Assurance that qualifications complywith the conditions
	E6	Submitting qualifications to the Register
F: Providing qualifications to purchasers	F1	Information on fees and features of a qualification
	F2	Packaging qualifications with other products or services
	F3	Invoicing
G: Setting and delivering the assessment	G1	Setting the assessment
	G2	Language of the assessment
	G3	Use of language and stimulus materials
	G4	Maintaining confidentiality of assessment materials
	G5	Registration of Learners
	G6	Arrangements for Reasonable Adjustments
	G7	Arrangements for Special Consideration
	G8	Completion of the assessment under required conditions
	G9	Delivering the assessment
H: From marking to issuing results	H1	Marking the assessment
	H2	Moderation where an assessment is marked by a Centre
	H3	Monitoring the specified levels of attainment for a qualification
	H4	Adjudication by Ofqual of specified levels of attainment for a qualification
	H5	Results for a qualification must be based on sufficient evidence
	H6	Issuing results
I: Appeals and certificates	I1	Appeals process
	I2	Compliance with Ofqual's appeals and complaints process
	I3	The design and content of certificates
	I4	Issuing certificates and replacement certificates
J: Interpretation and definitions	J1	Interpretation and definitions

what needs to be measured by implementing assessment procedures. Valid qualification means primarily good educational outcomes

For a qualification to be valid:

- it must have a recognised purpose

- The knowledge, skills and understanding that comprise the qualification content must be valued by end users

- The performance described by each result must be an accurate reflection of what that candidate can do outside the test or assessment environment

- The assessments must classify candidates' abilities reliably

We have a Qualification framework in which each qualification receives a level. It includes 1 – 8 plus 3 Entry levels. The level indicates the relative level of demand of different qualifications. We have mapped the levels to the European Qualifications Framework – this helps mobility.

Table 11: EQF and the Qualifications and credit framework

EQF	QCF
	Entry (1)
	Entry (2)
Level 1	Entry (3)
Level 2	Level 1
Level 3	Level 2
Level 4	Level 3
Level 5	Level 4/5
Level 6	Level 6
Level 7	Level 7
Level 8	Level 8

We are planning to introduce a new framework for regulated qualifications that will:

- retain the levels, but introduce new level descriptors

- introduce a consistent way of describing the size of qualifications – which is the time it typically takes learners to complete a qualification

- help people understand the range of qualifications on offer - but it can only provide partial information

The main challenges are to make sure that the qualification covers the right content to the right standard, especially when there isn't a common, clearly described view within a sector about what people must know, understand and be able to do for specific roles. Expectations about what qualifications can and should be expected to do must be managed. Considering the important of assessment in qualifications, building assessment expertise into the system is urgent, especially the assessment of generic skills, including the 'softer skills' employers value, alongside technical skills. It is not easy to achieve an appropriate balance between reliability, validity and manageability (including cost), avoiding inappropriate statements about the 'equivalence' of different qualifications.

OfQUAL strives to fulfil its role in a wider national and international system.

FURTHER READING

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MODULE 8

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF QUALIFICATIONS

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All organisations approved to develop qualifications within a NQF must comply with all the design specifications relevant to their responsibilities within the NQF. A detailed set of requirements is developed by the body responsible for the NQF nationally so that an appropriate approval process can be established for all qualifications within the NQF.

1. The Idea of Standard

Conceptualisations of the word 'standard' vary considerably according to the context in which it is used. For example, when purchasing an item of clothing (a pair of jeans) which comes in various styles, the term 'standard fit' might be used to imply something that is commonplace or unadorned with additional, optional features. Even within educational contexts, the word is used with different meanings. The complaint can be heard that educational 'standards are falling' when what is really implied is that educational attainment or achievement is falling. Alternatively, one might hear standards being referred to as a set of benchmarking criteria: the definition of a 'minimum standard' of attainment below which performances would be unacceptable.

In the context of education and training, this latter conceptualisation of the word standard is used in various instances: in general, standards are characterized by the fact that they are set by a certain authority and describe criteria which characterize either the average or the minimum performance, tasks, outcomes, etc. expected. In relation to qualifications and certification processes, according to a Cedefop study concerning the development of qualification standards within Europe, these standards are considered to be norms and specifications applying to assessment, educational pathways or targeted occupations. The following types of standards can be distinguished:

(a) assessment standards: may specify the object of assessment and performance criteria. These are typically the standards used for the certification process;

(b) occupational standards: may specify the professional tasks and activities the holder of a qualification is supposed to be able to carry out, and the competences needed for that purpose. Occupational standards are often set through a dialogue with stakeholders in the economic world and reflect the needs of the labour market and of society more generally. They are often the basis for deriving the other two types of standards.

(c) educational standards: may define the expected outcomes of the learning process leading to the award of a qualification. These standards relate to education and training and are the basis for defining appropriate teaching and training methodologies and approaches.

Not all countries distinguish between these three types of standards or define them centrally (Cedefop, 2008). While in some cases, for example, only the educational standards are defined centrally and are used for certification, elsewhere the distinction is very clear. Further, in some countries the term used to refer to national standards may differ from the three categories above, as in those countries using the term National Curricula rather than standards. However in most cases even though different words are used the rationale behind these standards is:

■ that of the labour market requirements for a profession: **occupational standards**;

■ that of the educational programme and what the training programme is expected to deliver: **educational standards**;

■ that of the certification process and of assessment requirements and criteria: **assessment standards.**

The table below indicates how selected countries deal with standards.

Table 12: Examples from European Countries (Source CEDEFOP)

Country	Type of standards	Description
CZECH REPUBLIC	Currently: educational standards Future: Assessment standards	Currently assessment in IVET is based on educational standards (curriculum) and the assessment criteria are not standardised. In CVET there are no centrally set standards for the moment. With the introduction of the NQF, qualifications are undergoing reform and will be based on qualifications standards. Qualifications standards will be the basis for curricula and also for assessment standards (in the NQF). The latter will be progressively introduced as the basis for assessment.

Country	Type of standards	Description
GERMANY	Assessment standards (*Prüfungsanforderungen*)	These are defined together with educational and occupational standards and have the characteristics of legislation.
GREECE	Educational standards	Educational standards are used by the awarding body (theoretical part) and providers (practical part) to design assessment. However, their use for assessment is not regulated.
SPAIN	Educational standards (*módulos formatives*)	These standards define the education and training content, the competences to be achieved and the assessment criteria.
FINLAND	Educational standards	Assessment is based on the standards defined in curricula. Competence-based qualifications: assessment standard Competence-based qualifications contain the training and assessment standards.
FRANCE	Assessment standards (*référentiel de certiication*)	Assessment standards are defined as part of the qualification definition when registered in the national repertory of qualifications. For sectoral qualifications assessment is also based on assessment standards
IRELAND	Qualification standards (as defined in the award specifications)	Award specifications contain a description of learning outcomes and of assessment techniques.
ROMANIA	Qualification standards	These define the competence to be achieved and the performance criteria for assessment.
UK	Assessment standards	Based on occupational standards, all units within the qualifications and credit framework (QCF) contain assessment criteria.

2. Quality Assurance of Qualifications

Life cycle of a qualification

Identification of needs

Qualifications consist of the combination of relevant training components (units, modules, semesters...) derived from the National Occupational Standards (when they are available) or from a reliable job descriptions. NOS or job descriptions provide the competences (performance criteria in the case of NOS) which need to be developed for a person to be deemed competent. Occupational standards are developed by industry experts. They provide a way of deciding whether or not a staff is performing a function in the organisation to a standard that employers expect. The performance criteria need to be translated into learning outcomes for a training purpose (e.g.in India Curriculum Packages, see box below). Learning outcomes are later developed by awarding bodies, assessors or trainers. Qualifications are based on the achievement of learning outcomes which specify the knowledge, skills and understanding required at a specific level, as the result of a process of learning.

"**Curriculum packages:** the competency-based curriculum packages would consist of syllabus, student manual, trainers guide, training manual, trainer qualifications, assessment and testing guidelines and multi-media package and e-material. This will be developed for each NSQF level and when relevant for specific qualification packs (QPs identified by the SSCs. This may be done by such agencies as Ministries/Departments, Sector Skills Council and Regulatory bodies may designate or any other body in accordance with the NSQF.NSQF curricula should be modular, allowing for skill accumulation and facilitating exit and entry. Curricula design will also be aligned to a credit framework that reflects credit earned and competency acquired. Training of trainers would also be aligned to the NSQF." (NSQF Notification).

Qualification development

Qualifications are composed of learning blocks (components, units, modules) presented in a format that identifies the level, size and a precise description of the content of the qualification. If there is a credit system, they may be rules of combination of units or credit. Rules of combination specify the credits that need to be achieved, through the completion of particular units, for a qualification to be awarded. All NQF units/modules identify a credit value for the unit which specifies the number of credits that will be awarded to a learner who has achieved the learning outcomes of the unit/modules. The Indian NSQF Notification specifies that the NSQF is a quality assurance framework, stating that "it facilitates the awarding of credit and supports credit transfer and progression routes within the Indian education and training system. It seeks to help everyone involved in education and training to make comparisons between qualifications offered in the country, and to understand how these relate to each other".

All NQF units/components must be capable of assessment and set a clear assessment standard for the unit. All NQF unit contain assessment criteria that specify the standard a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of that unit have been achieved. level: all units must be positioned at a single NQF level that is consistent with the level of achievement expressed in the learning outcomes of the unit. In a given qualification, not all units or learning blocks need be of the same level in the framework. The global (best-fitting) level can only be decided against a complete job description which covering all the NQF descriptors or against the learning outcomes of the training programme.

Qualifications are fit for purpose and ensure there are no features in the design of the qualification that could disadvantage any group of learners.

The qualification developer must build evidence of the need for this qualification. This evidence may be gathered in answering the following questions:

What evidence is there that the qualification is needed?

* the purpose of the qualification - eg designed to get people into work, a qualification intended for people already in work, a qualification to allow people to add new skills based on technological change.

* The starting point for the creation of the qualification – eg request from sectoral stakeholders, evidence of a gap in the framework, link with government policy, evidence of an emerging need.

* Research and consultation – eg occupational mapping, stakeholder views, support from relevant stakeholders.

process (es) by which the qualification/QP/NOS was validated nclude information about the organisations which participated in the validation, the feedback they offered and the steps taken to address issues raised by the validation.

What is the estimated uptake of this qualification and what is the basis of this estimate?

Which employers will use the qualification and why? Who is expected take the qualification?

What investigations were carried out to test the likely uptake of the qualification and what steps were taken to ensure that the investigations truly reflected this market and provided robust estimates of uptake?

What steps were taken to ensure that the qualification(s) does/do not duplicate already existing or planned qualifications in the NSQF?

Allocation to the framework

NQF qualification file (that is the set of information which will allow the levelling of the qualification and its allocation to the framework) must usually specify:

■ the qualification's objective, which lead to a benefit for learners.

■ the qualification title which present in a standard format the level, size in notional hours and a description of its content.

■ any other qualification which a Learner must have completed before taking the qualification,

- any prior knowledge, skills or understanding which the Learner is required to have before taking the qualification,

- units which a Learner must have completed before the qualification will be awarded and any optional routes,

- any other requirements which a Learner must have satisfied before the Learner will be assessed or before the qualification will be awarded,

- the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of the qualification (giving a clear indication of their coverage and depth),

- the method of any assessment and any associated requirements relating to it,

- the criteria against which Learners' levels of attainment will be measured (such as assessment criteria or exemplars),

- any specimen assessment materials, and

- any specified levels of attainment in the NQF. Accreditation will also ensure that the qualification submitted reflects the framework level that is claimed for it.

The main purpose of the qualification file is the levelling of the qualification. Qualifications in the NSQF should be trusted by learners and employers. A lot of this trust will relate to assessment. On the one hand, employers will want to be sure that holders of a qualification have been tested to show that they can carry out the outcomes described to the standards set in the qualification; and on the other hand, learners will want to be sure that the assessment is fair and that the same pass/fail judgements are made for all candidates. This will have to be in line with the national policy& guidelines.

The assessment strategy is the main instrument of proof of levelling. An assessment strategy should ensure that the assessments used for the qualification are appropriate for the aims and outcomes of the qualification. This is especially important in relation to vocational qualifications which are designed to develop competence in learners. The strategy should ensure that the assessment instruments which are used generate sufficient evidence for all the assessable outcomes of the qualification – these may include practical outcomes, knowledge and understanding, the ability to integrate skills and knowledge, and the capacity to adapt to circumstances. The strategy should include opportunities for assessments which cover/integrate different outcomes and ensure that the amount of assessment to be undertaken is manageable. The cen-

tral issue is about the degree of flexibility in the assessment of the qualification and how the arrangements for gathering and evaluating evidence of previously gained competence will ensure that holders of the qualification can demonstrate the outcomes in the qualification.

Arrangements relating to the quality assurance of assessment include:

- how will it be ensured that assessment judgements are always made on valid and sufficient evidence?

- what steps are taken to ensure that assessment judgements are consistent from assessor to assessor?

- how will problems of unreliable or unfair assessment, misconduct by assessors, or other kinds of malfeasance be dealt with?

- Do providers understand the standards in the qualification – capacity-building work, support materials, etc.

Table 13: Summary of the German qualification file

Name of the qualification			
Documents and source texts used			
Proposed level allocation			
Area of competences	Categories/subcategories	Level	Justification/ explanation s
Professional competence	Knowledge (depth and breadth)		
	Skills (instrumental and systemic skills, judgement)		
Personal competence	Social competence (team4eadership skills, involvement and communication)		
	Autonomy (autonomous responsibility/responsibility, reflectiveness, learning competence)		
Difficulties in allocation			

Draft Approval Criteria in India

The qualification has been created by an authorised body.

The qualification must:

- meet a genuine economic or social need

- contain well-founded standards based on appropriate research and/or consultation

- be awarded using quality assurance arrangements which guarantees the validity and reliability of the training and assessment
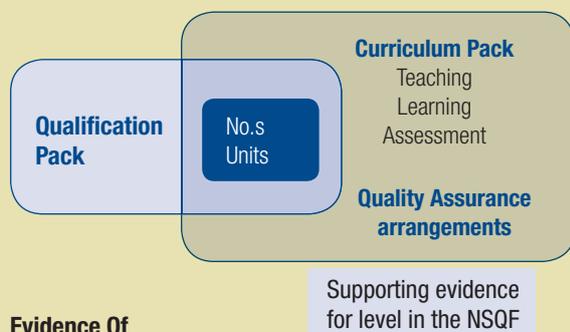
- match to a level of the qualification framework and meets the other requirements of the Framework

Qualification delivery

Qualification specifications are important to allocate a level to the qualification, but the allocation of level is not a one-off process. If it is to be seen as a QA process, it must also take into account the delivery of the qualification in a training programme, which is also a source of information for levelling. In the public system, curricula are the product of regulations of educational programmes which set "educational objectives". It is important to note that educational objectives are not learning outcomes in the sense of a qualification framework. They primarily meet examination regulations, examinations, educational standards which are related to expected results of learning processes. But often, educational standards,

even if they are competence oriented, do not have the required level of abstraction which learning outcomes possess. Examinations measure outputs, because they are related to school subject and school year, rather than outcomes which are based on understanding and performance over time and on a suitable level of abstraction. So the delivery of the qualification should be considered as one source of information among others for confirming the level of qualification. The levelling of qualifications should be a **repeated process**. A solid documentation is needed is always need.

