The New Zealand Qualifications Framework

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The Christchurch earthquake on 22 February was a terrible and devastating event, which claimed 181 lives. The toll included people from 20 countries, many were foreign students who had chosen to pursue their education and dreams in New Zealand. New Zealander’s mourn their loss and our hearts in particular go out to their children, spouses, parents, friends and families. The earthquake and continuing aftershocks has had a major impact on education, especially schools in the Christchurch area.
Christchurch earthquake cont..

• The tertiary sector has been impacted, but it has proved very resilient.
• Prior to the earthquake there were 123 Private Training Establishments based in Christchurch, of these 111 have now re-opened.
• Christchurch’s two universities and the cities polytechnic continue to operate and to deliver courses to students.
Overview of session

- New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) roles and functions
- New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF)
  - History of NZQF - NQF and The Register
  - Recent rejuvenation of the qualifications system
  - The lessons
Role and functions of New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)

- Crown Entity – Education Act, 1989
- Governed by a board
- Reports directly to the Minister of Education and the Minister for Tertiary Education
Government agencies involved in tertiary qualifications and quality assurance

Minister of Education & Minister for Tertiary Education

Policy advice

Policy decisions

Policy and Funding

Ministry of Education

Tertiary Education Commission
Funding decisions

Institutions Providing Education

Wānanga, Private Training Establishments, Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology

Universities

Quality Assurance

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Universities New Zealand
Role of NZQA

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority ensures that New Zealand qualifications are valued as credible and robust both nationally and internationally.

NZQA is accountable for:

- managing the New Zealand Qualifications Framework
- independent quality assurance of non-university education providers
- administering the secondary school assessment system
- qualifications recognition
- setting standards for some specified areas e.g. Business.
NZQA functions

**Quality Assurance**
- Registration of private providers
- Monitor delivery and evaluate outcomes
- Accreditation of providers to deliver programmes

**Qualifications System**
- List qualifications, approve programmes and standards
- Delivery of national secondary school external assessments
- Evaluation of overseas qualification
- Maintenance of NZQF
- Record of achievement

**Integrated and Cohesive Qualification and Quality Assured System**
Development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

• Late 1980s: Government decisions to reform education and training to:
  - encourage lifelong learning
  - increase skill levels in the labour force
  - improve competitiveness in global markets

• 1991: NQF launched
Legislation: The Education Act 1989

“… a framework for national qualifications … in which all qualifications have a purpose and a relationship to each other that students and the public can understand; and there is a flexible system for the gaining of qualifications, with recognition of competency already achieved.”
NQF – guiding principle and aims

• Guiding principle - all learning achievement should be recognised
• Aims included;
  • Clear learning and career pathways
  • Relevant and flexible learning
  • Access to learning and portability of recognition
  • Quality assured provision
  • Assessment with the outcome of skilled New Zealanders equipped and committed to lifelong learning
Structure of the NQF

- Standards as building blocks for qualifications
- Level and qualification descriptions
- Levels were extended over time
- Credits as common currency
Implementation meets resistance

- Concern about standards-based assessment approach
- At advanced levels qualifications cannot be broken down into small units of learning (standards)
- Competency notion vs ‘excellence’
- Universities withdrew support before development of NQF complete (1996)
2001 The Register of Quality Assured Qualifications

- comprised all quality assured qualifications in New Zealand
  - school, industry, university
  - vocational, academic
- ensured all qualifications had a purpose
- relationships between qualifications clear
- enabled credit transfer by learners
- assisted international recognition of qualifications
- Fully implemented 2006
Register of Quality Assured Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider developed Local Qualifications</th>
<th>National Qualifications Framework qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approved local courses</td>
<td>Unit Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achievement Standards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next decade…

- Strong economy – involvement in tertiary education and training encouraged
- Uncapped funding environment
  - Increase in the number of places for students
  - Increase in the diversity in range of courses available
  - Increase in competition for students
- Increase in the number of international students
- Stronger quality assurance requirements
Taking stock 2008 – 2009

- controlling expenditure – capped funding
- reducing costs of compliance where practicable
- transparency of information
- impact of changing demographics
- future societal and industry needs
- appropriate to take stock of NQF and conduct a review
Issues identified in Review (1)
Number of qualifications on the Register

### Numbers and Types of Qualifications on the Register (December 08)

- **Certificate**: 58%
- **Diploma**: 18%
- **Graduate**: 11%
- **Post-graduate**: 13%

3455 certificates within 305 fields

25% certificates offered in 10 fields

1059 diplomas within 208 fields

25% diplomas offered in 9 fields
Issues identified in Review (2)

- Proliferation in number of provider (local) developed qualifications (branding / marketing / competition)
- Duplication of unit standards (e.g. management) by standard setting bodies
- Some misunderstanding of the respective roles of the NQF and the Register
- Some outcome statements and consequently some of the “educational pathways” could be clearer
Rejuvenating the qualifications system

NZQA embarked on a strategic development to strengthen the original intent of the NQF

- remove incentives for unnecessary duplication
- reduce proliferation
- ensure the Framework is more easily understood and as user-friendly as possible
- further strengthen alignment with industry

Major consultation undertaken
Tertiary Qualifications System Improvements
Levels 1-6

**THE KEY ISSUES**

- System not understood by learners / employers
- Too many qualifications and duplication
- Unclear which qualifications were available
- Pathways to further education and employment not clear to students / parents / employers
- Cost and time to market of qualifications
- Different quality assurance requirements for National and provider qualifications

**CHANGES**

- Establish the NZQF and provide clear information on availability of a qualification
- Review qualification design, strengthen outcome statements and industry involvement
- Reduce the number of qualifications on the NZQF through mandatory reviews and pre-development assessment

**IMPACTS**

- NZQF internationally relevant
- 45% overall reduction in number of qualifications on NZQF by end 2012
- Skills, knowledge and competencies of graduates from each qualification are clear
- Clear pathways to future qualifications for learners / employers
- Qualifications relevant and fit-for-purpose
- Significant $ savings over time
- Consistent approach to quality assurance

**ECONOMIC / FISCAL CONTEXT**

**FUTURE SOCIETY / INDUSTRY NEEDS**

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The New Zealand Qualifications Framework is designed to optimise recognition of educational achievement and its contribution to New Zealand’s economic, social and cultural success.

Specifically the NZQF will:
- convey the skills, knowledge and attributes a graduate has gained through completing a qualification
- require the development of integrated and coherent qualifications
- enable and support the provision of high-quality education pathways
- enhance confidence in the quality and international comparability of New Zealand qualifications
- contribute to the strengthening of Māori as a people by enhancing and advancing mātauranga Māori
- represent value for money, be sustainable and robust
Some key lessons

• The NQF and The Register contributed to improvements in education and skills in New Zealand
• The original principles of the NQF were sound
• Need for clarity of ‘Policy’
• Be aware of potential challenges to change
• Development is resource-intensive
• ‘Maintenance and improvement’ are essential
• Framework needs to reflect context