



Adding to Knowledge Management

**NATIONAL
QUALIFICATION
FRAMEWORKS**

What experience
has shown



FormPRO – Formação Profissional para o Mercado de Trabalho em Angola

Editor

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Rationale

FormPRO has a commitment to learning from the work of others and believes this is the essence of knowledge management and the beginning of joint reflection on issues of topical interest.

Emerging in 2002 from 30 years of civil war, Angola has been cut off from exposure to developments elsewhere, and has been further hindered by being caught in the midst of the Eastern-Western power-play. An added disadvantage has been that reflection has been limited to what is available in the Portuguese language. Thus it has missed some of the relevant discussions in English.

FormPRO would like to see both that English language debates are integrated into the discussions and that they are absorbed into the Portuguese knowledge base. At the same time, we believe that the general debate has much to learn from the Portuguese reflection. We have therefore prepared some papers in English and translated others into Portuguese. Papers such as this one are based on institutional reflection (i.a. of GTZ/GIZ), personal experience and internet research. It does not claim to be comprehensive. They represent the beginning of ongoing discussions and an invitation to include the Angolan experience in the international exploration.

Why a paper on National Qualifications Frameworks? – because:

- Angola is part of the SADC region – and SADC has approved the idea of a Regional Qualifications Framework considering National Qualifications Frameworks. This has provided an impetus for the trend in the southern African region – including Angola. Angola intends to enter the route towards a NQF – at least in the sub-sector of Vocational Training.
- GIZ – on behalf of the BMZ is supporting the Government of Angola to improve the relevance and quality of Vocational Training for a very limited time. Due to time limitations it will not be possible to accompany the Angolan partners on their NQF-journey. Nevertheless, it is possible to provide access to a NQF platform for policy learning. This brief paper is a step into this direction.

Clearly, there is much that countries exploring an NQF approach can and should think about before leaping into complex systems that are costly and do not necessarily yield the benefits anticipated. If too much is expected of an NQF it will probably disappoint. A brief paper of this nature cannot point to solutions to all problems and, indeed, cannot even identify them all. However, we attempt in what follows to highlight some of the issues related to NQFs and to provide some kind of understanding of the terminology, as well as to refer to what has and has not worked in various developing countries. While detailed research reports exist on a number of the NQFs that have been attempted, this paper presents an attempt at a succinct overview, providing key points of what enables existence or development.

Luanda, September 2012

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Abstract

The setting up of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) in developing countries has become a megatrend. As yet, however, there have been few to none notable successes although much has been learned about what does and does not work.

SADC has approved the idea of a Regional Qualifications Framework and this has provided an impetus for the trend in the southern African region.

In general what has been found is that systems should not be too complicated and that, on the whole, it is better to apply the system in three parallel sub-systems: high school, vocational education and university education. These sub-systems should be linked through specific qualification points, determined by a competence base. At one end of this is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which addresses the needs of the poor and marginalised and the unemployed to engage in lifelong learning and enter the NQF system (equality) and at the other relevance of vocational and academic qualifications to the needs of the economy. This leads to an increase in competitiveness, nationally and internationally. Implicit in this is the necessity for meaningful partnerships between business community and education & training (E&T).

While the NQFs are not a silver bullet for the education problems that plague developing countries - combined with good institutional governance, a grounded sense of reality around the time it takes to achieve effectiveness, and a good grasp of the relationship between principle and practice - NQFs add a useful dimension in strengthening the value of E&T in developing countries.

What does a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) mean for us?

1. There is a powerful trend in the developing world for countries to move towards a national qualifications framework as a means of making E&T - in the broadest sense¹ - more relevant to the needs of the economy and making it possible to move from one type of qualification to another, through higher education to vocational to academic, vice versa and all around. E&T and work are linked through occupational standards. So powerful has this impetus been that it has become known as a megatrend.
2. The Southern African Development Commission (SADC) has approved a Regional Qualifications Framework which would make it possible for the holder of qualifications in one country of SADC to move up the qualifications ladder in another country in SADC.
3. After a number of years of experimentation with the NQF in southern African countries there have been no outright successes with the NQF which has proved difficult to design and implement. Its potential remains however and, if the problems it has thrown up can be overcome, then it may be able to address the difficulties of including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which will impact positively on the poor and marginalised, giving them an opportunity for lifelong learning.