Qualification review

All awarding organisations within the frameworks are subject to monitoring by the qualifications regulators and asked to complete periodic self assessments. Monitoring focuses on whether the awarding organisation or qualification submitter continues to meet the regulatory requirements under which it has been recognised, including how it uses relevant systems, procedures and resources to ensure that assessment methods produce consistent, valid, fair and transparent results over time and between assessment locations. The frequency and focus of awarding organisation monitoring is determined on the basis of risk. Areas identified for improvement as a result of monitoring will be outlined as accreditation conditions and will be monitored in an action plan for the awarding organisation. When these requirements have been complied with they will be signed off by the qualifications regulators. For high-risk qualifications, monitoring is also conducted at a qualification level. Some major qualification types are subject to codes of practice or operating rules that outline in greater detail how qualifications should be delivered with reference to areas such as assessment, awarding and grading. These codes of practice or operating rules are used to direct the qualifications regulator in monitoring to ensure that qualifications continue to meet the required quality standards.

3. Registers of Qualifications

The Register is a searchable data base on qualifications understood as.

… a specification/statement of the **outcomes of learning** (knowledge, skills, etc)

… together with the **assessment** and **certification** arrangements

… which demonstrably meet the **requirements/criteria** set by a validating body (NSQC)

… and have been formally **validated** by an authorised body (NSQC) as being appropriate for a stated purpose.

Registers typically include the following information:

- Title and type of the qualification
- Administrative codes, etc
- Level and credit value of the qualification
- Subject/Vocational area of the qualification
- Outcome statement(s)
- Status of the qualification (eg current, expiring or discontinued)
- Qualification review date
- Details on the qualification developer, provider(s), certificating body

Table 14: Countries with Qualification Registers

France	full vocational qualifications – detailed entries
Scotland	full qualifications in the SCQF (all sectors) – headline info + links to other databases
New Zealand	"all quality assured qualifications in NZ" – headline info
South Africa	searchable databases of qualifications and part-qualifications in the SAQF – very detailed specifications
Australia	- the official national public record of all AQF qualifications and qualification pathways, accrediting authorities, organisations authorised to issue AQF qualifications, and all AQF qualifications issued a portal with links to a number of authorised registers of issuing authorities (providers) and qualifications. .

Possible function of a Register:

- ensure that information about QF qualifications and authorised issuing organisations is publicly available
- ensure that a clear distinction is made between QF and non-QF qualifications
- ensure that any publicly available registers, databases and other information based on data derived from the QF Register, or purporting to be about QF qualifications and the organisations authorised to issue them, accurately represents the QF
- facilitate the comparison of QF qualifications and authorised issuing organisations to enable consum-

ers of QF qualifications to make informed choices, and

- ensure records of QF qualifications issued are kept.

Possible scope of the Register

The policy covers all education and training sectors that issue national qualifications and the responsibilities for the provision and management of registers of QF qualifications and the organisations that issue them.

The terminology used in the QF policies is not sector-specific. To support consistency of understanding and interpretation, definitions of the terminology are provided in a glossary.

Awarding organisations and unit submitters must be recognised by the qualifications regulators before they can submit units/modules and qualifications into the frameworks or start awarding qualifications within the frameworks. Recognition involves meeting requirements in several areas including having sufficient resources, expertise, and organisational and administrative processes to develop and/or award qualifications to the standards required, having procedures in place to monitor compliance with the regulatory arrangements, and having robust procedures for centre recognition, managing enquiries and appeals and dealing with malpractice.

Box 14: NSQF Register

"To ensure that all learners have access to all the qualification registered and currently being provided by various training providers/institutions, a register of qualifications that are approved and available, shall be maintained and regularly updated. The NSQF Register will be the official national public record of all qualifications aligned to NSQF levels qualifications pathways and accrediting authorities.

The qualification Register will be made available on a web portal and regularly updated. Every institution offering an NSQF-aligned qualification will have to keep details of its training programmes updated on the portal."

Register policy

The Users – The principal users of the policy are the QF Council, accrediting authorities including self-accrediting organisations and issuing organisations that have responsibility for maintaining parts of the QF register.

The other users are those who utilise the QF register to gain information about QF qualifications and qualifica-

tion pathways, accrediting authorities and issuing organisations such as students and prospective students, graduates, employers, industry and professional bodies, licensing and regulatory bodies, migrants and migration advisors, qualifications developers, researchers, international education agencies and the general public.

Monitoring- The NSQC (Qualification Committee) and accrediting authorities in each education and training sector are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the use of this policy.

4. Skype Session:
Compares QA Systems between Scotland, England and Germany (Mike Cole)

ENGLAND
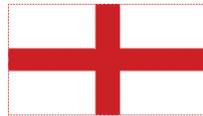
Main timeline

- 1994, NQF, 5 levels (based on NVQ descriptors and broadened across VET but not HE

- 2004, New NQF (current), 8 levels, based on broader descriptors, potential for HE to be included.

- 2008, QCF (current), 8 levels, new broader descriptors, extensive, credit system, potential for HE to be included, validation procedures

- 2010, QCF linked to the EQF

- Latest proposal, single QF, 8 levels, new descriptors across 2 domains, inclusive of all non HE regulated qualifications.

Allocation of qualifications

Mainstream qualifications formed the basis of the levels, awarding organisations make proposals for new qualifications to be added (and removed).

SCOTLAND

Main Timeline

- 1998, SCQF, 12 levels, based on partnership agreement

- 2010, SCQF linked to EQF

- 2012, level descriptors revised a little

- 2012, Credit rating opened up

Allocation of qualifications

- Mainstream qualifications formed the basis of the levels

- New qualifications being added through the credit rating process

- International qualifications added

- To be included on the SCQF a qualification or learning programme must be
  - ✓ At least 10 notional learning hours
  - ✓ Based on learning outcomes
  - ✓ Formally assessed
  - ✓ Internally and externally quality assured

GERMANY

Main timeline

- 2008, discussions on DQR begin

- 2009, DQR basic grid outlined

- 2011, main consultation period ends, DQR formulated

- Appointment of working groups for four occupational areas: metal/electrical, IT, retail, health (16-20 members each, representing all relevant stakeholders)

- 2012, final DQR launched and accepted

- 2013 DQR linked to EQF

Allocation of qualifications

- A clear allocation of a qualification based on primary sources often proved to be difficult and led to deviations of up to one NQF level.

- Subsidiary criteria were taken into account, such as access requirements, duration of learning, field of activity and position in company hierarchies, consensus across educational sectors. Learning outcomes, however, remained the decisive criterion for allocation.

- Analysis of legal regulations and ordinances, curricula and study plans

- Use of EU Guideline: Learning Outcomes http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/ EQF_note4_en.pdf

- Proposal for allocations of selected qualifications on all levels (see form on next slide)

- Evaluation of the results and consultation by the DQR steering committees

FURTHER READINGS

- Use of EU Guidelines: Learning Outcomes http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-eqf/files/EQF_note4_en.pdf

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MODULE 9

QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR TRAINERS AND TEACHERS

Teachers (which includes Trainers) are seen in their double role as professionals and stakeholders of vocational training reform. Initial teacher education is perceived as one among other levers to increase the professional performance of vocational teachers. However, the main emphasis is placed on the dynamic interplay between formal training and the huge variations as regards the real conditions of teaching practice in vocational schools. The schools where teachers work are a crucial factor shaping the quality of their work. Emphasis is put on the crucial role of the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers. CPD is much more than formal training, and experience from EU countries and pilot schools in transition countries indicates that it is both effective and affordable.

1. Trainers as Stakeholders

In many countries, the roles of teachers and students are in a process of change as a result of new approaches to active learning. Responsibility is shifting from the teacher to the learner and the teacher becomes more an organiser and facilitator of the learning processes than the transmitter of expert knowledge. Capacities for change and adaptation as well as learning-to-learn have become important competences *per se* that learners should develop. Self-directed learning has become a necessity for an increasing proportion of the population in rapidly changing societies. The experience of macro-reform, including on reforms of qualification systems, if not enough attention to the 'micro' level of classrooms, teachers and students, tend to fail, even in already 'developed' systems where the major needs concern such issues as the quality and relevance of outputs, soft skills and life skills, etc. In many developing countries, 'macro' reforms address such fundamental issues as legislative tools, funding systems, and improved governance structures.

Vocational schools are the key focus for any reform and the continuing professional development of teachers as well as school principals, configured in school-based innovative development projects, is probably the best way to ensure sustainable, qualitative change in education systems. Unless teachers become professionals *and* stakeholders of reform, it will be difficult to improve results in terms of education system performance. Modern vocational training systems, teachers are at the same time professional educators and key change agents. Continuing innovation and development has therefore become a core task of the modern professional vocational teacher. The crucial challenge is that both of these

teacher roles are now changing.

Professional roles are changing:

1. Teachers will become lifelong and life-wide learning facilitators instead of transmitters of isolated blocks of expert knowledge and skills;

2. Several paradigm changes are taking place: new public management, education management, vocational training policies and school management are changing.

3. Learner needs and labour market requirements are changing and becoming more differentiated.

Stakeholder roles are changing too:

1. They have long been neglected but are now increasingly appreciated;

2. Vocational training reform is seen as an ongoing learning process;

3. Reform increasingly requires articulation between national and system authorities, and between local and school authorities;

4. There is an increasing need for teachers to go beyond the classroom – into the school, the community, the vocational training system at large and even across borders;

5. Teachers will have to become more actively engaged in reform processes

Why are teachers and trainers so important for systemic education and training reforms?

Vocational training reform in most countries has led to the redefinition, diversification and expansion of teacher functions. In modern vocational training systems effective teaching depends not only on teaching skills but on the ability to work in a team; collegiality is a significant challenge for teachers. Another issue is the need for teachers to re-conceptualise their own position within vocational training. It is not enough for teachers to acquire new skills and perform new functions. Effective motivation of teachers requires that they should fully understand the reasons for change (e.g. the NSQF) – making them their own. Many factors influence the changing demands for professional knowledge, competence, practices and performance of teaching staff involved in vocational training. Andreas Schleicher (2006) of the

OECD writes in the Lisbon Council Policy Brief that the most successful countries have something fundamental in common:

"…they have all shifted policy away from control over the resources and content of education toward a focus on obtaining better outcomes. They have moved from "hit and miss" teaching practices to establishing universal high standards. They have shifted from uniformity in the system to embracing diversity and individualising learning. They have changed from a focus on provision to a focus on choice, and they have moved from a bureaucratic approach towards devolving responsibilities and enabling outcomes, from talking about equity to delivering equity. Most important, they have put the emphasis on creating a 'knowledge-rich' education system, in which teachers and school principals act as partners and have the authority to act, the necessary information to do so, and access to effective support systems to assist them in implementing change."

Teachers are rarely seen as subjects or as drivers of change. An almost universal experience in EU and OECD countries in recent years has been that it has become increasingly difficult for policy alone to change practice. Paradoxically, precisely during and since the 1990s we have seen a resurgence in large scale reform in most western countries, few of which had much impact on student achievement levels. At present, many OECD countries focus on policy and systems development without paying enough attention to the management of implementation processes (McLaughlin, 1990). A lesson learned here is that, contrary to the one-to-one relationship assumed to exist between policy and practice, the nature, amount and pace of change at the local level is a product of local factors largely beyond the control of higher-level policymakers (Hopkins, 2006).

Governments policy implementation has most commonly used the school as the focus of intervention, yet international research evidence shows that we have to go even one level further down – to the classroom – to improvement achievement. Increasingly strong evidence suggests that any strategy to promote student learning needs must seek to engage students and parents as active participants, and expand the teaching and learning repertoires of teachers as well as students. This implies a transition from an era of top-down 'prescription' to an era of teacher 'professionalism'. A new balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches must be found.

Educational factors must be rebalanced in pursuit of quality. But how do we get there? As Michael Fullan (2003) has said, it takes capacity to build capacity, and if there is insufficient capacity to begin with it is useless to announce that a move to 'professionalism' provides the basis for a new approach. We can't just move from one phase to the next without deliberately building professional capacity throughout the system. Here the continuing professional development of teachers must be the central response. Who, then, knows best what teachers should do, why, how, where and when? Most teachers would say that they do. They are the professionals who have a profound knowledge of their field, based on both theoretical studies and a sound practice, know the students, their needs and what is best for them; work in accordance with professional standards and in the best interests of the client (the students).

According to this view they are the best placed to decide where, when and with whom preparation should take place, and how and with what means teaching should be organised. But this point of view does not fit very well into policymakers' efforts to make both schools and teachers instruments to achieve strategic goals. Another barrier to overcome is a tendency to **reform fatigue** among teachers almost everywhere. Reforms are in reality, and should also be perceived as, major social learning processes, and today, more than ever before, the huge challenge is how to organise such policy learning activities in the coming years.

An analysis of professionalisation strategies for teachers in EU countries points to the same need in all EU countries. Most changes are initiated from outside the vocational training system, either through political decisions or as a result of pressure from industry. The Cedefop study on vocational teachers found that there is a tension between change pressures and the response of teachers:

"Often they challenge the teacher's view of the vocational training system, of their own role and of the way they teach. And in some cases the changes contrast with the teachers' 'implicit', 'tacit' knowledge of how best to behave in specific teaching situations. This situation is made worse when government – or management – fails to provide teachers with the time, or the financial resources to retrain. Where these resources are not available, teachers (and their managers) will give priority to the needs of their students rather than to their own training. In short, and as a result of all these factors, whole-hearted teacher acceptance cannot be taken for granted and teacher resistance to change is one of the most significant threats to the success of vocational training reform."

In the Cedefop study, a key recommendation for policy-makers in EU countries is therefore that: There is a growing recognition that schools - and classrooms - need to take the lead in the next stage of education reform. The current focus on 'personalisation' is about putting citizens at the heart of public services and enabling them to have a say in the design and improvement of the organisations that serve them. In education this can be understood as personalised learning (OECD, 2006), the trend towards tailoring education to individual needs, interests and aptitude so as to fulfil every young person's potential. Personalised learning is about designing teaching, curriculum and the school organisation to address the needs of the students both individually and collectively. It is a system that is more accessible, open to the individual and involves the learners in their own learning.

This requires professionalised teaching. A much sharper focus should therefore be placed on the crucial role of the continuing professional development of teachers and trainers also in ETF partner countries. Such development implies more than just making teaching more comparable to other modern professions. To personalize learning, teachers must use data and evidence when they choose teaching strategies that meet the specific needs of their students. They must be versed in the application of different methodologies that cater for individual learning styles.

As Hopkins (2006) underlines: *"This in turn implies radically different forms of professional development with a strong focus on coaching and establishing schools as professional learning communities."*

Teacher professionalism will furthermore have to be supported by some form of educational accountability as a driver for raising standards. In the move from top-down 'prescription' towards teacher 'professionalism', an accountability system should strive to build capacity and confidence for professional accountability. More emphasis should be placed on internal assessment; in particular formative assessment will need to develop increasingly refined learning assessments, student progress data, contextual value-added and school profiles. Perhaps the most substantial quality control instrument that needs to be developed is a culture of evaluation in vocational schools. If we are to move towards a system based on informed professional judgment, the capacity for all of this has to be built simultaneously at the school and system level as both schools and authorities learn new ways of working, establish new norms of engagement and build more flexible and problem oriented work cultures. The continuing professional development of teachers and trainers is probably the key to innovation and change also in countries of transition; it is much more than formal training, there are other pathways to relevant learning, and experience from EU countries and pilot schools in transition countries indicates that it is both effective and affordable. To this can be added that for transition countries there is an urgent need to reach out to the majority of vocational schools that were never part of the comparatively narrow reform circle.

Initial teacher education in universities or teacher faculties is an important lever but only one among others to increase the professional performance of vocational teachers. Of special interest here is the lack of a dynamic interplay between formal training and the different conditions of teaching practice in vocational schools. The institutions, in which teachers work, have a huge potential for helping to shape the quality of vocational teachers' work. This implies that any effort to professionalise vocational teaching needs to take into account initial teacher training providers as well as vocational schools.

New professionalisation strategies based on 'horizontal' learning principles form a promising response to future challenges. Such horizontal learning principles include (i) schools as learning organisations, (ii) engaging teachers as stakeholders in vocational training reform , (iii) central innovation funds for local school development, and (iv) establishing 'communities of practitioners' among vocational teachers as vehicles to nurture a culture where teachers may (again) become professional innovation agents.

