Development of National Qualification Frameworks

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Qualifications systems

• A qualifications system includes *all* aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning
  - includes institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, and skills recognition

• One feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit *framework* of qualifications
Qualifications frameworks

• A qualifications framework is an instrument for classifying qualifications according to a set of criteria for *levels of learning outcomes* achieved.

• It is hoped that National qualification frameworks (NQFs) will lead to improved:
  – lifelong access to education and training
  – progression in working life through occupations and industrial sectors
  – educational/labour mobility within/between countries
How NQFs can help

By promoting confidence and transparency in qualifications through:

• *Establishing national standards and levels* for the outcomes of education and training

• *Promoting quality* -- assurance that the standards and levels are met by providers or authorities

• *Facilitating comparison* among levels and content of qualifications e.g. supported with recognition tools

• *Promoting access* to higher levels of education and training e.g. supported with credit systems
Variations in the NQFs introduced

• all education and training and qualifications?
• explicit levels of qualifications?
• descriptors defined against learning outcomes?
• measures of volume of learning?
• information on qualifications, pathways providers?
• associated Recognition Tools?
• associated credit system?
• regulatory quality assurance by national agency?
• links to regional frameworks?
• validation of informal and non formal learning?
Regional reference frameworks e.g. the EQF

- 8 *reference* levels of learning *outcomes*
- Shift from learning *inputs* such as the length of a learning experience, or type of institution
- National qualifications to be placed at one of 8 levels
- Applies school, academic, professional and vocational
- Promotes validation of non-formal and informal learning
- Member States developing NQFs *linked* to EQF
Descriptors defining levels in the (EQF) level 8

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<th>Knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual</th>
<th>Skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments)</th>
<th>Competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy</th>
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<td>knowledge at the most advanced frontier of a field of work or study and at the interface between fields</td>
<td>the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice</td>
<td>demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research</td>
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Development of NQFs

• NQFs often followed reforms in VET
• VET outcomes--competences based on industry needs
• Some shift in control away from providers
• Associated with growth in competition, seen to promote quality and responsiveness
• Universities a key stakeholder
• Universities want to retain control of outcomes
• Benefits of NQF depend on quality assurance
• Some benefits depend on credit system
Overview of Asia-Pacific NQFs

- NQFs in at least seven countries
- Several others developing them
- Most have explicit *levels* - but varying numbers
- New Zealand & Singapore - credit frameworks
- Various agencies in charge of quality assurance
- Public information to support quality assurance
- Recognition tools beginning in Australia
- No regional framework (like the EQF in Europe)
Some issues

- Differences in learning outcomes across sectors
- Effect on trust in qualifications if underpinning knowledge not well assessed
- External assessment in measurement of outcomes
- Recognition of institutional experience and inputs as well as measurement of outcomes
- Can some of the aims/benefits be achieved without an NQF?
Summing up

- Don’t yet have evaluation of achievements of NQFs
- Not necessarily the same approach across sectors
- A good system of quality assurance is essential
- Quality assurance of outcomes can be enhanced by
  - monitoring of assessment and/or
  - measures of institutional quality
  - good public information (where users have choice)
- Credit systems and recognition tools being developed
- Case for a regional framework where considerable movement of workers and students