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1 Formal, non-formal and informal

In case of E&T be made more relevant to the needs of the economy, making them more competitive in a global market through improved mobility and flexibility, based on quality assurance.

4. Some of this has been achieved by a move to a modular form of delivery but, at times, this has deteriorated into fragmented units which do not necessarily come together to form meaningful qualifications.
5. The NQF system makes use of competence-based education and training. The emphasis here is on outcomes rather than inputs and hours of learning. The important thing is that the candidate should be able to show that s/he can do the job. This makes the scenario for service providers more competitive (and hence cheaper). The NQF is based on a system of credits for learning outcomes achieved. A learning outcome is essentially a capability developed in the learner reflecting an integration of knowledge and skills which can be understood, applied and transferred to different contexts.
6. A key to the success of an NQF is the assessment system which must be fair and measure achievements against clearly stated national standards. All stakeholders, especially business community, should be involved in the assessment process. Business community co-determination of needs and outcomes is essential.
7. The system has been found to work best in the vocational and occupational sphere of E&T, rather than in higher education and university education.
8. Experimentation in countries such as South Africa has shown that an excessively complex system that tries to be comprehensive and inclusive will need, sometimes at great cost, to be simplified and focused, with a particular effort made at the lower end of the qualification scale.
9. Countries that have been most successful in implementing the NQF have been those that have treated the development of frameworks as complementary to improving institutional capacity, rather than as a substitute for it, or as a way of shaping institutions. Governance, inclusion of relevant stakeholders, clarity on realistic objectives, all have a bearing on success.
10. Among these stakeholders are funders whose role should be to encourage an indigenous development of an NQF, rather than be based on an already functioning system from a different context and country, and who, together, should see that there is enough support for the system to make it sustainable in the long-term.

1 Introduction

For those who have worked in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the developing world over many years, the idea of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is a megatrend that needs to be examined and assessed for its strengths and weaknesses. Fuelled by globalisation, free markets and labour migration, NQFs have come to dominate the ways in which developing and even developed countries attempt to frame their E&T systems and to link education and training to the world of work in systemic, theoretical and practical forms.

According to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) publication (2010), over 100 countries (exactly 116) now implement or are in the process of developing or considering NQFs². The accepted reality now is that, if you want “good TVET” delivery, then you need a qualifications framework. Of particular concern for most countries is improving the relationship between education and training systems on the one hand, and labour markets on the other. It was the United Kingdom government that first recognised the incongruence between their systems of education and training and the manpower requirements of business community and commerce. Thus, the initial steps in devising National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) came from them.

Hence (see below), the concerns of GTZ/GIZ about some of the “Anglo-Saxon” innovations which were not necessarily best when translated into developing country circumstances. These included:

- **A lack of realism:**
Frameworks are created under time pressure, with an overstretched span of control and little awareness of resulting expenditures. Scotland, for example, took 30 years to develop a mature system, while Administrators in Nepal thought, incorrectly, that a most comprehensive framework could be created within six months.
- **Perfectionism and focus on the top:**
Some countries are afraid of partial solutions and opt for fully integrated frameworks, including all levels of competence up to to the highest academic levels. As a result a great deal of effort goes into articulation arrangements which are only relevant for a small minority of learners (this was an impediment when the South African system was developed). Focus on the lower occupational levels, where access and inclusion and equity are important social problems, is lost.
- **Import-adopt-adapt:**
The skills to develop occupational standards and assessment tools are crucial elements of national TVET capacity. The often promoted short-cut of taking another country’s framework and “quickly” adopting and adapting the imported standards and instruments can easily lead to a lack of know-how, a lack of local ownership and a new dependence on the exporting country.
- **Unitisation:**
The trend to segment (if not fragment) competences into small units puts the principles of occupational mobility, contextual learning, and the development of meta-skills at risk. Often unitisation is seen as a precondition for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and, in the area of pre-employment training, the price of unitisation is high. This is one of the strongest incompatibility areas with “German” TVET approaches which stick to the development and recognition of competences – not competencies through E&T .