Almost everywhere, there is a lack of awareness of the fact that the primary socio-economic function of vocational teachers and trainers is not to produce "teaching" but to produce the "qualifications" needed in a modern economy. The qualification needs of companies require competent workers who are capable of combining theory and practice. This calls for a new configuration of teaching, learning and practical work exercises. This configuration might gradually help to strengthen the capacity of individual students to move, as the context requires, between theoretical-analytical competence and a more experience-based, intuitive competence. However, developing this type of configuration is a serious challenge to the existing structures of vocational teacher and trainer training everywhere, including in most EU countries. A good way to encourage such an integrated approach is to support the efforts of vocational schools to become continuing vocational training providers. Continuing training offered to experienced workers from local companies will challenge teachers to combine their own

To become a trainer in Denmark, candidates must have a training in Vocational Education and training or a professional education relevant fo the concerned field of learning, where appropriate supplemented with higher education. He/she must have 5 years professional experience in the vocational subject. In terms of qualification, a diploma should be obtained within 4 years of employment and the preparation to this diploma must begin within the first year of employment. The duration of the training is 60 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), which is equal to 1 year full time.

The diploma content includes:

- Compulsory modules
  - Teaching and learning – 10 ECTS
  - Planning of teaching and didactics – 10 ECTS
  - Pedagogical science – 5 ECTS
  - Final project – 15 ECTS

- And two elective modules – 20 ECTS
  - Participants in VET
  - VET pedagogical system development
  - Internationalisation of VET
  - Digital technologies in VET

theory with the experience and (often tacit) knowledge of their adult course participants. This procedure should, without hesitation, be required of the teacher and trainer training institutions in their provision of continuing training to teachers in vocational schools.

2. Teachers as Professionals

Standards for trainers and teachers in the VET sectors are the "duty side" of the profession Teachers, which only makes sense in the context developed in the first section. Indeed, in this context, the key purpose of the teacher is to create effective and stimulating opportunities for learning through high quality teaching that enables the development and progression of all learners. In a number of areas, the teacher is committed to behave in a certain way:

Professional Values and Practice

The teacher is committed to:

- Learners, their progress and development, their learning goals and aspirations and the experience they bring to their learning.

- Learning, its potential to benefit people emotionally, intellectually, socially and economically, and its contribution to community sustainability.

- Equality, diversity, and inclusion in relation to learners, the workforce, and the community

- Reflection and evaluation of their own practice and their continuing professional development as teachers

- Collaboration with other individuals, groups and/or organisations with a legitimate interest in the progress and development of learners

These standards apply across all areas.

Teachers are committed to:

- The application of agreed codes of practice and the maintenance of a safe environment

- Improving the quality of their practice

Learning and teaching

Teachers are committed to:

- Maintaining an inclusive, equitable and motivating learning environment.

- Applying and developing own professional skills to enable learners to achieve their goals.

- Communicating effectively and appropriately with learners to enhance learning

- Collaboration with colleagues to support the needs of learners.

- Using a range of learning resources to support learners

Specialist Learning and Teaching

Teachers are committed to:

- Understanding and keeping up to date with current knowledge in respect of own specialist area.

- Enthusing and motivating learners in own specialist area.

- Fulfilling the statutory responsibilities associated with own specialist area of teaching.

- Developing good practice in teaching own specialist area

Planning for Learning

Teachers are committed to:

- Planning to promote equality, support diversity and to meet the aims and learning needs of learners.

- Learner participation in the planning of learning
- Evaluation of own effectiveness in planning learning

Assessment for Learning

Teachers are committed to:

- Designing and using assessment as a tool for learning and progression
- Assessing the work of learners in a fair and equitable manner
- Learner involvement and shared responsibility in the assessment process
- Using feedback as a tool for learning and progression
- Working within the systems and quality requirements of the organisation in relation to assessment and monitoring of learner progress.

Access and progression

Teachers are committed to:

- Encouraging learners to seek initial and further learning opportunities and to use services within the organisation
- Providing support for learners within the boundaries of the teacher role
- Maintaining own professional knowledge in order to provide information on opportunities for progression in own specialist area
- A multi-agency approach to supporting development and progression opportunities for learners

3. Community of Practice

The notion of community of practice has become influential within debates in education in the last 20 years: Lave and Wenger among the foremost exponents of the concept offer the following definition of the concept:

"A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity and world over time and in relations with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge." (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

Although not specific to the training and teaching function, Community of Practices (CoP) play an important role in this area. CoP are typically developed by a group of people sharing a craft and/or a profession who shares information and experiences to learn from each other

and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally. Community of Practice also follow the Social learning theory based on the work of psychologist Albert Bandera. He states that people learn:

- Through direct experience
- Indirectly, by observing and modelling the behaviour of others with whom the person identifies (for example, how yound people see their peers behaving).
- Through training that leads to confidence in being able to carry ut behaviours. This specific condition ias called self-efficacy, which includes the ability to overcome any barriers to performing the behaviour.

Communities of practice are primarily a means of categorizing a particular set or web of relations between people as having a particular identity, value orientation and purpose. Within a strong community of practice, there is a strong sense of shared values and beliefs; a consciousness of and a commitment to an overall holistic purpose that shapes the activities of the community; and an agreement on a set of practices that constitutes "competent practice". To some level, learning is always an induction into a community whose boundary are marked by a commitment to a set of beliefs about what counts as knowledge and skills and what are "good" values and attitudes to underpin and infuse learning as a process of enlightenment, enhancement and attunement.

CoP take different forms such as formal or informal, off-line or on line, with participants presence in a lunch room or on a factory floor or as a virtual community or network/wikis/dropbox/linkedin, etc. CoP are not specific to VET trainers; all subject matters in general education and higher education have their networks. What seems specific to VET trainers is the purpose to bridge the knowing that and the knowing how. Competence in VET is more located in the knowing-how (skills) than in the knowing-that (knowledge), not because there is no knowledge involved, but because knowledge is understood as embedded in gestures, behaviours and skills. The transmission of skills meets specific challenges and those are central in CoP for trainers. Trainers are also keen to hear that they are not the only ones to experience challenges they experience daily in training situations.

Successful CoP are those where individuals are practioners willing to share with and to learn from others. it is difficult to maintain a living CoP if people never meet. But as CoP are born from voluntary initiatives, and are not compulsary (although professional standards do

mention collaboration with colleagues in the benefit of learners), they are mainly fuelled by motivation.

The participation in CoP can contribute to Continuous Professional Development /CPD). CPD is the means by which people maintain their knowledge and skills related to their professional life. It is closely related to Life long learning . CPD can be (i) Pedagogical, (ii) Domain specific, (iii) Formal (iv) Informal.

There are many obstacles to CPD, which can be individual (lack of motivation or of incentives) or institutional, when conditions of practice are sub-optimal. On the job training of trainers is costly and trainers rarely receive the amount of training they would like/need. Some (but not all) initiatives about professional improvement are left to the trainers themselves but their personal situation and their professional status (civil servant or self-employed) surely affect their motivation to improve continuously.

The most advanced form of CPD is encapsulated in the concept of "reflective practitioner", who typically ask himsel/herself questions such as: Where am I and how do I know? Where do I want to go? Again, the concept is not specific to VET training or to teaching in general. It is based on a metacognitive process, consisting in the self's capacity to distance from experience in order to analyse it objectively. So, with respect to a specific training experience which would have been less successful than anticipated, the reflective practitioner would ask himsel/herself:

- Description – what happened?
- Feelings – what were my thinking and feelings?
- Evaluation – what was good and bad?
- Analysis – what sense can I make of the situation?
- Conclusion – what else could I have done?
- Action plan – what will I do next?

These questions could be answered by an observer, but there is no observer in a typical training session. The capacity to analyse a situation as an observer is what the reflective practitioner is developing.

Conclusion

Teachers will have to be recognised in their double role as professionals and stakeholders, if the quality of education is to be gradually increased. Teaching staff and school managers are the professionals of the vocational training system. As stakeholders they should develop the capacity to help formulate vocational training policies and establish platforms for discussion of reform initiatives, embedded in schools and fitting into their contexts. This would encourage ownership and support the sustainability of reforms. Teachers who are actively engaged in local innovation and experimentation are an important source of expertise for national policymakers.

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MODULE 10

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF TRAINING PROVIDERS

* Stephen Auburn is Lead Auditor in VET quality framework for ASQA (Australian Skills Quality Authority)

1. Registering Training Providers (TP)

Most nations have a process for gate keeping the approval or registration of training organisations. However these processes vary in terms of level of scrutiny, parameters reviewed, for example program design, program materials, skills of practitioners, program facilities; and complaints processes and outcomes of graduates.

Terminology matters: it is not the same thing to go through a registration process, an approval process, an accreditation process or an affiliation process. The difference lies in the degree of scrutiny the TP submitted and in the range of services they are allowed to propose. An affiliation process might be limited to recognizing the existence of the TP, whereas an accreditation process might cover the right to develop official qualifications.

Approaches for quality assuring TPs.

The provider has a defined continuous improvement strategy that requires the collection and analysis of data. The strategy includes implementation of continuous improvement activities for training and assessment. An accredited training organisation collects, analyses, and acts on relevant data for continuous improvement of training and assessment.

An accredited training providers will develop quality standards and/or quality guidelines and will undergo regular assessment either through self-evaluation of through approval and inspection approaches or a combinations of those. The Information System is often viewed as supplementary but it is very expensive to develop and to maintain, especially for small training providers.

Quality standards for an accredited TP might look like this:

1. The provider has strategies in place to provide quality training and assessment across all of its operations as follows:

    1.1 Strategies for training and assessment meet the requirements of the relevant VET accredited course and have been developed through effective consultation with industry.

    1.2. Staff, facilities, equipment, and training and assessment materials to be used by the provider meet the requirements of the VET accredited course and the provider's own training and assessment strategies and are developed through effective consultation with industry.

    1.3 The provider has a defined strategy, procedures and measures to ensure training and assessment services are conducted by trainers and assessors who:

    (a) have the necessary training and assessment competencies as determined by the National Quality Body;

    (b) have the relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered or assessed;

    (c) can demonstrate current industry skills directly relevant to the training/assessment being undertaken; and

    (d) continue to develop their vocational education and training (VET) knowledge and skills as well as their industry currency and trainer/assessor competence.

    1.4. The provider has a defined strategy and procedures in place to ensure that assessment, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):

    (a) will meet the requirements of the relevant VET accredited course;

    (b) will be conducted in accordance with the principles of assessment and the rules of evidence;

    (c) will meet workplace and, where relevant, regulatory requirements; and

    (d) is systematically validated.

2. The provider has strategies in place to adhere to the principles of access and equity and to maximise outcomes for its students, as follows:

    2.1. The provider has a strategy in place detailing how it will establish and meet the needs of students. The organisation establishes the needs of clients, and delivers services to meet these needs.

    2.2. The provider has a strategy in place for the implementation of continuous improvement of client services informed by the analysis of relevant data.

    2.3. The provider has in place a process and mechanism to provide all students information about the training, assessment and support services to be provided, and about their rights and obligations, prior to enrolment or entering into an agreement.

    2.4. Where identified in the learning and assessment strategy, the provider has engaged or has a defined strategy in place to engage with employers or other parties who contribute to each learner's training and assessment on the development, delivery and monitoring of training and assessment.

    2.5. The provider has a defined process and mechanism in place to ensure learners receive training,

assessment and support services that meet their individual needs.

2.6. The provider has a defined process and mechanism in place to ensure learners have timely access to current and accurate records of their participation.

2.7. The provider has a defined complaints and appeals process that will ensure learners' complaints and appeals are addressed effectively and efficiently.

3. The provider has in place management systems that will be responsive to the needs of clients, staff and stakeholders, and the environment in which the accredited provider will operate, as follows:

3.1. The provider has a strategy in place detailing how the management of its operations will ensure students receive the services detailed in their agreement with the provider.

3.2. The provider has a defined strategy for the implementation of a systematic continuous improvement approach to the management of operations.

3.3. Where applicable, the provider has a defined process and mechanism to monitor training and/ or assessment services provided on its behalf to ensure that it complies with all aspects of the VET Quality Framework.

3.4. The provider has a defined strategy and process to manage records to ensure their accuracy and integrity.

4. The provider has adequate governance arrangements, as follows:

4.1 The provider must demonstrate to the National VET Regulator;

(a) what its intended objectives as an accredited VET provider are;

(b) that it has undertaken business planning, and

(c) the continuing viability, including financial viability, of its proposed operations.

4.2 The provider must also demonstrate how it will ensure the decision making of senior management is informed by the experiences of its trainers and assessors.

4.3 The provider's Chief Executive must identify how he or she will ensure that it will comply with the VET Quality Framework and any national guidelines approved by the National Quality Body. This applies to all of the operations within the provider's intended scope of operation.

5. Interactions with the National VET Regulator (these standards depend on the structure for the national Quality Assurance system incorporating a Regulatory Body)

5.1 The application for registration must be accompanied by a self-assessment report of the provider's compliance with the VET Quality Framework.

5.2 The provider's Chief Executive must identify how it will ensure that the provider will co-operate with

the National VET Regulator:

(a) in the conduct of audits and the monitoring of its operations;

(b) by providing accurate and timely data relevant to measures of its performance;

(c) by providing information about significant changes to its operations;

(d) by providing information about significant changes to its ownership; and

(e) in the retention, archiving, retrieval and transfer of records consistent withthe National VET Regulator's requirements

6. Compliance with legislation

6.1 The provider identifies how it will comply with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements relevant to its intended operations and its intended scope of registration.

6.2 The provider identifies how it will inform staff and clients of the legislative and regulatory requirements that affect their duties or participation in vocational education and training.

7. Strategy for certification, issuing and recognition of qualifications & statements of attainment

7.1 The provider identifies how it will issue to persons whom it has assessed as competent in accordance with the requirements of the VET accredited course, a VET qualification or VET statement of attainment (as appropriate) that:

(a) meets the National Skills and Qualification Framework requirements;

(b) identifies the accredited provider by its national provider number

(c) includes any required national logo

7.2 The provider confirms that it will recognise the NQF and VET qualifications and VET statements of attainment issued by any other accredited provider.

7.3 The provider retains client records of attainment of units of competency and qualifications for a period of 30 years.

7.4 The provider identifies how it will provide returns of its client records of attainment of units of competence and qualifications to the National VET Regulator on a regular basis, as determined by the National VET Regulator.

7.5 The provider meets the requirements for implementation of a national unique student identifier (if one is identified).

8. Strategy for accuracy and integrity of marketing

The provider demonstrates that its proposed marketing and advertising of NQF and VET qualifications to prospective clients is ethical, accurate and consistent with its scope of registration.

N.B. Standards relating to finance and insurance etc. will need to be determined

Table 15: Examples of countries' use of national standards for training providers:

Coverage	Austria	Sri Lanka	Singapore	New Zealand	South Africa
a. Learning resources	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b. Trainers and Managers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
c. Facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
d. Equipment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
e. Assessment		✓	✓	✓	✓
f. Financial/governance		✓	✓	✓	✓
g. Graduates outomes		✓	✓	✓	
h. Students services		✓		✓	✓
i. Employers and student satisfaction	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Box 16: Qualifications Framework of training providers in selected countries

AUSTRIA

- Quality seals (Qualitätssiegel) were introduced in Upper Austria as an initiative of the Adult Education Forum, the umbrella organisation of all non-profit providers in the region. Criteria related to:

  - the nature of training

  - the qualifications of management and instructors

  - the curriculum and physical facilities, and

  - feedback from students.

- Based on criteria, certified auditors examine different aspects of any organisation seeking a quality seal.

- This system of self-regulation is now linked to the provincial government scheme of individual learning vouchers whereby vouchers only be used for training by organisations with the seal.

