National Qualifications Frameworks for Lifelong Learning and Skills Development

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“National Qualifications Frameworks for Lifelong Learning”

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(The opinions expressed in this power point presentation are those of the author alone)
Outline

- Terms and Concepts

- National Qualifications Frameworks: Rationale

- National Qualifications Frameworks to Promote Lifelong Learning

- Policy Pointers

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- Terms and Concepts

- National Qualifications Frameworks: Rationale

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Key Terms

- Lifelong learning (LLL)
- National qualifications system (NQS)
- National qualifications framework (NQF)
- Regional/international qualifications framework
- Competence
- Learning outcome
- Certification = Qualification
- Credit
- Formal learning
- Non-formal learning
- Informal learning
- Recognition
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Key terms I will address in detail

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Key Terms in Brief

- National Qualifications System (NQS)

- Regional/International Qualifications Framework: Meta framework or translation device (such as the European Qualifications Framework, EQF); not a template 😞 😞

- Competence:
  Knowledge, skills and attributes (typical attributes are autonomy° et responsibility); not “knowledge, skills and attitudes”, not “knowledge, skills and competences” 😞 😞

- Learning outcomes:
  It seems the meaning of learning outcomes may vary: in most cases it means acquired competences, it sometimes means successful completion of a study programme
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Qualifications: Definition

- Both a process and the outcome of this process: A qualification process leads to the awarding of a qualification…

… which described the acquired learning outcomes (competences)

- The qualification process is more or less:

  Learning -> Assessment -> Validation -> Certification -> Awarding of a qualification

- A qualification is about making competences visible
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Qualifications: Definition

- A qualification should have **double currency**:
  - In the labour market; and
  - In the lifelong learning formal system (resuming studies).

- Currency happens when the qualification is recognised (by the society, and all its component)

- In short, a qualification is a **document reflecting competences**

- Here, qualification is taken as synonyms

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Qualifications Framework: Definition

- Instrument for the classification of qualifications
- Not a national qualifications system
- A sort of container, or big matrix, with:
  - Rows = Levels
  - Columns = Descriptors
- Useful only if there also is a Catalogue of Qualifications

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Lifelong Learning: Definition

- From preschool to adult learning (cradle to grave)
- Some countries have issues with primary education, other with adult learning…
- Qualifications frameworks can be useful for all sectors, as long as they deliver qualifications
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Recognition: Definition

- Validation is a **technical** process
- Recognition is a **societal** process
- Validation does not guarantee recognition in/by the society
- It is the **societal recognition** that matters for qualifications to have **currency** in the society, of which a key component is the labour market
- Recognition highly depends on the **quality** and on the level of **formalisation** of the assessment/validation process; it depends on **trust**
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This is the crux of my argument: qualifications frameworks help moving from just qualifications to recognised qualifications.
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Qualifications Framework: Rationale

- **Broad general aims:**
  - **Labour market** (unemployment, employability, recovery, restructuring, upskilling, technological progress…)
  - **Lifelong learning** (access and retention, transfer, resumption, adult learning (demographic downturn)…)
  - Sometimes: citizenhips and democracy
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Qualifications Framework: Rationale

- Main issues in summary:
  - Overall low level of qualification of the population
  - Poor access to certain sectors of the lifelong learning system (upper secondary, TVET, adult learning)
  - Not enough recognition of learning taking place outside of formal settings
  - National qualifications system rather difficult to understand and to navigate (big black box)
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Main Idea

NQS  LLL

Good supply  Excellent supply

This link is identified as *mechanisms*
The Approach

National social and economic systems

Structural changes and changes in conditions

Structural changes

Changes in conditions

NQS

LIFELONG LEARNING

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Practical Objectives of NQF

- To establish national standards for learning outcomes
- Qualifications description in terms of learning outcomes (or, rather, competences)
- To promote quality through regulation (Catalogue)
- To relate qualifications to one another
- To promote access to learning, transfer of learning and progression in learning
- To rationalise (through integration) the education and training provision
- To improve the infrastructure of some sectors (TVET)
- To facilitate recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes
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NQF and LLL

- Benefits of national qualifications frameworks through which promotion of lifelong learning:
  
  - Improved **transparency**:
    - Removing risk of engaging in a dead end
    - Make progression routes clear
    - Visibility of competences (description in the catalogue)
    - Make qualifications more readable
    - Increase trust
  
  - Improved **quality**:
    - Through the conditions for registration in the Catalogue
    - Bring coherence
  
  - Improved **mobility** (occupational, geographical, statutory…)
  
  - Promote the use of qualifications (in recruitments)
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NQF and LLL: Consequences of the Above

- Individuals might be [more] motivated to learn if they can be guided towards appropriate qualifications for their aspirations.

- They might also have [more] confidence in nationally approved qualifications.

- They might appreciate the approach through validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes which emphasizes and values their existing competences…

… and minimise opportunity costs if they resume learning.
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NQF and LLL: In Summary

- Visibility of learning outcomes (competences)
- Transparency/readability of the national qualifications system
- Legitimacy of the qualifications awarded
- Societal recognition of qualifications, in the labour market in particular
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Broad Policy Pointers

- Adopt a vision

- Define your national needs (terms and concepts, broad aims, detailed objectives…)

- If relevant in your country, start from an analysis of the labour market

- Start somewhere, do something (even if on a small scale: sector, enterprise, minucipality…): Pilot projects

- Be patient, avoid pitfalls

- Only when national needs are agreed, move to the discussion about an international qualifications framework

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Further Readings

With Mike Coles (QCA) 2007

For a summary see:

www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/2/38500491.pdf
Merci

Questions and comments please to:
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