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2 In 2012 ETF mentions 146 countries

- **Assessment:**

A framework that encompasses the certification of competences / competencies needs a reliable and economically viable assessment system. The Germans appear to have expertise and experience in this area in terms of affordability, objectivity and equity. If the area is compromised because the system is underfunded or corrupted, then the whole system loses credibility and the framework is undermined. This is an area where the German support can be used to “heal” what is wrong in a system already established.

The German Technical Co-operation (GTZ), now part of the German Agency for International Co-operation (GIZ), has been a strong supporter of TVET and Competence-based Education and Training (CBET)³ and it is naturally concerned about the relationship between this and NQF, and in what ways the megatrend can improve or hinder the work the German government is supporting in this area throughout the world. After various meetings and discussions, a key meeting in 2009, working together towards a common GIZ position on NQFs, looked at the key questions of how GIZ should:

- Constructively deal with and support to shape emerging frameworks
- Design planned frameworks and help them develop towards an acceptable optimum solution
- Make sure that the unique features of German TVET are blended into the framework of partners.
- This led to a preliminary German position with regard to qualifications frameworks in development co-operation in TVET.

Initially (ten years ago), the German debate suggested three different positions among programme designers and project practitioners: “assimilation”, “rejection” and “adaptation”. In the recent workshop (2009), all participants agreed that the CBET and QF megatrend should not be ignored but rather that the appraisal should be to:

- Develop and implement - in countries where there is a mandate to do so – a home-grown approach that avoids the drawbacks, limitations and traps of Anglo-Saxon models and matches the needs and potentials of the partners;
- Shape or intelligently interpret existing or emerging QFs when and wherever possible, in order to mitigate or overcome drawbacks, limitations and traps inherited from Anglo-Saxon models;
- Develop strategy and instruments for meaningful TVET interventions in countries where qualifications frameworks exist, whose design and procedures – however detrimental – cannot be ignored.

Clearly, there is much that countries exploring an NQF approach can and should think about before leaping into complex systems that are costly and do not necessarily yield the benefits anticipated. If too much is expected of an NQF it will probably disappoint. A brief paper of this nature cannot point to solutions to all problems and, indeed, cannot even identify them all. However, we attempt in what follows to highlight some of the issues related to NQFs and to provide some kind of understanding of the terminology, as well as to refer to what has and has not worked in various developing countries. While detailed research reports exist on a number of the NQFs that have been attempted, this paper presents an attempt at a succinct overview, providing key points of what enables existence or development.

3 The term „competence“ is to be understood as a holistic concept and not reduced to behavioral aspects only which is quite often reduced to when talking about “competencies”.

2 What is a National Qualifications Framework (NQF)?

An **NQF** has been described as an instrument for classification of qualifications. The qualifications are incorporated on different levels in the NQF according to a set of criteria for the learning achieved.

The following have been identified as essential considerations in an NQF:

- Outlining the overall purpose of the NQF by stating its objectives and benefits;
- Anchoring the NQF in a reform programme (linking it with overlapping education policy reforms);
- Clarifying the scope of the coverage of the NQF across the E&T sectors;
- Clarifying the mode of implementation: voluntary/incentivised/regulatory implementation;
- Basing the qualification on learning outcomes i.e. a competence based NQF;
- Involvement of social partners (linkages with employers and employees);
- A framework for ensuring the quality assurance of the NQF;
- Organisational structure of the NQF.

Translated practically this means that an NQF:

- links E&T and work through occupational standards;
- creates ownership among the corporate sector;
- provides transparency to assess the competence of the workforce; (GTZ, and now GIZ, has always supported trade testing to ensure that there is a proper match with competence based E&T; this gives it an edge in the area);
- must deliver training flexibly with an outcomes-based approach;
- should use the curriculum as a process control and learning management tool;
- should open up certification for everyone (including Recognition of Prior Learning [RPL]; "unit based certification" may, however, flood the labour market without creating qualifications of any kind so that learning may become concerned with too narrowly defined competencies and may need to be moderated);
- should, importantly, create lower entry thresholds (again RPL can become part of the system);
- ensures that, instead of isolated building blocks, there are meaningful clumps that together make a reasonable entry point to an occupation;
- ensures that there is vertical and horizontal mobility that adds value to a certificate of competence by allowing the holder to move from one part of the qualifications system to another; and
- ensures that "the system" works by ensuring that there is participatory stakeholder involvement - again a strength of GTZ/GIZ.