- ARQA-VET, the Austrian Reference Point for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training

SRI LANKA

Quality criteria identified by the Tertiary Vocational Education Council:

- Auditors, soon to include self-assessment

- Registration of training providers

- Accreditation of courses

- Registered assessors

- Linked to the NVQF

- In process of second review phase

SINGAPORE

- Approved Training Organisation (ATO) - recognized by the Workforce Development Agency (WDA) to deliver training and/or assessment services under Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ)

- Training Organisations wishing to offer WSQ programmes must satisfy the accreditation criteria two quality dimensions:

  - Pre-delivery Approval – accreditation ensures courses approved satisfies the competency requirements and is accessible through appropriate delivery modes and resources. Ensures that the course is delivered by quality training organisations using suitably qualified

trainers and assessors.

  - Continuous Improvement Review –ATO is expected to pursue continual improvement to uplift the quality of design and delivery. WDA validates the internal quality assurance system and capability of the ATO on a regular basis.

NEW ZEALAND

- Administered by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority

- Responsible for the quality assurance of all education and training delivered outside universities

- Key features: - Registration is a separate process to approval and accreditation

  - registration of providers, approval to deliver unit & assess standards & qualifications from the National Qualifications Framework

  - A letter of support Industry Training Organisation (ITO) or other standard-setting body

  - Evidence of compliance with ITO Accreditation and Moderation Actions Plans (AMAPs)

  - accreditation of other courses

  - Industry Training Organisations (ITO) register workplace assessors.

SOUTH AFRICA

- Administered by the South African Qualifications Authority

- Legislation but a phasing-in approach

  - accommodate historically & statutorily separate stakeholders and processes in the TVET system

  - build on the strengths & benefits of different structures and systems to ensure short and long term implementation of the National Qualifications Framework are met; and

  - requirements ensure that there are continual and incremental quality improvements in the learning system.

- registration of providers

  - approval to deliver unit & assess standards from the National Qualifications Framework

  - accreditation of courses

2. Self Assessment:
Key component of a Quality Management System to determine achievement of objectives on effectiveness/ efficiency

Self assessment is a major tool to identity opportunities for improvement on a continuous basis. It builds a reflective practitioner approach (a culture of assessment). It is based on the selection of a site visit team who designs and prepares site visit based on the self-evaluation report. As showed in the table, the result is either Accredited or Agreed Implementation Plan. Under no circumstances should self-assessment become an end in itself. Self-assessment becomes all the more powerful when results are transformed into a development plan. It aims at measurement, whereas AQIP are aimed at quality improvement. The agreed timelines must allow for realistic implementation.

The risk assessment strategy determines the risk of non-compliance through regular monitoring and attention through audit, with the aim of improving performance outcomes. It reduces the burden of administration and rewards training providers who are serious about quality. Specific operating context may also affect risk - qualifications leading to licensed outcomes (such as welding) may be assessed as high risk. Managing the risk requires data collection and retrieval/ analysis. Risk relates to the potential impact on the delivery of quality training and assessment services.

The risk assessment process includes four key steps:

1. **Identification** of indicators of risk to be used in the risk assessment process

2. **Risk assessment,** involves consideration of the potential impact if quality training and assessment services and outcomes are not delivered & likelihood of this occurring – risk rating

3. **Response:** assessment of applications, audits and monitoring of training providers are sources of risk information. The risk rating is used to determine the scheduling and scope of audits and other monitoring mechanisms

4. **Ongoing review:** QA body will review any information that may change the outcome of a risk assessment.

RISK ASSESSMENT RESPONSE:

Rating	Possible responses
Extreme	Immediate action required by the QA body of a type determined appropriate by the QA body
High	Intolerable risk. Applicant / training provider to be audited and monitored. Other mitigation strategies may also be applied (conditions placed on the training provider's accreditation, etc) as deemed appropriate by the QA body
Medium	Risk mitigation through a program of audit and/or monitoring activity
Low	Tolerable risk. No specific audit activity required and may include a no audit option

3. Audits

Audits serve a compliance approach – they measure whether quality standards are met or not met and allow

Figure 24: Audit of Training Providers

On going professional development and continuous improvement
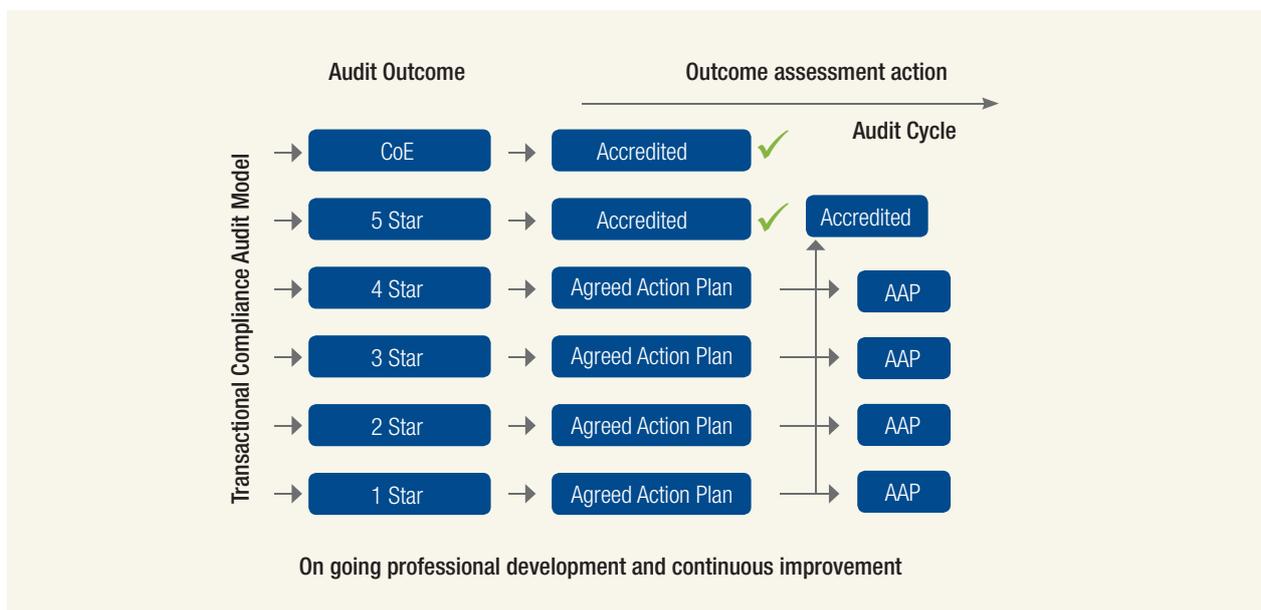
monitoring of quality improvement. They are performed either by the regulating body or through a third party. Auditors have to be trained and the process need to be moderated. Many countries apply some form of risk assessment rating to minimise the audit burden but there are variations in methodologies.

Managing non compliance: how each nation addresses issues arising with non-compliant providers varies, as does the level of information provided to the consumer in this regard. In New Zealand it is possible to view provider summary audit reports within the NZQA website at the profile of each provider but these are summaries and are included only if the private provider approves. The Ontario College Quality Assurance Service provides access to very brief executive summary reports of public providers that include a conclusion of the findings, determination of compliance against their five criterion.

4. SKYPE Session
The VET Regulatory Journey in Australia (Stephen Auburn)

How training provider audits are undertaken and what is involved

Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015

1. The RTO's training and assessment strategies and practices are responsive to industry and learner needs and meet the requirements of training packages and VET accredited courses

2. The operations of the RTO are quality assured.

3. The RTO issues, maintains and accepts AQF certification documentation in accordance with these Standards and provides access to learner records.

4. Accurate and accessible information about an RTO, its services and performance is available to inform prospective and current learners and clients

5. Each learner is properly informed and protected.

6. Complaints and appeals are recorded, acknowledged and dealt with fairly, efficiently and effectively.

7. The RTO has effective governance and administration arrangements in place.

8. The RTO cooperates with the VET Regulator and is legally compliant at all times.

See *Users' Guide* for more information

Trainers and Assessors

The Standards establish the requirements for:

- Specified training and assessment qualifications
- Vocational competency at least to the level being delivered and assessed
- current industry skills directly relevant to delivery
- current knowledge and skills in vocational training and learning

Special requirements to those RTOs delivering training and assessment qualifications

Auditors

Based on *ISO 19011 Guidelines for auditing management systems*

Standards for VET Regulators 2015 specify qualifications for auditors:

- Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (or its successor) and MUST include:
  - Design and develop assessment tools (or its successor);
  - Design and develop learning strategies (or its successor); and
  - Lead assessment validation processes (or its successor).
- Diploma of Quality Auditing (or its successor) and MUST include:
  - Participate in a quality audit (or its successor);
  - Initiate a quality audit (or its successor);
  - Lead a quality audit (or its successor); and
  - Report on a quality audit (or its successor).

Types of audits

1. **Registration audit:**
   - Initial registration as an RTO
   - Renewal of registration as an RTO
   - Change of scope of registration of an RTO

2. **Compliance audit:**
   - Compliance Monitoring
   - Compliance Monitoring – Complaint
   - Post initial

3. **Strategic industry review audits**

Scope audit and allocate audit team

ASQA management:

- Reviews risk management tool that led to decision to conduct audit

- Uses Business rules for scoping an audit to inform size and scope of audit (which standards and which training products on scope of registration to be sampled) and which auditor/s might be best suited

- Determine desk audit or site audit

- Allocate auditor or audit team (Note: auditors may be staff auditors or panel auditors)

The audit process

1. Plan the audit
2. Conduct the audit
3. Report on the audit

PLAN THE AUDIT

Auditor:

- Reviews audit scope

- Contacts RTO to set date for site audit and the sends formal Notification of Audit by email confirming the Standards to be audited and the training products to be sampled (10 to 20 days' notice)

- Request the following evidence be provided before the site audit (at least 10 days in advance):

  - Strategies for training and assessment for sampled training products

  - A copy of any agreements for third party to delivery or assessment

  - Details of each trainer and assessor's qualifications, training/assessment & vocational competence and industry currency - as relevant to the sampled training products

  - A copy of the organisation's marketing materials relevant to the sampled training products

  - Student Handbook

- Sample assessment tools and instruments are not requested before site audit

CONDUCT THE AUDIT

- An audit samples part of an RTO's business and the audit findings are considered to represent its broader operations

- It is the RTO's responsibility to provide evidence of compliance - it is not the responsibility of the audit team to locate evidence

Auditor:

- Develops audit plan and timetable:

  - Different audit approaches may be used e.g. continuous improvement, student journey

- Undertakes desk audit of evidence requested (any non-compliances identified are used to guide further inquiry at the site audit – not an opportunity for the RTO to rectify non-compliances

Site audit

- Conduct opening meeting using *Audit verification form – opening and exit meeting* which the RTO CEO signs (*see handout*)

- Auditor:

- Conducts audit using audit plan and schedule

- Gather and review evidence:

- documents

- Interviews with management, trainers, assessors

- May interview past or current students, employers

- Student files and records especially of completed assessment instruments and tools

- May take photographs

- Uses triangulation approaches ("not just words on paper")

- Provides verbal feedback as the audit progresses (no surprises at the end)

- Uses the Standards, evidence guidance in audit report template and ASQA Users' Guide

- Auditor conducts exit meeting using *Audit verification form –opening and exit meeting*:

- *the purpose and scope of the audit*

- *an overview of the audit process that has occurred*

- *the main areas of non-compliance*

- *that the audit findings will be reviewed within ASQA prior to the audit report being provided to the RTO*

- *the audit report process and timeframes*

- *the proposed rectification process (if non-compliances have been identified) and timeframes*

- *obligations of the RTO to implement any required rectifications across all operations, not only in the areas audited*

- Note: This is not the opportunity for the provider to provide rectification evidence.

REPORT THE AUDIT

- ASQA report template used
- Exception reporting – only non-compliance detailed (changed over time – previous Standards had a continuous improvement focus and auditors could make recommendations for improvement)
- Overall audit findings: Compliant / Not Compliant
- Include recommendation of overall level of non-compliance:
    - Minor non-compliance - minimal or no serious adverse impact on learners
    - Significant non-compliance - indications of a serious or potentially serious adverse impact on learners
    - Critical non-compliance - actual or potential critical adverse impact on learners

WHAT NEXT

If compliant, auditor drafts recommendation to Regional Manager Compliance

If non-compliant

- RTOs given 20 working days to submit rectification evidence
- Rectification evidence usually analysed and reported by original auditor
- If still non- compliant, auditor drafts recommendation to Commissioner:
    - To refuse application (initial registration, renewal or change of scope)
    - To impose a sanction:
        - Impose/ vary conditions of registration (e.g.

must keep assessment records for X period)
- Give notice of an intention to impose an administrative sanction (e.g. The RTO is not to enrol any new students in any qualifications on its scope of registration)
- Impose an administrative sanction
- Allow withdrawal of registration

FURTHER OPTIONS

- RTO may submit Request for Reassessment (fee payable) with additional evidence
- New auditor allocated and Regional Compliance Manager who was not involved in first decision (fresh eyes)
- Auditor analyses documents relating to the first decision and undertakes a compliance assessment of the new evidence submitted.
- Completes *Evidence analysis template* and makes recommendation to Commissioner
- Commissioner makes decision
- If still non-compliant RTO given notice of an intention to impose a sanction
- RTO may appeal the decision to impose a sanction and provide more evidence
- New auditor allocated – similar process (fresh eyes)
- If still non-compliant, the RTO's only recourse is to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal

ASQA requirements of Auditors

- Participate in 4 days of moderation per annum
- Ongoing professional development as auditors
- Maintain currency in VET

Compliance with standards by existing RTOs - Audits of Existing RTOs 1 October 2013- 31 March 2014
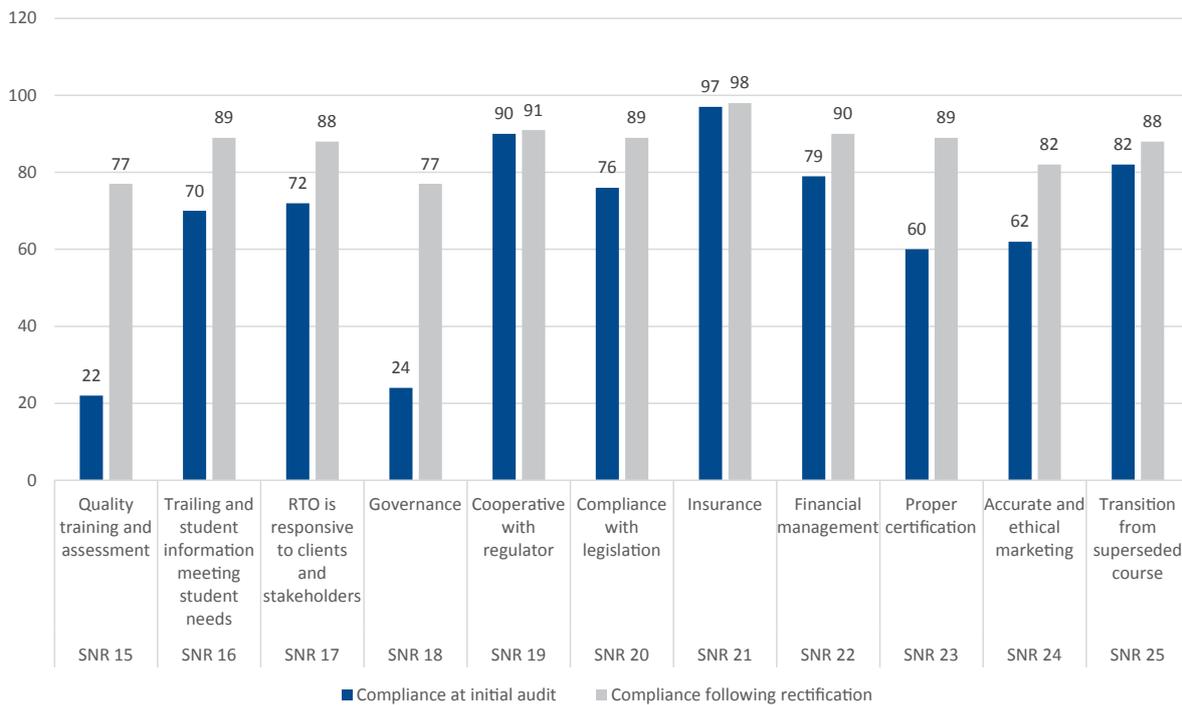
Conclusions from the first three years of vet regulations.