The NQF is based on a system of credits for learning outcomes achieved. A **learning outcome** is essentially a capability developed in the learner reflecting an integration of knowledge and skills which can be understood, applied and transferred to different contexts.

The **achievement of a qualification** in such a system is not dependent on attendance at particular courses, but by a learner accumulating credit on an agreed cluster of learning outcomes defined by full-time, part-time or distance learning, by work-based learning or by a combination, together with the assessment of prior learning.

The NQF is designed to:

- introduce a fair assessment system which measures achievements against clearly stated national standards;
- establish a dynamic and flexible system able to adapt quickly to new developments in the labour market, workplace, education and training;
- encourage more people to participate in further education and training;
- develop learning which is relevant and responsive to the needs of the individual, the economy and society;
- promote access to learning;
- provide a variety of routes to qualifications; and
- provide national quality assurance.

In other words, **NQFs' objectives** are:

- Equality: improved access to TVET and inclusion in the E&T system;
- Competitiveness: more relevant competences resulting in better employment and income;
- Growth: improved mobility and flexibility in the labour market and further E&T.

GTZ/GIZ had already engaged with some of the methodologies that can be seen as the driving forces of the NQF approach. So, for example, DACUM (Developing a Curriculum) is a process that has been used for many years to conduct job analyses in every field imaginable all over the world. It is primarily used to update E&T programmes and assessment procedures. It is unique in the sense that expert workers are involved in defining occupational profiles, in developing curriculum, rather than having curriculum selected only by instructors, college professors, or training managers. By making the workers the experts, DACUM narrows the gap between what is typically taught in classes and the workers knowhow actually needed to achieve excellence in the workplace. Of course, there is a need to include the view of international experts to anticipate future trends when defining an occupational profile. Typically, a DACUM devised curriculum would have learning objectives, learning content, learning organisation (duration, sequencing), learning methods, place of learning, teaching media and materials, assessment (exams) and certification. This remains a solid base even within an NQF system and, indeed, reference to it helps in overcoming some of the problems of the NQF such as the tendency to break learning into small units focused on limited practical steps that do not encourage meta-competence task skills such as task management skills, contingency skills and environmental skills.

For GTZ/GIZ the question is how it can engage with the debate on NQFs so as to build on technical and vocational skills development (TVSD) by utilising the existing NQFs, shaping emerging NQFs, and helping in the design of those still to come. The point being made here is that the NQF is not an entirely new way of looking at things but it takes the process a step further in terms of allowing students or trainees or learners mobility, not only nationally, but also regionally. The intention is a transparent system of certification that creates access to E&T and employment.

It also should lead to E&T provider competition (around achieving the same, specified outcomes, assessed in the same way) and, hence, should cut costs. Instruction can be individualised, the time to learn skills may be variable, but the mastery of the learning will be assessed equally through the outcome as demonstrated by the student or trainee or learner. However, developing an NQF will not by itself achieve the benefits it is meant to realise. It needs to be combined with policies regarding improving linkages with business community, developing standards and developing quality assurance mechanisms. One of the negatives about an NQF is that it can become very complex and much of the work done in various countries over the past ten years has been to simplify the NQF system and so make it more user-friendly.

No two NQFs are identical and each is developed in a particular context – socio-economic, political and historic. The challenge then is to express the core values and principles in the simplest way possible, while achieving the stated objectives.

3 Southern African experiences

NQFs have been established, are being developed and implemented, and are being planned and/or designed or at least being considered in over a 100 countries world-wide, definitely constituting a megatrend. This means developing countries need at least to consider them, but, given the experiences of unnecessary complexity (see South Africa below) and the move towards more basic and simpler underlying principles, implementation should be considered and done with care.

The countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have been advanced in the introduction of NQFs in sub-Saharan Africa. South Africa, Malawi and Uganda have already designed and, to some extent, implemented NQFs. SADC has approved the concept of a Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) which will include:

- Quality assurance guidelines which set minimum standards for quality assurance in the SADC region; and
- A SADC Qualifications portal which will incorporate full and part-time qualifications that are formally recognised in SADC member states. The SADC RQF is expected to contribute to the efforts of developing a continental qualifications framework for mutual recognition of degrees and qualifications in higher education, too.

a) South Africa

South Africa was one of the first in the post liberation phase to introduce an NQF and its system, certainly, was one of the more complicated, falling into some of the traps already mentioned above. It is useful to see where it went wrong and how it is moving towards something that may well be “right”.

Those involved in the South African “experiment” agree broadly on the following “lessons learned” over the years:

- Understanding the limitations – an NQF is not a panacea for all that is wrong with the E&T system of a country.
- Avoid being over bureaucratic and technicist.
- Active stakeholder and role-player participation is essential for building the rela-

tionships that facilitate collaborative networks. These make shared understandings, shared meanings and shared strategies possible.

- Communication and advocacy are essential for informing the public of the value-added that the system offers. A focus on the more visible operational activities required at the expense of a public endorsement of the value of the system may compromise the effectiveness of the system. (The more complicated the system, the more difficult to get the public endorsement needed.)
- Engage constructively with partners to ensure that there is an environment that supports lifelong learning and is conducive to quality learning and credible qualifications.
- In South Africa, the direct involvement of professional bodies has been a vital component of the system.
- The inclusion of non-formal and informal learning in an NQF is a challenge but it is also an essential part of the *raison d'être* of an NQF. Ultimately, the top levels, especially those that take the system into the realm of academia, are not nearly as essential as the lower levels which enable it to move from recognition of prior learning, through non-formal qualifications and informal qualifications, to those that are formally recognised and can, through the NQF, lead into many avenues of qualification including offering the possibility of academic options. In a number of instances, the emphasis on how to make academic routes “fit” the system deflected attention from the more urgent lower levels, where one finds the vast majority of unemployed youth and where one is faced directly with the reality of poverty and the need to overcome it.
- In South Africa, the shift to national standard setting bodies and standard generating bodies proved too difficult to achieve because the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) could not manage these bodies effectively. Traditional sectors resented having to subject their qualifications to this wider scrutiny by other sectors which they regarded as non-expert in their sector. The accreditation of existing and newly formed statutory bodies as E&T quality assurance bodies with powers to quality assure E&T institutions and providers proved a contentious issue. In the end, three quality councils, with both standards setting and quality assurance functions for their respective sectors were accepted. Within this new environment sector-specific approaches are now being accommodated, including the preference for a curriculum-based approach in the schooling and higher education universities sectors. In the more basic sectors, the idea of output measurement over input and time-period measurements has prevailed. Thus there is now a network framework (as opposed to an integrated approach) in the form of three Quality Councils, with separate systems but common structures for transferability. (University, general qualifications and further education qualifications, occupational qualifications). At least in theory, there is a linked governance structure within which all activities are purposeful efforts to guide, steer, control or manage institutions, sub-sectors or processes associated with the NQF. This includes legislation, the role of implementing agencies and funding, as well as the balancing of the needs and potentially conflicting interests of different stakeholders. A Quality Council for Trades and Occupations has been established and is intended to facilitate the movement from one of the sub-systems to another.
- On the whole, South Africa's shift to the NQF is seen by those involved as a positive step in view of the megatrend and the mobility it provides at a national, regional and international level. The framework is still developing and a current Green

Paper suggests that no provider should be forced to use unit standards but rather to ensure centralised assessment. The emphasis is on creating a clear relationship between the main national qualifications - in other words, which qualification can lead to which other qualification. If the changes suggested by the Green Paper are accepted, it will be far easier for community-based organisations to develop responsive programmes, including training programmes for young people. The Green Paper also suggests a substantial expansion of Further Education and Training Colleges and the building of new institutions for adult education, both of which would dramatically increase the educational options available to out-of-school and unemployed youth. This combined with “lightening” the burdensome specifics of the qualifications and quality assurance model, particularly in the Trades and Occupations part of the model, will make for a better model.

b) Uganda

The NQF type system came later to Uganda and its introduction was precipitated by issues that had to be addressed such as lack of employment relevance of existing vocational education and training courses which hampered the productivity of industries and businesses, provision of access to vocational qualifications and employment for 800 000 school leavers annually. There was also an expectation that the introduction of modular training and encouraging on the job training in the private sector would reduce the cost of training for the government.

The focus of the Ugandan system is on a purely sub-sector Vocational Qualifications Framework. There are four proposed competency levels envisaged to start with an entry level and then go up to a fourth level which is seen as a National Diploma and an entry point to higher education sub-sector qualifications. The competency-based standards in the form of assessment and training packages are meant to be *de jure* standards. This should influence training delivery but the system does not carry the heavy weight of the early South African provider systems. While the system has been quite slow in introduction, old trade testing systems have been linked to the new system. DACUM job analysis is used for occupational competency-based standards development involving expert workers from the business community and assessment involves expert practitioners from industrial work places and instructors. Assessment of Prior Learning is envisaged.

c) Malawi

The Malawian TEVET sector operated for many years without an instrument for regulation and harmonisation of occupational qualifications, with an over dependency on Foreign Examination bodies. Then a TEVET qualifications framework (TQF) was introduced. There were still an increasing number of dubious certificates on the labour market, with credibility problems and dubious value. Employers did not have confidence in the employability level of TEVET graduates because they did not demonstrate the employability level expected by the business community. But, in 1999, the TEVET Authority (TEVETA) was established as a regulating and co-ordinating body for all TEVET providers to facilitate and promote technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training. The intention of TEVETA was to reform the TEVET sub-sector from a supply to a demand oriented system. To enable this transformation, a modular competency-based approach and the TQF were introduced but there is still much to be sorted out in terms of governance of the TEVET system around roles, responsibilities and lines of communication.

As in South Africa, governance has shifted from the Ministry of Labour to Education. It has the advantage of consolidating all education sectors, opening possibilities for an integrated approach to the governance of the entire education sector and to develop coherent education and lifelong learning policies. Although progress has been achieved around involving business community, it is still not a systemic feature in the governance arrangements. Many stakeholders, particularly in business community, share a common concern that limitations in the existing TEVET governance arrangements have resulted in weak policy execution leading to delays, overregulation, and inefficiencies in expenditure. Because of the confusion in governance, certification has not been harmonised but TQF level 4 is the equivalent of a diploma holder and offers the potential for entry into the sub-sector of higher education. This, however, remains a controversial issue with higher education. At the other end of the entry qualification debate, RPL has not yet been fully implemented.

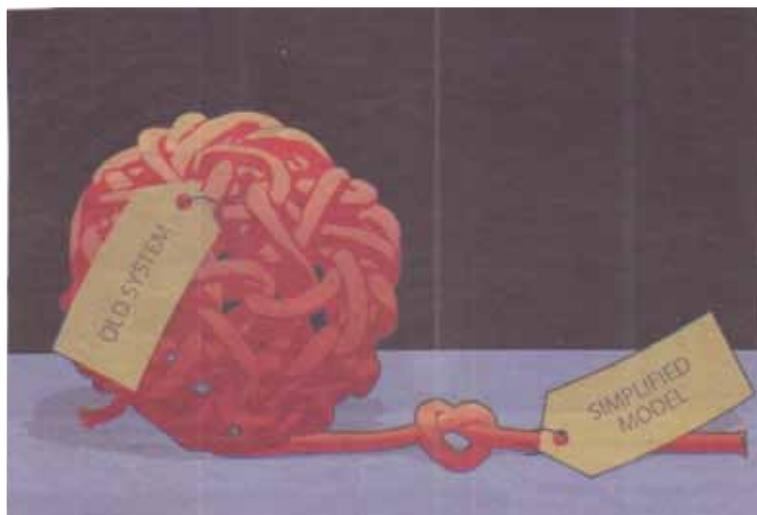
Apprenticeships in the informal sector comprise by far the majority of training and are not part of the formal TEVET system. Inappropriate teacher qualifications, run-down workshops, low passing rates, and a mismatch between supply and demand are just some of the symptoms of gaps in policy execution. Central components such as the TQF, competency-driven standards, and increasing business community involvement, could initiate a process of sustainable innovation of the TEVET system in Malawi to ensure that the TEVET provision meets the needs of employers, but also that it meets the needs of the unemployed.