Three groups have emerged in the Australian VET sector.

- High quality providers who fully comply with the required National Standards (around 20% providers)

- Providers who want to comply with the National Standards but who experience some difficulty at least at initial audits (around 60% providers)

- Providers who do not provide quality training and are unwilling or unable to comply with the National Standards (around 20% providers)

- Most providers –some 80%- are experiencing some difficulties with doing assessment properly

- About one-third of providers appear to be offering courses that are too short to unable sufficient quality delivery to ensure quality skills are obtained

- The transactions-based regulatory approach is too slow a way to focus adequately on poor quality providers.

FURTHER READINGS

- ISO 19011 Guidelines for auditing management systems

  Standards for VET Regulators 2015

- European Parliament; Council of the European Union (2009a). Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of a European quality assurance reference framework for vocational education and training. *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 155, 8.7.2009, pp. 1-9. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2 009:155:0001:0010:EN:PDF

- HANDBOOK FOR VET PROVIDERS-Supporting internal quality management and quality culture, CEDEFOP 2015

- Ishikawa, K. (1985). *What is total quality control? The Japanese way*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

- Krueger, R. A. (1994). *Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

- Nonaka, I., Toyama, R., Byosiére, P. (1994). A theory of organisational knowledge creation: understanding the dynamic process of creating knowledge. In: Dierkes, M. et al. (eds) (2001). *Handbook of organisational learning and knowledge*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 491-517.

MODULE 11

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

1. Key Concepts

The Recognition of Prior Learning process (RPL) has been introduced and applied by many countries primarily to facilitate the social inclusion and rapid uplifting of persons with learning and skills gained in the non-formal & informal environments. People in the non-formal & informal sector comprise the majority of those working in India today, yet they may have little or no recognition for the learning and skills they possess. Along with this, there are unemployed persons who may wish to get recognition for the learning they already have, but which is not recognised or certificated. This lack of recognition excludes them from making a better living or entering the formal education process. RPL in the formal sector is applied mainly for access to learning opportunities, certification and for employment progression purposes as detailed below.

- RPL for recognition of experiential learning

  Many people have learning gained in a range of situations. These situations can include learning through, for example, community support activities, sport, and the workplace. Such learning may be not certificated as it occurred outside of a formal learning process. Nevertheless, all learning has value and should be recognised no matter when where or how the learning was achieved.

- RPL & employment

Employers use RPL in order that both they and their employees benefit from the process. RPL is used in such cases to;

- Advise employees on matching their skills and knowledge to existing qualifications and national occupational standards

- Facilitate employees in using their existing skills and knowledge for career development, progression and mobility

- Assist workers to identify existing skills they possess that may be relevant to new functions in their job role.

This is achieved through the use of a range of processes to identify and match skills & learning to existing National/Sector/Job standards, including;-

- Validating the scope and relevance of an individuals practical skills through the use of tests and interviews, mapping skills & learning to a National/Sector/Job standard, observing tasks, and structured discussion.

- Mapping prior learning, knowledge and skills against learning outcomes of NOS/units of qualifications for entry to employment

- Verification of evidence

Figure 26: Recognition model for RPL within the NSQF concept
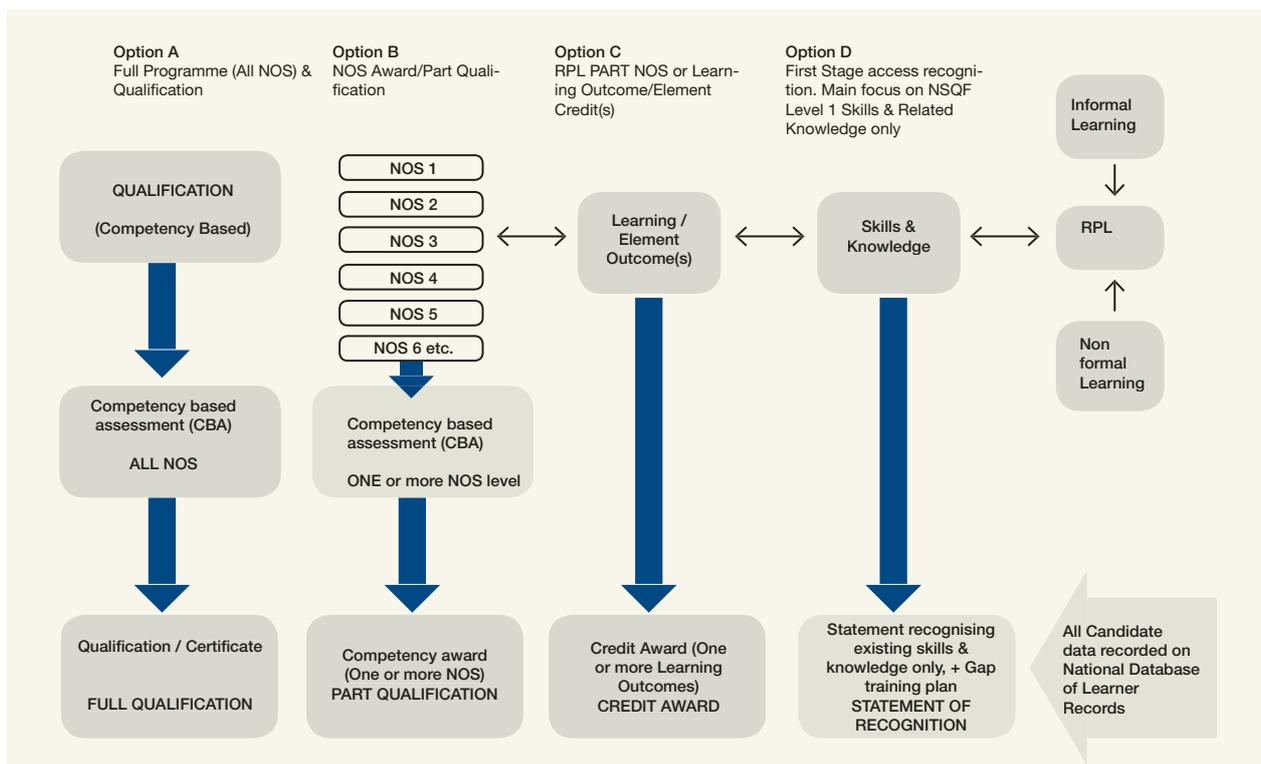
2. Recognition of Prior Learning & Education

Individuals use the RPL process to gain recognition for the existing learning they have, in order that they may;-

- Gain entry to formal education & training based on existing learning

- Obtain formal recognition Certificate/Award based on existing learning

Figure 26 details an RPL concept for discussion, and based on the NSQF requirements.

In proposing this RPL concept model, consideration is given to a number of issues, not least being the reality in the market place, whereby **workers in many sectors, particularly in the unorganised sector, may not comply with the full scope of the requirements of a National Occupation Standard (NOS), which are developed mainly for use in a formal learning environment.** The bulk of those with non-formal and informal learning reside in the unorganised sector, and can be unemployed. RPL will need to provide them with a model that enables them to progress. The RPL concept in Figure 26 identifies **four options** ranging from recognition against a full qualification through to recognising a candidates skills and knowledge, obtained through non formal and informal learning.

Option D of the concept model details this approach, and proposes a model that can identify & recognise the existing/job skills and knowledge that such workers may possess. Currently this option is targeted at workers aspiring to Level 1 NSQF recognition.

The approach proposed is to apply the RPL process, in the first instance, for judging skills and related knowledge only, that may be Level 1 compliant, and to record such attainment in the candidate's portfolio, for later recording on the **National Database of Learner Records (NDLR)**. The RPL concept also allows that Gap or Bridging training needs are identified. If the primary focus is on Skills & Knowledge learning recognition in Option D, then the focus of the identified training may focus on the remaining components at Level 1.

This may be mainly but not exclusively focused on, writing, reading etc. as contained in the Core/Generic skill component at level 1 NSQF.

In summary, the draft RPL concept proposed, allows for learning recognition based on;

- **Skills & Knowledge** residing within a Learning Outcome of a NOS **(Option D)**

- **Learning Outcome(s)** recognition as contained within the relevant NOS **(Option C)**

- NOS recognition as contained within a full qualification **(Option B)**

- **Qualification** recognition **(Option A)**

Below are some definitions from bodies responsible of Education & Training.

UNESCO, the United Nations Education Scientific & Cultural Organisation states that RPL is "the formal acknowledgement of skills, knowledge, and competencies that are gained through work experience, informal training, and life experience"

CEDEFOP, the European body responsible for Vocational Education & Training policy, states that RPL is "The confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non formal or informal setting have been assessed against predefined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification."

The Ministry of Human Resource Development, India through the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) states that;

"Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the formal assessment and recognition of the skills and knowledge a person has regardless of how or where the competencies may have been attained, that is, through formal or informal training or work experience (paid and unpaid) voluntary work and life experience".

The **NQSF Notification No. 8/6/2013-Invt.** states that "RPL is the process of recognising previous learning, often experiential, towards gaining a qualification"

There are many more definitions of RPL, but what is clear is that **RPL as a concept is focussed in recognising that all learning has a value learning no matter when, where or how it has been acquired.**

3. Guidelines

These RPL Guidelines have been developed to support users of RPL and form a component of the RPL Quality System. The draft guidelines are developed based on existing information and will be amended over time and

are detailed within the following Sections.

Section A: Accreditation of Institution & Workplace Assessment sites

In supporting a sustainable RPL system, it is first required that all institutions providing RPL services are accredited to provide these services. This is in line with best practice Education & Training systems worldwide. The RPL system proposed can take place in an assessment centre/institution, a training centre or in the workplace. Providers of RPL services will be accredited in line with the accreditation procedures agreed in the QA system. RPL Assessors and advisors employed in an accredited Assessment centre will be permitted to provide RPL services in the workplace. Where assessment takes place in the workplace, the workplace will be registered as a provider of assessment services. RPL sites should provide candidates with RPL options, based on their non-formal & informal learning/experiences. These options include the following:-

a) **Access** (to learning and employment)

b) **Award** (credits, full or part qualification)

c) **Progression** (within a programme of learning or within employment)

The purpose of accreditation is to ensure conformity on all aspects of quality pertaining to RPL and all assessment issues. **Accreditation instructions and guides** should cover the following;

■ Capacity of the Institution or workplace to deliver RPL services with regard to the sufficiency and quality of its Human, Physical & Financial resources.

■ Practitioners Qualified in line with National/Sector policy & Qualifications

■ Performance of the institution or workplace over time in the provision and delivery of RPL services.

Any Institution or entity providing RPL will be required to have sufficient RPL resources (physical, human, financial) necessary to provide a professional & Quality Assured RPL service.

Section B: Recognition of Prior Learning – Implementation & Practitioner Guidelines

B.1.   RPL Implementation issues

RPL implementation can occur in a range of accredited environments, including the workplace, through a provider of RPL services, or in a learning institution. In line with best practices, an RPL service provider will put in place a schedule of RPL services on offer in the RPL/Assessment Institution. Such a schedule will need to address the following;

a) Scope of services (What sectors/jobs the RPL service will cover)

b) Marketing plan (Use of print, radio and other media to reach market)

c) RPL Fee structure

d) Timetable of RPL services

It is important to plan RPL to be implemented on a managed individual basis when assessment is taking place. Clarification of evidence presented is best implemented on an individual basis. This does not exclude the assessor from scheduling more than one person for assessment, providing that sufficient time is given to ensure that each candidate is assessed in line with the guidelines for assessment. Parts of the advising process can be done with groups of candidates, where the candidates are claiming recognition that is job, or qualification related. The RPL service provider will also need to have in place sufficient resources that enable the RPL assessment process to take place. These resources will cover the following at a minimum;

a) Portfolio of evidence materials (including candidate details etc. This and other recording means can be in paper or electronic form)

b) Practitioner instruments per occupation/NOS/Learning Outcome or Element.

c) Learning action planners, where gap or bridging training is required.

d) Database of Learning providers.

e) Sufficient human, financial & physical resources available to implement the planned RPL service.

The outcome of the RPL Implementation process can include one of the following recommendations;-

- Access to a formal education & training programme
- Access to employment or progression within employment
- A Qualification award
- A Part qualification award
- A Record of credit against learning outcomes
- A Statement of recognition

This stage will also allow for the identification of issues such as individual candidates being suitable/unsuitable for progression through the advisory stage. In many cases potential RPL candidates are unsure of the RPL process and do not conform to the requirements for RPL processing. The briefing stage addresses this and identifies those suitable for further processing through the Advisory stage and onto the Assessment stage if successful.

B.2. Practitioners

RPL implementation is dependent also on having in place Qualified RPL practitioners. This will be in line with the **accreditation requirements**. RPL policy and guidelines will identify the Practitioners required.

These practitioners will be:

- Occupation Qualified
- Practitioner Qualified (Advisor, Assessor, Verifier)

There are three primary stages in the proposed RPL system, with each stage supported by a competent RPL practitioner as detailed in Figure 27. As referred to earlier in Figure 26, the verification process is a planned but random process that supports assures the quality of the advisory and the assessment processes in line with existing practices in education.

- **Advise (Advisor)**
- **Assess (Assessor)**
- **Verify (Verifier)**

All RPL services are based on approved National Qualifications and/or National Occupation Standards.

All quality assured activities require proof or evidence of completion and the programme covered and the recommendations made. Practitioners themselves may progress to the Award stage via the RPL process. Qualified practitioners will be required to develop and use instru-

Figure 27: RPL Practitioners

ADVISOR	• Advise, Guide & Support • Recommend Learning or Assessment
ASSESSOR	• Review advisement result • Judge Evidence • Recommend Award or Further Verification • Assessment or Learning Development
VERIFIER	• Verify/Validate Assessment process & practitioners • Assure quality of product & process • Approve outcomes & Compile reports

ments in carrying out their functions. Whether they are advisors, assessors or verifiers, the instruments they use will need to be approved for use in line with guidelines relating to the development and application of such instruments.

Advisor Guidelines

A primary and defining stage in RPL is the **advisory** stage, developed to provide support to candidates with non-formal and informal learning. The advisor plays a key role as the **gatekeeper into the RPL Assessment process**. Advisors will need to make decisions concerning a person's claim and the evidence they provide. Advisors are assisted in their functions through the use of standardised instruments/documents/records. Advisor Instruments should be designed to reflect the outcomes of questions and decisions from the advisory process.

The role of the Advisor is to:

- Assist candidates to understand the RPL process and its benefits
- Assist candidates to gather and compile their Portfolio of Evidence
- Critically Review the evidence being provided by the candidate to support their claims for recognition, through structured questioning
- Agree & record the next stage with the candidate using the instruments provided – remember, - the Advisor is NOT the Assessor.
- Assist and support the candidate through to the next stage of the RPL process – either Assessment or Further Learning.

Compile a Portfolio of Evidence

Where there are no literacy issues, it may be useful to use the Portfolio process to gather and document the candidate's evidence. Otherwise evidence should be provided in visual form, for example by demonstration, use of pictures, drawings etc. In either process questioning will be used to support any physical evidence.

In any event it is required to gather the personal details of the RPL Candidate for record purposes.

The purpose of the portfolio is to gather & record candidate details & the evidence presented that is relevant to the claim for recognition being made by the candidate. The Portfolio can be in paper or electronic format. The advisor will use a range of instruments and approaches in order to gather the information and evidence to support the claim. The advisor will;

- Record the candidate's personal details, education & training history including non-formal and informal learning and their employment history.

- Brief the candidate on the process and Benefits of RPL.

- Work with the candidate to extract the evidence required to support the claim

Orientate the Candidate to the required NOS

The purpose of Orientation at the Advisory process is to clarify the candidate's comprehension of the required Standards against which they are making claims.

- Review and discuss the appropriate registered Qualifications and Standards with the candidate

- Check the candidates knowledge and comprehension of the evidence criteria against which the candidate will be assessed

- ■ Resolve any problems arising, so that the candidate is clear how the Advisory process works.

Match Claims

The purpose of Matching Claims is to agree with the candidate the claims that the candidate is making, matched against the appropriate Qualification &/or Standard(s)

Matching is based on the information and evidence provided by the candidate.

- Review the Portfolio details, in particular employment and Learning history to back up the claims the candidate has made. Support the candidate at all times through this process using a friendly inclusive manner.

- Question the detail of the claims. This questioning process should be applied using an open question style for clarification purposes and to assist the advisor make candidate progression decisions. The advisor is not determining the competence of the candidate – this is the role of the assessor, should the candidate progress to the assessment stage.

- Record all decisions made on the Match Claims form and sign off. This becomes evidence in the assessment stage.

Plan Progression

The purpose of Planning Progression is to close the advisory stage of this process by agreeing an action plan that progresses the candidate to the next stage of the RPL process- whether this is to Assessment or to Learning development. The advisor will;

- Summarise and check that there is agreement with the candidate on all the Planning outcomes

- Agree the progression of the candidate to either Assessment or Learning Development.

- Record this agreement on the Candidates Action Plan. Both the Advisor and the Candidate will sign and date the action plan.

- Progression to assessment requires selecting and recording the Competency Standards that the candidate will be assessed against.

- The candidate will be provided with an appointment for assessment indicating the time, date, venue and contact details.

- The dates agreed per group of candidates for assessment will be recorded on the Assessment Schedule-Group.

- Where gap or bridging training is required, this is agreed planned for & recorded in the candidate's record.
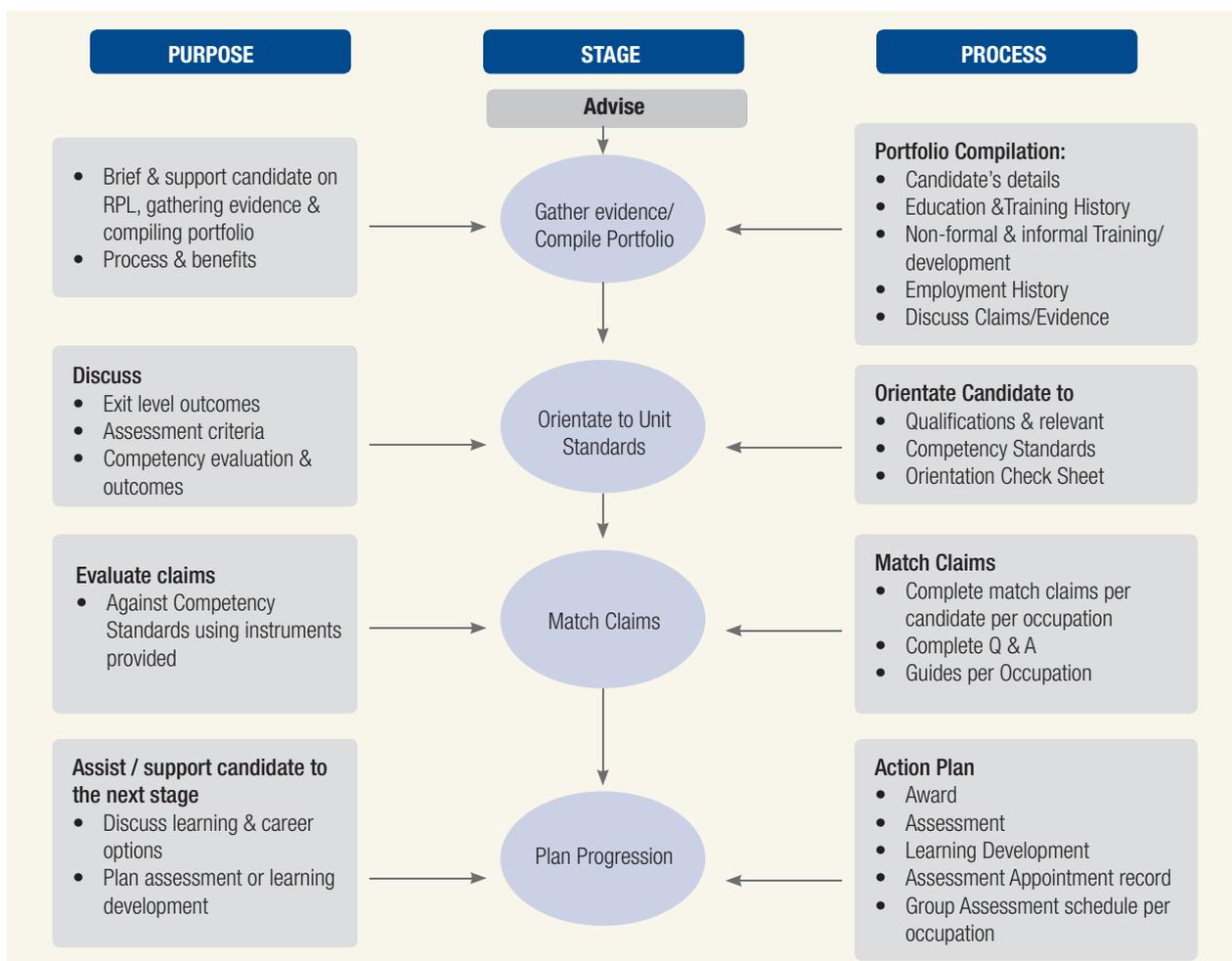
The Advisement Instruments can include the Portfolio of Evidence, Matching Claims check-sheets, background occupational questions and sample answers are other inputs provided to assist the Advisor, to plan the progression of the candidate to either Assessment or to Further Learning. The outcomes of the Advisory process are either a recommendation to Assessment or to Further Learning.

Box 17: The Advisor as a professional

No matter what the situation Advisors are presented with, they must be professional, fair and impartial in all decisions. On the one hand the progress people will make is effected by the decisions you made by the Advisor-on the other hand, scheduling people for assessment that do not have the evidence to back up their claims is a waste of money and time, and does no favours to the people making the claims.

Figure 28 summarises the Advisory Purpose, Stages and Process

Figure 28: RPL Advisory process

The Role of the Assessor is to:

- Prepare the candidate for the assessment
- Brief and advise and instruct candidates on the assessment process
- Orientate the candidate to the Qualification/National Occupation Standard requirements.
- Review/authenticate the evidence provided
- Plan for the assessment
- Select relevant assessment instruments
- Make assessment decisions
- Record assessment results
- Generate suitable action plans
- Provide inputs to any appeals

PURPOSE	STAGE	PROCESS
	Advise	
• Brief & support candidate on RPL, gathering evidence & compiling portfolio • Process & benefits	Gather evidence/ Compile Portfolio	**Portfolio Compilation:** • Candidate's details • Education &Training History • Non-formal & informal Training/ development • Employment History • Discuss Claims/Evidence
Discuss • Exit level outcomes • Assessment criteria • Competency evaluation & outcomes	Orientate to Unit Standards	**Orientate Candidate to** • Qualifications & relevant • Competency Standards • Orientation Check Sheet
Evaluate claims • Against Competency Standards using instruments provided	Match Claims	**Match Claims** • Complete match claims per candidate per occupation • Complete Q & A • Guides per Occupation
Assist / support candidate to the next stage • Discuss learning & career options • Plan assessment or learning development	Plan Progression	**Action Plan** • Award • Assessment • Learning Development • Assessment Appointment record • Group Assessment schedule per occupation

Assessor Guidelines

The Assessor is the judge of the evidence provided by a candidate as their claim for recognition, following the Advisory/Evidence gathering process. In the first instance the assessor will judge the Advisors recommendations. Assessors are assisted in their functions by the use of standardised instruments/documents/ records. Assessors will be qualified against the Qualification/NOS for the Assessor & registered on the NDLR.

- Evaluate the way in which the assessment was conducted

Review Evidence

The assessor will review the evidence presented, and accept or query the recommendations made by the advisor. Where the Assessor does not accept the advisors recommendations, both the Advisor & Assessor must meet to clarify and agree the following:-

- The completeness of the Portfolio of Evidence and/or
- The relevance and sufficiency of the evidence provided
- Other related issues
- A way forward

Orientation

The assessor will conduct a comprehensive orientation to the Qualification/NOS or Learning Outcome against which the claim for recognition is being made. This will be a more technical Orientation than that conducted by the advisor.

- The assessor will orientate the candidate to ensure the candidate is fully aware of the requirements relating to assessment criteria and quality judgements that will be made by the assessor
- The results of the orientation stage are recorded as and signed off by the candidate and the assessor.
- Maintain this record as evidence

Plan & Implement Assessment

It is critical that the candidate clearly understands the RPL assessment process, and their role in this process. The candidate should be provided with detailed Instructions, either written or verbal, and the assessor should ensure that sufficient resources are available to support the implementation & judgement process. The candidate will be briefed regarding general and specific Instructions to assist the candidate understand what is required in the presentation of the evidence and its evaluation/judgement. The form/type of evidence judgement /assessment to be used will be agreed by the candidate and the assessor. **In general, an assessment that verifies the claim by simulating the skills required in a job situation, backed up by supporting process knowledge, will provide the assessor with sufficient evidence upon which to make a judgement.**

When conducting an assessment against a claim made, it is preferable that standardised Assessment Instruments are used by the assessors. The use of the standardised instruments allows for the validation of assessment data and instruments. Integrated Assessment instruments (IAI's) contain the tools and other judgement/assessment criteria used in evaluating the quality of the evidence provided. Each IAI will assist the assessor in the making of judgements in an integrated manner involving the skill, relevant/required knowledge and other components required for a comprehensive assessment.

The assessor will record where insufficient evidence is provided, and relate this to the appropriate Learning Outcome. Each IAI will also contain guide questions and model or typical answers to assist in this process. Assessors should compile their own bank of assessment instruments, necessary to provide a quality assured evidence judgement process. IAI's will also contain details and materials to enable a further verification assessment to occur, where award judgements cannot be made due to non-complying evidence. These further verification assessment assignments will contain some or all of the following -

- Drawings/pictures/other visual media containing the detail of the assessment assignment
- Technical verification Question examples covering essential embedded knowledge
- Verification Question examples covering the required learning outcomes

The RPL guides and instruments are based upon judging evidence of learning outcomes achieved against the requirements of the relevant National Occupation Standard. This can lead to a recognition decision. The instruments the assessor will use will assist in the judging of the evidence in an integrated manner. All judgements will be recorded and depending on the scope of the assessment, a record of **judgement decisions against each Learning Outcome** within each National Occupation Standard/Qualification.

Evidence Review Record

An evidence review record provides the record of decisions leading to a judgement, and is also a record of such judgements. The Evidence review record is completed by the Assessor and the Candidate. The Assessor will:

- Record the types of assessment used in judging the evidence
- Record against the evidence provided, if the evidence is Valid, Authentic, Sufficient and Current.
- Be a basis for a recommendation leading to **further verification assessment, learning development**, or an **award recommendation**. Assessors will make, record and sign off the recommendation, along with the candidate, in the **Candidates Action Plan**
- Maintain the **Evidence Review Record as proof** of the Assessment decisions made.

This record is **proof of the judgement** or assessment of evidence, as recorded by the Assessor and agreed by the candidate.

Evaluate Outcomes

The Assessor will finalise judgement decisions, agree this with the candidate and record this as the record of achievement on the candidates file. If, for example there are three Learning Outcomes that the candidate has provided sufficient evidence for, but one Learning Outcome where the evidence does **not meet the requirements,** the assessor can ask the candidate to complete a Further Verification Assessment. The outcome of this process is a recommendation by the assessor.

Record Recommendation

Where sufficient evidence is provided the assessor will make a recommendation leading to an award. Where the evidence **does not meet the requirements** for award recommendation purposes the assessor can **recom-** **mend Gap training/Learning Development** and will need to record the Learning Development needs in the candidates **Action Plan**. This plan needs to be agreed with the Candidate.

Box 18: The Assessor as a professional

As a qualified and registered Assessor, the Assessor is expected to provide decisions that are fair and impartial, and are agreed with the candidate. The Assessor is also expected to do this in a professional manner, and in a way that is open to verification or query.

To achieve this, the Assessor will be qualified both as an Assessor and in the Occupation that the Assessor is making judgements on. The Assessor must ensure that the decisions taken regarding the acceptance or rejection of the sufficiency, validity, currency and authenticity of a candidate's evidence are recorded in the candidate's portfolio, or other approved RPL record.

Figure 29 summarises the RPL assessment purpose, stages and processes.

Figure 29: RPL Assessment process
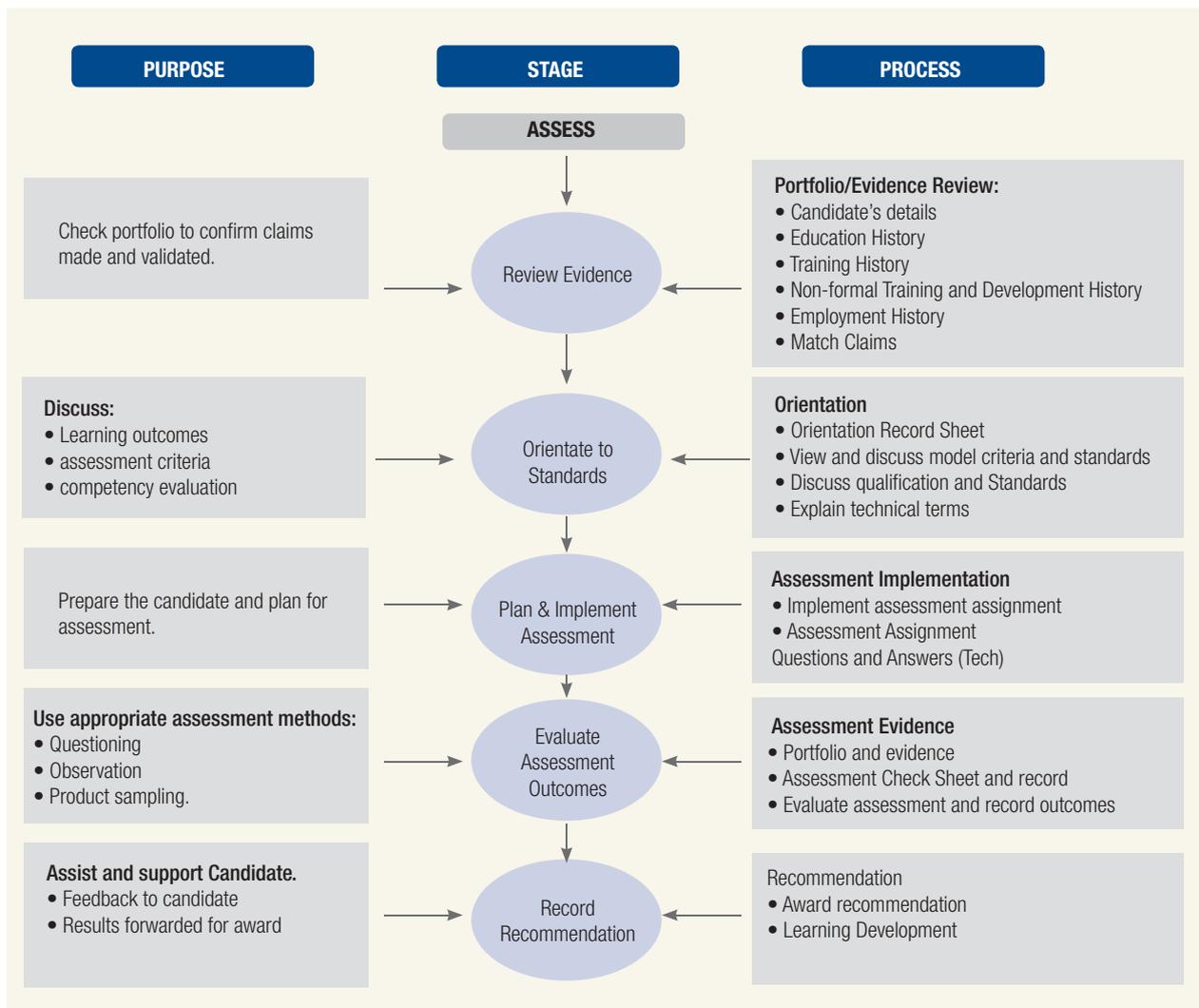
Verifier Guidelines

The Verifier supports the RPL process through reviewing the overall RPL process in an independent manner. The Verifier underpins the credibility and relevance of the RPL process/result to the Quality Assurance body, Awarding body, the candidates, the provider, and to the broad community. The Verifier will need to put in place the operational systems of checks and balances that assure this process and its outcomes. Verifiers are assisted in their functions by the use of standardised instruments/ documents/ records. The Verifier can be an internal Verifier or a Verifier from outside the RPL institution. Whether the Verifier is internal or external, they will be Qualified in line with the Verifier Qualification or Standard and be registered with the appropriate Quality Assurance body.