4 The Learnings

As other countries, particularly in Southern African, seek to follow the megatrend set by NQFs, it is important to recognise that good intentions alone, and an enthusiasm to address the demanding needs of inadequate E&T systems, a detrimental gap between supply and demand, and the specific needs of both employers and the unemployed, are not enough to make an NQF a success.

For any country wishing to utilise an NQF to address such problems, there are certain principles and practicalities it needs to consider - important among them the imperative not to make the system over-complex. In South Africa, for example, the proliferation of acronyms the initial system produced made it all but incomprehensible even to those who were involved directly in implementing it.

In this section we look at some of the learnings which GTZ/GIZ has gleaned from its involvement in developing some of the systems and its observation of others. The section could probably best be summed up by a picture that appeared in the Mail and Guardian (31 August 2012) depicting what has happened in the South African system.



It seems that there are a number of **mistakes** that developing countries make when they begin the process of responding to the NQF megatrend. These include:

- Being “engulfed” by the trend rather than interacting with it and seeing how it fits with existing systems. Relying on “foreign” ideas rather than developing more appropriate indigenous ones.
- Going for complex designs rather than simple ones looking for complicated rather than lean. Attempting comprehensiveness instead of accepting basic need.
- Getting lost in a myriad of unnecessary unitisation that ends in reductionism instead of comprehension. The trend to segment (if not fragment) competences into small units puts the principles of occupational mobility, contextual learning, and development of meta-skills at risk.
- Lack of business community co-determination.
- Weak assessment. Assessment is a key part of TVET and should be of the NQF.

- Emphasis at the higher end instead of the lower end so that RPL does not work and the system does not reach the poor where it is supposed to have the most impact. The lower occupational levels and the domain of pre-employment where excessive unitisation leaves learners unemployable get left behind and it is here that access, inclusion and equity are the striking presenting problems.
- Frameworks are created under time pressure with little time for systems to evolve and become mature in their own context.
- Thus far non-delivery is a problem.
- Isolation of the NVQF is a problem – it needs to be articulated with existing TVET delivery, integrated with the needs of the economy, and to rest on a value base which addresses what in themselves are megatrends in developing countries – inequality, poverty and unemployment. That means that the system must address the needs of the informal sector.
- The NQFs often ignore the important need to train service providers in order to improve qualifications. TVET specialists (multipliers) need to be trained in methods of developing TVET standards with the objective of contributing to the improvement of the horizontal and vertical permeability of national TVET systems. In other words: to contribute to articulation.
- Dialogue and networking between actors, stakeholders and decision makers from responsible ministries, representatives of social partners in the country itself as well as other participating countries in, for example, a regional QF, does not take place sufficiently. These discussions should concern strategies in developing national standard based qualification frameworks, their regional adjustment, comparability and RPL.

Should then a developing country be following the megatrend to NQFs?

It would be difficult to avoid doing so, particularly in an area such as SADC where the move to a RQF has already been agreed. How then does a country learn from the mistakes of others and so introduce the notion of an NQF as painlessly and productively as possible?

The following steps are suggested:

- Be very clear about your objectives. In most instances this would be to promote transparency, comparison, and progression of your E&T system, to increase linkages between business community and the E&T system, and to give some regional and international credibility to your national qualifications. Often, in addition, there is a commitment to incentivising lifelong learning. These are, in a sense, “value objectives” and need to be seen differently from the more specific objectives around making the NQF work.
- The process should improve the esteem in which TVET and skills qualifications are held. A QF should be seen as the long-term by-product of a TVET reform process rather than as its starting point.
- Link the NQF to other policy reforms in areas such as:
 - Development of standards for competences;
 - Linkages with industries;
 - Competence based training
 - Quality assurance of E&T.