The role of the Verifier is to:

- Assure the quality of the RPL process, the instruments used and outcomes recommended when RPL has been implemented within an enterprise or institution providing RPL services.

- Conducted the verification in line with the QA policy on assessment.

- Review the RPL process with candidates and the other RPL practitioners and obtain their feedback.

- Record and report on the RPL process

- Approve or put on hold recommendations made, prior to the issuing of certificates.

(In line with standard practice, once a certificate has been issued, it may only be withdrawn on grounds of fraud)

Verifiers will liaise with **other practitioners** within their enterprise or institution that are involved with the qualification process and have regular **meetings** with them to plan and schedule the RPL verification process and to resolve outstanding issues including candidates with special needs. The Verifier will gather & provide data on an agreed basis that verifies the quality of the results and the assessment process. Reports will be provided by

Verifiers to the appropriate awarding body. All Verification reports will contain data resulting from:-

- Candidate feedback

- Advisors

- Assessors

- Awards data

- Instruments used

- Data capturing quality & integrity

- Further Verification Assessment assignments

- Learning Development progression plans

- RPL Process Observation

The Verifier will;

- Schedule the verification process by agreement with the RPL institution & practitioners

- Observe the RPL process at various stages

- Record & log non compliances

- Resolve non-compliance issues locally

- Record and report outcomes to resolve non compliances

- Collect, analyse, organise and evaluate information.

- Plan, prepare and conduct verification.

- Advise and support practitioners.

- Review verification systems and requirements.

- Prepare external verification requirements.

- Report according to procedures.

- Approve or amend RPL outcome recommendations

The Verifier as a professional

As a member of the RPL practitioner team, Verifiers will carry out their duties in a quality assured manner that assists in supporting the other team members and results in candidates having a fair and comprehensive RPL service. The Verifier links to the Quality Assurance / Awarding body plays a key role in supporting the credibility and relevance of RPL.

Figure 30: Verification process

PURPOSE	STAGE	PROCESS
	VERIFY	
Plan the process for verifying the outcomes of RPL advisement & assessment	Plan, Prepare & conduct verification	Plan & prepare the verification process regarding Scope, nature, processes, techniques & implementation.
To support and quality assure the process and outcomes of RPL as they impact on practitioners & providers	Advise & support assessment practitioners & agencies	**Advise & support** practitioners and providers regarding QMS elements including planning, resources, competency, qualifications & data capturing and reporting
Provide Quality assurance guidance & reports re-verification results	Report, record & apply verification	**Provide verification** reports to awarding body for action in line with existing TVET QA procedures
Ensure verification reports are actioned and line with approved Quality management systems.	Review & assure the quality of systems & outcomes	**Support & quality assure** the outcomes of the assessment process in a cost effective and efficient manner

Section C: Credit Transfer, Certification, Awards, Credits, Statements of recognition

C. 1. Credit Transfer

"Credit transfer is the process of recognising prior learning that has been credit rated by the assessment & certification bodies to do so. The transfer of credit points from one qualification or learning programme into another helps to minimise duplication of learning."(NSQF notification No. 8/6/2013-Invt).

The importance of credit transfer in supporting RPL is critical. Being able to accumulate credit for learning through the RPL process provides the basis for progression by the learner. This is true whether the learning forms the whole or a part of a NOS or a Learning Outcome/Element, the recognition and recording of the assessment outcome is critical. **The NSQF notification (9 i) supports the transferring of accumulated credits. Credits or credit points can have a particular reference to the notional hours allocated to learning and learning attainment. Where sufficient required credits are accumulated, this may lead to certification or**

an award. There may be a need to consider what process best suits the supporting the allocation of credits to all qualifications, NOS and Learning Outcomes/Elements within NOS, particularly when applying RPL using option C or D. A Credit points system will allow for the accumulation of credits, progression to an award as detailed in Option B. **Such a system will need to be incorporated into the National Assessment & Certification system legislation, for future use during the RPL process.**

C. 2. Statement of recognition

A statement of recognition is one that is provided to an RPL candidate, where skills and knowledge are judged as insufficient for an award, but identify skills, knowledge and learning by the candidate within one or more learning outcomes.

Section D: Development of RPL Materials

D.1. Types of RPL Materials

RPL materials consist of those instruments and records used by RPL Practitioners during the RPL process. These materials are taken from the databank of assess-

ment materials developed over time by the practitioners, and referenced to specific qualifications. As a part of their practitioner qualification, RPL practitioners are required to be competent in the development of such materials. RPL materials will be developed and referenced to each NOS & stored in a safe secure environment in line with existing QA procedures.

These materials can include;-

- RPL marketing materials

- Candidate Portfolio (paper or electronic)

- Advisor Instruments per NOS by Learning Outcome/ Element

- Assessor Instruments per NOS by Learning Outcome/Element

- Verifier Instruments

D. 2. Maintaining the RPL databank.

The source of the RPL materials will be the databank. This databank will be referenced to the NQF Qualifications register. The databank will be developed to include a range of questions and related media including drawings, pictures etc. organised by type and qualification for use in the development of standardised RPL instruments. The databank will be continually updated to provide a reliable & secure source of assessment materials for use in the RPL process. Maintaining the RPL databank will be done in line with the QA procedures governing the National Assessment & Certification system.

Section E   National Database of Learner Records (NDLR)

It is planned to establish and maintain a Qualifications register, which will be "the official national public record of all qualifications aligned to NSQF levels, qualification pathways and accrediting authorities" NSQF Notification No.8/6/2013-Invt. It may be useful to link the planned register to a National Database of Learner Records, thereby establishing formal links between qualification and records and for learners to access for use in planning progression activities. In developing the model & the detailed guidelines for an NDLR, there will be a need to take account of all learner achievements, whether achieved through the formal learning system or through RPL.

The NDLR can sit within the LMIS.

i)   An NDLR can provide learners with access to their achievements, including via RPL, based on National Qualifications

ii)   Learners can download proof of their achievements for use when seeking employment or access to further learning

iii) Data can provide source material for use by government in skills development planning and prioritising resource allocations.
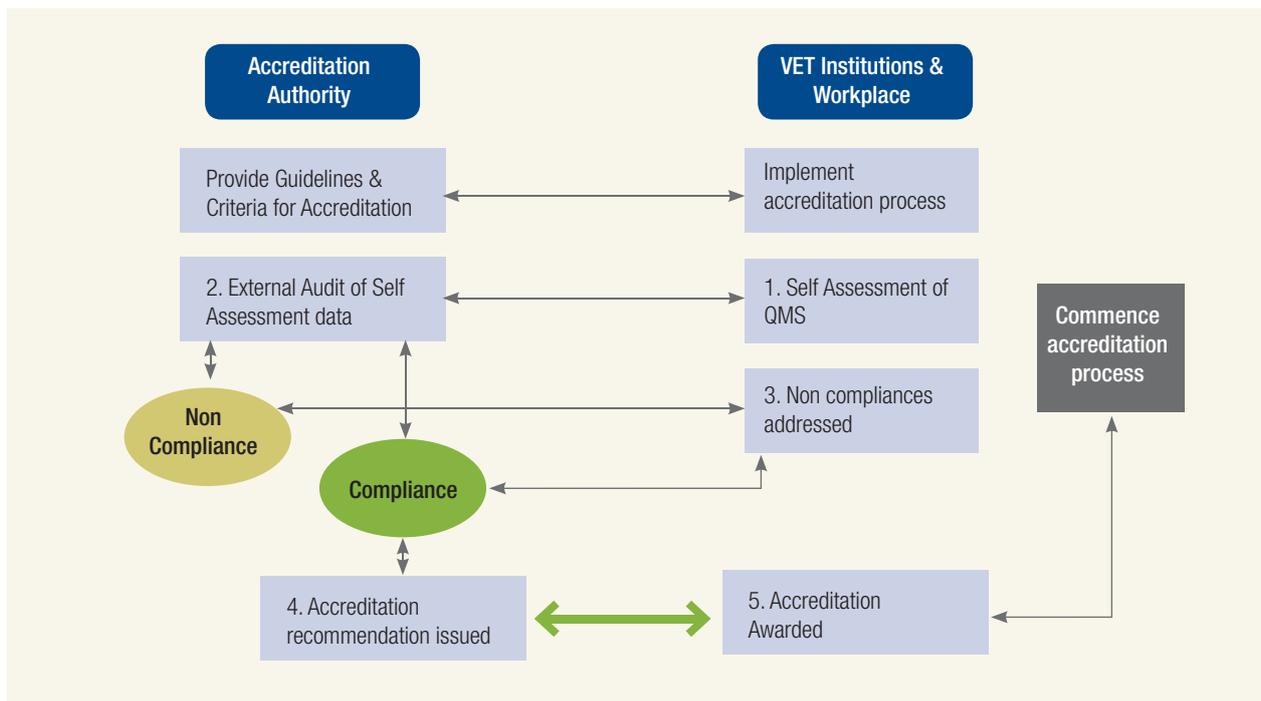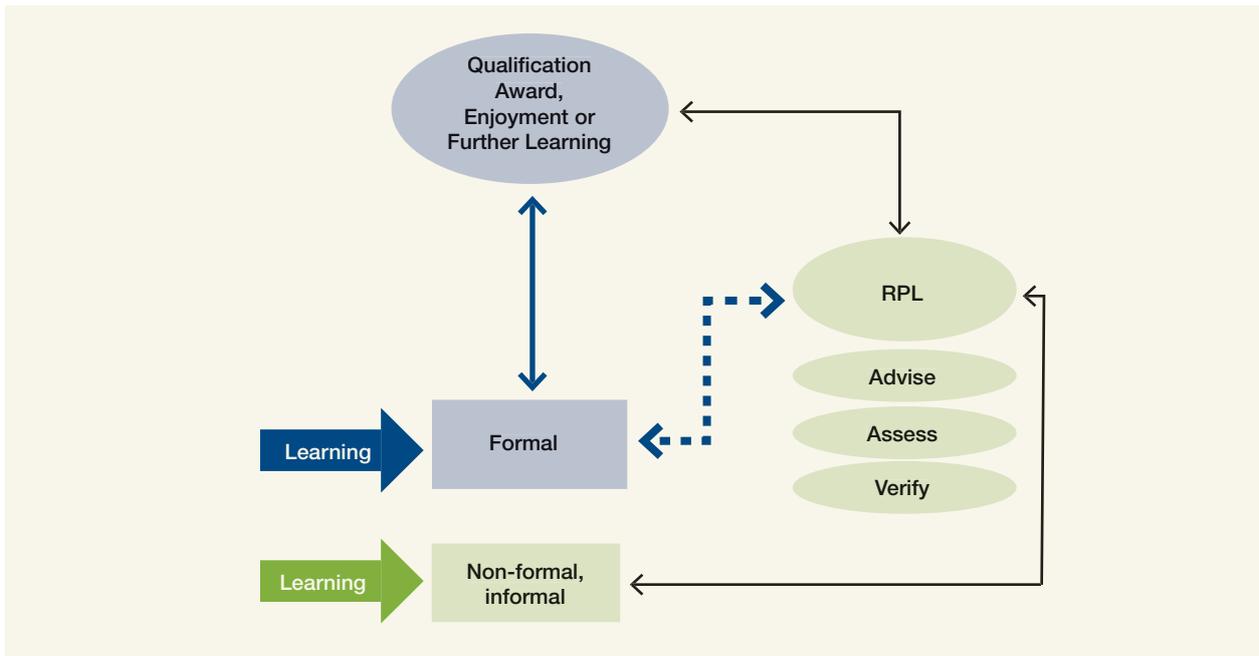
Figure 31: RPL Model

Figure 32: Accreditation model

FURTHER READING

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MODULE 12

PILOT PROJECT IN RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR DOMESTIC WORKERS

1. Summary & Observations on the Recognition of Prior Learning – Pilot for Domestic Workers

To date, the NSDA RPL pilot project has assessed 920 domestic workers in the NCR with an 80% pass rate. These participants will soon be given certificates and a tracer study will begin that tracks the participants post assessment at weeks 5, 15 and 25. Until the tracer study has been completed it will not be possible to provide complete and conclusive results. However, some important observations can be made that will be useful as the soon-to-be-approved SSC for Domestic Workers begins its important work.

As this RPL pilot pre-dated a formal and approved SSC, it was necessary to first create National Occupational Standards so as to have some standard competencies to use for the assessment process. The NOS used was created using the collective experience of the consortium members, several of whom have been training domestic workers for many years. The training courses held by the consortium members over the years had all been designed to meet specific market requirements. They were all demand-led and were created as viable working models at the request of clients, both private and corporate (as in the case of facility management companies). In the absence of any government sponsored training programmes for domestic workers, these organisations responded to repeated requests for training by creating original curriculum and developing methodology that was designed specifically for the domestic workers. The cost and length of the courses are aligned with the amount the employer/employee will pay and the length of time the worker can be free to take the course. The methodology of each training course used as a base for the NOS created for this pilot is unique and designed to take into account the specific characteristics of the individuals being trained including their lack of formal training and low level of literacy.

The very fact that the courses offered by the consortium members are in constant demand even today and create small profits for the organisations points to the fact that there is an identifiable need in the market for trained domestic workers and that training domestic workers can be a viable financially for an organisation if the course matches the market need. This is important for the SSC to consider as it will be essential to find ways to make the SSC financially viable in the years ahead. The NOS used for the pilot is a combination of these original curriculums and measures the competencies identified for an experienced domestic worker. The assessment tools created for this pilot have their origins in the courses run by the consortium members. In essence thus RPL assessment marks the different between an absolute beginner who has never stepped foot inside a home to work and someone who has worked as a domestic helper for at least a year.

There are important lessons and observations that can be drawn from the pilot and these will be useful in helping the SSC as it comes together. The observations will help the SSC understand what the market can bear at this early stage and will also inform future RPL assessment programmes. It is also important that the findings of this pilot are taken into account when creating policy around RPL where it affects the informal workforce. There can be no doubt of the necessity and urgency of putting an RPL assessment process in place for the domestic workers. The RPL process, as it develops will provide excellent data which will help to identify the job roles and competencies and it is an excellent starting point in the journey to create a complete market map and to formalize and legitimize this sector. Even if the results of this pilot do not show immediate increases in income for the workers or provide further mobility or legitimacy at this stage (as per the hypothesis set at the beginning of the pilot) the consortium remain convinced that these benefits will come in the future as awareness and understanding about the assessment process grows. Furthermore, lessons learned from the Domestic Workers RPL pilot will inform RPL assessment programmes for other informal workers in the unorganised sector. Independently employed plumbers, carpenters, electricians, domestic drivers, rickshaw pullers and street vendors are amongst those whose work environment mirrors that of domestic workers. The challenges of mobilisation, literacy and scale will be very much the same.

Much thought will need to go into creating RPL assessments for the informal workforce and the RPL process will necessarily look quite different than it does for the organized sector. However, it is the informal workforce who has the most to gain by having their skills recognised and certified. It will be the first crucial step to creating an aspirational career path and, through this process they will, for the first time, be able to understand that there is a journey ahead that will allow them to increase their income, improve their work environment and develop their skills. Improving literacy and creating a

bridge to formal education will be the final step to helping domestic workers join the organized sector.

Some observations drawn from the pilot are listed below as well as a detailed analysis on the key challenges faced during the pilot and some specific recommendations on how these challenges could be overcome.

- From the outset it was clear that the participants understood the value of the assessment and were keen to obtain the certificate. Everyone who came to the centre wanted to go through the process and obtain a certificate even if they were not working in the domestic industry. Those participating clearly communicated that the process was interesting and were confident that the certificate would lend them legitimacy in the job market. Further to this, they believed that having the certificate increased the likelihood of obtaining and job and that showing it to potential employers was likely to help them gain a higher salary. The tracer study will show if these assumptions on the part of the worker are borne out in the market.

- In order for RPL assessment to help the domestic workforce it is essential the at an SSC for Domestic Workers begins the process of mapping the NOSs so that training programmes and RPL assessment tools can be developed in line with these standards. It is imperative that the NOSs reflect the current market environment and that access is given to both live-in and live-out workers. Specific NOS must be developed for live in and live out candidates.

- Gathering evidence of prior learning was a major challenge and yet it forms an essential part of the RPL process. The assessment process was able to go some distance to gathering the information but the lack of other support evidence in the form of employer feedback or past work certificates proved impossible to obtain. Employers were uninterested in helping the workers and unwilling to take the time to fill in the feedback form even though the questions asked were very basic. Finding ways to obtain additional evidence would increase the credibility of the RPL assessment process.

- A nation-wide awareness campaign is required to legitimize the domestic work force and, as mentioned above, to increase employer engagement. As there are no major industrial players in this segment a method for reaching individual employers must be devised. Technology could play a part in this goal

through the development of easy-to-use apps. The awareness campaign could include some degree of education for the employer, advocacy for the basic rights of workers as well as provide information on standards, available courses and RPL assessment centres

- Literacy cannot be assumed in this community. Training programmes, NOS and assessment tools must all be developed with this fact in mind. Lack of literacy is only part of the issue. Domestic workers lack any formal training and as a result lack the behaviours and discipline to sit through long sessions. It will be essential to understand how members of this community learn and all resources and tools must be designed to gather the most accurate information in order to help formalize this sector.

- It is important to recognise the importance these workers place on their independence and to find ways to create/support a more formal employment environment while retaining their personal freedom. It is unlikely that large organisations will be employing these individual and therefore most will continue working as free agents. Therefore, RPL assessment will be the main way in which we are able to map the current skill levels and the data gathered will inform the design of future training programmes. Going forward, up skilling or training programmes aimed at improving their negotiating skills, life skills and increasing their level of engagement and accountability will be important. Teaching them to take care of themselves, their families and their finances will ensure they remain productive members of society.

- Physical resources are essential to carry out RPL assessment and subsequent up skilling. Central and State government can help by identifying unused infrastructure that can be turned into support centres offering RPL assessment, training and education in each community. Developing simple technology-based solutions for RPL assessment and training will ensure inclusion across the country.

- The professional development of freelance of trainers and assessors and their inclusion on a national database is essential to ensure consistent and high quality delivery. The role of these individuals' needs to be mapped and standards to be created. Specializations, such as working with the semi-literate need to be identified and modules for training to be designed.

2. Key Challenges

Mobilisation

Key Challenges Faced

- **Reaching potential participants:** In RPL assessments where there is a recognised industry and specific industry bodies, reaching the participants is relatively straightforward. Participants can be accessed by meeting them at their place of work. However, given the nature of the domestic workers industry, where the workplace is individual homes the task was much harder as the potential participant base was widely spread across various communities. Added to this was the fact that employers were reluctant to give their workers time off to attend the assessment centres. In some cases, a door to door approach was required to gain trust and identify workers for the pilot. NGO's and community groups were central and extremely helpful yet ultimately the success of the mobilisation process came down to individuals deciding to take part and finding a way to attend the sessions.

- **Gaining trust in the communities:** Many of these domestic workers and communities suffer from overexposure from black market agents as well as well-meaning NGO's. We found the potential participants skeptical and wary and it took time to gain their trust even when working with the team from the Domestic Workers Union.

- **Time required to register, counsel and assess was significant.** As workers could not get away from the jobs for very long, the project board decided to register, assess and provide life skills workshop in one session

- **Participants were only available on Sundays:** Sometimes they could not attend at all due to employer demands

- **Accessing appropriate mobilisers:** Finding committed and responsible mobilisers who would work with the project consistently was a real challenge. The work of mobilising in this industry is not considered dignified and the working conditions are challenging as they necessarily need to operate in low income communities. This time of year the heat and access to water proved a particular challenge. Ideally individuals from the same communities would be used as mobilisers but there was too little time to develop a sufficient number of these individuals who could commit to the entire project

- **Lack of time to properly train mobilisers :** the training course was only 4 hours long and was not really sufficient to help the mobilisers understand (and therefore be able to communicate) the importance of the assessment process.

- **Participants did not possess identification:** (particularly true of migrant live-in workers). This made documentation difficult and there were concerns about the integrity of the data as there was no way to verify the individuals undergoing the assessment.

- **Everyone wanted to participate:** Although it is a good sign, the challenge was that informal workers of all types wanted to be assessed so as to obtain the certificate. This created some issues with crowd control.

Recommendations

- **Permanent community/support centres:** These could be set up (in partnership with NGOs already working in the area) in the colonies where there are large numbers of domestic workers. These centres could double as assessment centres, training centres and advocacy centres and would help to access large numbers thereby eliminating the need to go door to door. It is essential that the assessment centres are very local as participants do not have time to travel far to gain certification. Permanent assessment centres would help lend credibility to the process and go some distance to increasing trust in the community. The mobilisers and assessors would also have a base to work from which would help improve their skills through peer to peer learning as well as help them feel that the role has dignity by having a office-type base to work from.

- **Allocate time and resources:** It is normal for a pilot to be short of both. However, in future RPL assessment programmes it will be important to lay careful groundwork on which to build the systems required for a complete RPL process. Considerable time is needed to build teams that are able to mobilise, counsel and assess consistently and to build community awareness. Once RPL assessment becomes a permanent part of the skill ecosystem it would be sensible to ensure due time is given to build teams, systems and processes. Building a solid base will ensure the assessment process actually serves the purpose for which it is intended and the inclination to simply chase the numbers must be avoided. The quality of the assessment is central to ensure the process really leads to the inclusion of the informal worker into the organized workforce.

- **Extensive Awareness Campaign:** An extensive city-wide awareness campaign needs to be mounted to educate workers and employers. Success stories from workers achieving the certification and explaining the subsequent benefits would be most effective here.

- **Incentives:** These would help increase the number of participants attending the session and could be in the form of a meal, reimbursement of transport costs or loss of income support, up skilling.

- **Immediate Assessment:** Is it essential that assessment takes place with two days of mobilisation given the mobility of the workforce. The consortium found that workers would not return on the second day early on in the pilot which forced the decision to register, counsel, assess and train all in one day.

- **Mobilise for multiple job roles:** There were challenges in separating the general (level1) domestic worker from others with more specialized experience. Everyone wanted a certificate even if it was not for a job they were currently doing. Therefore, it would be more efficient to run several RPL assessments for multiple job roles from the same centre to avoid workers from other segments attending the assessments just to receive the certificate.

Assessment Centre

Key Challenges Faced

- **Finding a centre easily accessible to the community:** Given the participants paucity of time the assessment centre needed to be near to their homes and places of employment. Participants would not travel beyond 1-2 km to attend the sessions.

- **Safety of the project team and equipment in the premises:** There were concerns that women working on the pilot could not be left alone on in the assessment centre and locking up the equipment was essential and represented a challenge as the centres used did not have locked cupboards.

- **Size and composition of the centre:** Finding the right amount of space was a problem. Minimum space requirement was 300cm^2. Time constraints meant that there were 25 participants per assessment group. Participants usually brought their children and their families so space was used up by non-participants.

- **Lack of basic infrastructure and costs associated:** Lighting, water, fans, electricity were sporadic

in most of the communities. The cost of putting infrastructure in place was prohibitive.

Recommendations

- **Create permanent community centres:** These centres, located in communities with a large number of domestic workers, could be used for RPL assessment, training and up skilling, advocacy and empowerment of the local community. Funded by Central or State Government, these centres could be administered in partnership with NGOs already operating effectively in the area and could double as migrant support units (funded by State Govt possibly?). Basic infrastructure could be provided and each activity given a locked space to hold equipment. An outdoor area could be created to hold families and children and medical and welfare camps held on a monthly basis

NOS & Assessment Tools

Key Challenges Faced

- **Lack of SSC:** The lack of an SSC for Domestic Workers meant that NOS had to be drawn up specifically for this project. The project board's market experience informed the process but testing out the RPL assessment on new and untried NOS was not ideal. At the outset of the pilot it was widely felt by the project board that the assessment was too basic and did not draw enough of a distinction between a completely unskilled worker and a worker at Level 1.

- **Constraint of time and resources to create the tools:** Original, sector-specific images would have enhanced the effectiveness of the assessment tool but there was neither time nor funding within this pilot to do this.

- **Process was labour intensive:** Total time required per participant was 5 hours not including mobilisation. Registration/counseling - 2 hours: Assessment - 1 Hour and Life Skills Workshop – 2 hours. Time also dictated how the assessment tool was designed and utilized. Given the time frame the tools were designed to be 80% visual/written (keeping in mind the very low level of literacy) and 20% practical demonstration. It was agreed by the consortium that this was the only way to get people through the process in a few short months. In this sector a more hands on assessment would be optimal therefore these numbers should be reversed but this would make scale impossible. Added to the challenges of

assessing practical skills the participants lack of experience with formal learning & assessing environments meant that it took more time than expected and required the assessors to be particularly sensitive to the participants which translated into extended training for the assessors. Participants were skeptical and anxious when they first arrived at the Centre and time was required to put them at ease. Prior to using the assessment tool, the assessors had to explain all aspects very carefully and were required to demonstration even how to mark "Xs" on a page.

Recommendations

- **Creation of standardised NOS :** These will urgently need to be created by the SSC in order to have an effective RPL assessment process and it is crucial that they reflect the job roles as they exist in the market today. The NOS will also need to be generic enough to be utilized across the country and in both tier 1 & 2 cities. Once the NOS are approved, an assessment tool for each will need to be created. The NOS used by the pilot could be adapted and elaborated and separate NOS and assessment tools created for live-in and live out domestic workers. Competencies around the use of some basic household equipment would need to be included in the NOS going forward. It will be key for the SSC to focus on the need for visual and practical tools given the low levels of education and literacy so prevalent in this sector

- **Basic & simple Technology:** Through the use of video images and software specially created for the sector a larger segment of the workforce could be more easily accessed. By using simple software and taking some time to teach participants how to use a computer mouse, objective and standardised assessments could take place faster and for many more participants per day. Create one assessment tool that can be used and adapted across the country.

Assessors

Key Challenges Faced

- **Freelancers:** Free-lance assessors were used in the pilot. They were graduates who had worked in the industry. Although they approached the project in the right spirit, their lack of exposure to the informal workforce was a challenge. Because the assessors were free-lance there was a lack of continuity and

assessors were coming and going throughout the exercise which may have compromised the integrity of the process

- **Role of the assessor is not aspirational:** The role of an RPL assessor is currently not aspirational so motivating the assessors to adhere to the process and to be consistent was difficult.

- **Working Conditions:** The working environment of the assessment centre with its lack of infrastructure was a challenge. Safety was a concern and accessibility of the centre sometimes challenging. The environment did not help when recruiting assessors and often acted as a deterrent to finding the right candidates for the job.

- **Training Programme too short:** The assessors underwent a 4 hour training session but it was felt that at least 8 hours of training was required to help the assessor gain sufficient understanding of the sector and sensitize them to work within the domestic community.

Recommendations

- Job Role Development: Ideally the assessor and skills trainer job roles are fully developed and become aspirational. In order for these jobs to be considered important and aspirational a career path needs to be drafted out. The roles could be interchangeable between skill training and assessing and training modules need to be created for each specific role. Where possible outstanding candidates from the community being assessed should be put into a longer term training programme to become trainers and assessors. Evidence suggests that when trainers originate from the sector and community they emerge as leaders and give participants a view of what can be achieved with commitment and hard work. If the tools used are appropriate, they can become manage the assessment correctly their understanding of the community allows them to accurately gather data and assess skill sets.

- **Database of experienced RPL Assessors:** A centrally held database of certified RPL assessors and skills trainer would help SSC and organisations source skilled individuals that match their requirements and allow for trainer/assessor mobility.

- **Assessor Training Time Increased:** At least 8 hours of training is required as stated above. The time required will vary from community to community and depend on the level of formal training or education the community has previously received.

FURTHER READING

- European Commission, Cedefop and ICF International. 2014a. *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning: 2014 update.* www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-nonformal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory (Accessed 16 April 2015.)

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- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). 2012. *UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning.* http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002163/216360e.pdf (Accessed 16 April 2015.)

Acronyms

AICTE	All India Council for Technical Education
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme
CEDEFOP	Centre European de Development de la Formation Professionnelle
CNCP	Commission Nationale de Certification Professionnelle
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CQF	Credit and Qualification Framework
CQP	Certificat de Qualification Professionnelle
CS	Credit system
CSTARI	Center staff training and research institute
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
DACUM	Developing a Curriculum
DEQA,	Deutsche Referenzstelle für Qualitätsicherung in Beruflichen Bildung
DEQA-VET	German Reference Point for Quality Assurance in VET
DQR	German (Deutsche) Qualification Register
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
ECTS	European Credit and Transfer System
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQARF	European Quality Assurance Reference Framework
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European Qualification Framework
EQF AG	European Qualification Framework Advisory Group
ESCO	European Skills/Competences, Qualifications and Occupations
ET	Education and Training
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HE	Higher Education
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training

KSC	Knowledge Skill Competence
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MS	Member States
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre
NCVT	National Council for Vocational Training
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NSDA	National Skills Development Agency
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NCP	National Coordination Point
NQAI	National Qualification Authorities of Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NQR	National Qualification Register
NSDA	National Skills Development Agency
NSQF	National Skills Qualifications Framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
NZ	New Zealand
NZQA	New Zealand Qualification Agency
OfQUAL	Office of Qualifications and Examination Regulations
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
OS	Occupational Standards
PQF	Pacific Qualification Framework
QA	Quality Assurance
QCF	Qualification and credit framework
QP	Qualification Pack
QQI	Quality and Qualifications of Ireland
QF	Qualification Framework
RNCP	Registre National des Certifications Professionnelles
RTO	Registered Training Organisations
SSC	Sector Skills Council
TP	Training Providers
SADC	South African Development Community
SAQA	South African Qualification Agency
SCQF	Scottish Credit Qualification Framework
TQFSSC	Transnational Qualification Framework for the Small States of the Commonwealth
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UGC	University Grants Commission