- Do not go for instant comprehensiveness, but rather three partial frameworks, covering three main E&T sectors – general, vocational and higher – implementing them throughout the country. The process should be taken step-by-step, particularly where resources are scarce. The long-term perspective should be to link the partial frameworks together as a possibility in carrying qualifications forward but this should not be seen as a necessary intention for everyone. The three partial frameworks should carry qualification incentives within themselves. It seems that the “three towers” should maintain their separation but be linked – the South Africa redesign suggests that this has been a learning for them.
- It has also become clear that unitisation i.e. the breaking down of an occupation into a large number of small units that can be assessed and certified separately does not have the desired results and, here again, the South Africa experience is pertinent. In Uganda, however, some degree of unitisation has aided lifelong learning.
- Do not expect instant implementation. Over time, providers – public and private – of the qualifications should meet the framework criteria if they want public funding. In other words, their training should lead to recognised qualifications to provide incentive to use the NQF. If the NQF is seen as valuable to those who use it, then there will be competition among service providers to provide appropriate skills and this should cut the cost to the public fiscus. Similarly, the public sector will be more interested in funding investment in it.
- The NQF should be competence-based, so outcomes-based with competence descriptions as part of the framework. In most developing countries, certainly those in which GTZ/GIZ has been working, this is already the basis of the curriculum in occupational and vocational skills and providers should not find this too radical a change, but may require support in developing curricula that correspond consciously to competencies.
- Involve social partners, employers and employees, as early as possible in the development of the NQF and in an inclusive and meaningful way that makes them real decision-making partners. The role of business community is important to the QF success. If business community is weak or not interested then occupational QFs may well be sidelined.
- Divide quality assurance responsibility among the NQF structures as well as the employers and employees, and include:
 - Description of learning outcomes of qualifications
 - Quality assurance of learning outcomes and development of qualifications
 - Quality assurance of the NQF itself (i.e. accrediting the placing of qualifications on the proper levels in the framework).
- Establish an organisational structure which includes a forum at relevant ministerial level. A body delegated with overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the NQF, bodies responsible for development and implementation of the partial frameworks, bodies responsible for development of skills standards, as part of the standard setting policy initiative.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has done an extensive study (2010) on countries that are using the NQF and, while it does not point to any outstanding successes, it does say that the research suggests that, for developing countries, there is a need for serious consideration of policy priorities as well as sequencing of policies.

NQFs are not “magic bullets” as instruments for reform. Countries that have been most successful in implementing them have been those which have treated the development of frameworks as complementary to improving institutional capacity rather than as a substitute for it or as a way of re-shaping institutions. “In other words, it seems that NQFs are more likely to be successful if training outcomes and inputs are seen as related to each other, and policy attention is focused on both.”

Finally, the issue of donor harmonisation appears to be a key success factor. QF implementation is time-consuming and expensive and the risk of stagnation (or failure) when the donors phase out is high. This calls for the (early) establishment of alliances and the meaningful division of labour among donors to ensure that sufficient resources for a sufficient period of time can be made available to make the system work and become sustainable.

Abbreviations and acronyms

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CBET	Competence-based Education and Training
DACUM	Developing a Curriculum
E&T	Education and Training
GIZ	German Agency for International Co-operation
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NVQF	National Vocational Qualifications Framework
QF	Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
SADC	Southern African Development Commission
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
TQF	TEVET Qualifications Framework
TEVET	Technical, Entrepreneurial, Vocational Education and Training
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TEVETA	TEVET Authority
TVSD	Technical and Vocational Skills Development

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Notas



The project „Training for the labour market in Angola” (Formação Profissional – FormPRO)

The project has the objective: The quality and relevance of training and advisory services have increased in selected economic sectors – especially the construction business community. This also puts the spotlight on vocational orientation and guidance as well as on employment services.

FormPRO is a bilateral Angola – German project. The Angolan side is represented by the National Institute for Employment and Vocational Training (INEFOP), which belongs to the Ministry of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security (MAPESS). The Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has entrusted the implementation of the German contribution to the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Many other actors from the public and the private sectors (chambers of commerce, associations, enterprises) as well as civil society organisations will play a part in achieving the ambitious objective by the end of 2012.

