2ª Reunión Técnica para la Validación de la "Guía para el desarrollo e implementación de Marcos Nacionales de Cualificaciones"

28 -31 July 2009
Cartagena de Indias (Colombia)

European experiences with Qualifications Frameworks Development Processes

Arjen DEIJ, ETF http://www.etf.europa.eu

etf
SHARING EXPERTISE
IN TRAINING

What I want to speak about

- What kind of QFs exist in Europe: Old ⇔ New.

- The influence of EQF and Bologna process

- Challenges for the development of qualifications frameworks:

  - QFs as tools to support reforms

  - Who supports and owns the framework – the importance of agreement among stakeholders

- An overview of experiences and key challenges during different phases of the development processes

- Conclusions

The early European frameworks

Scotland => SCQF partnership model

- Bringing together different stakeholders around a loose framework
- Modular framework of and national catalogue launched in 1983 under SCOTVEC, later SQA resp. for national qualifications
- SCOTCAT credit system for HE early nineties
- Coming together in 1999 (Higher Still agenda) progression
- 2001 SCQF partnership integrating as well SVQs, 2006 re-launched
- Objectives Access, Transfer and Progression and Transparency
- Different QA approaches, but has created a common language

- **Lessons learned:**
- **Changes take time, cooperation between stakeholders is important, QF is a social construct, everything needs agreement**

SHARING EXPERTISE IN TRAINING

The early European frameworks

England => Different frameworks for HE and VET that are not well linked

- NVQ model late 1980's => lack of trust in qualifications Competence based approach => 5 levels, industry led (based on occupational standards)
- NQF 2001-2009 integrate all national accredited qualifications (close to 6000 qualifications) – manage over 120 awarding bodies
- QCF – unit based framework, linked to vocational qualifications reforms process (role of sectors, funding) introduced 2009
- FHEQ- established 2001 – levels for intermediate, certificate, honours (bachelor), masters and PhD qualifications, not regulated, external QAA in 2008 reviewed and re-launched
- HE Credit Framework 2008 to provide common framework for use of credit

- **Lessons learned:**
- Environment is complex with many players. Reforms driven by government, looking for simplification, many changes in institutions, weak formal links between VET and HE, QA led to complaints about bureaucracy, slow progress

etf SHARING EXPERTISE IN TRAINING

The early European frameworks

France => Bringing different qualifications together in a common register and promoting RPL (VAE)

- MoE very strong as well as social partners (highly centralised education system)

- MoL has been promoting competency based qualifications (AFPA system) and employment service revolutionised guidance and counselling with ROME bringing different qualifications together

- Social partners and chambers also had their own parallel systems

- 2002 law created RNCP and opened the door to validation of competences (validation d'acquis d'expérience) against all qualification types

- HE qualifications are seen as 'professional certificates'

- **Lessons learned:**

- Strong national tripartite agreement and unique concept of sustainable professionalisation opened the door to a common repertoire in which VAE is driving force. However linkages between different qualification types remain weak and the role of the CNCP as the tripartite coordinator is limited. It can not create stronger links as stakeholders want to safeguard their interests.

The drivers for developing frameworks have changed

1st generation Qualifications Frameworks	**2nd generation Qualifications Frameworks**	**3rd generation Qualifications Frameworks**
Developed from national perceptions, mainly determined by internal drivers, and often using experimental approaches	Have tried to learn from 1st generation experiences, in terms of design and processes. Seeking more communication with other national systems on a bilateral basis, but influence of external drivers is limited	Internal drivers remain important, but external drivers have a significant impact on the technical design of frameworks and the QA arrangements

European Qualifications Framework

- Translation mechanisms of levels and qualifications between systems
- Lead to more transparency, support mobility, support lifelong learning
- Support comparability through mutual trust, quality assurance and the use of learning outcomes

- **Does not** provide European wide recognition, is not about European standards or establishing a common European education and training system
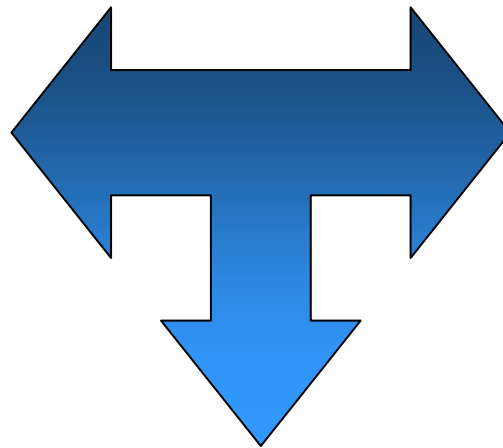
European Qualifications Framework

- Translation mechanisms of levels and qualifications between systems
- Lead to more transparency, support mobility, support lifelong learning
- Support comparability through mutual trust, quality assurance and the use of learning outcomes

- **Does not** provide European wide recognition, is not about European standards or establishing a common European education and training system

EQF and Lisbon process

European countries to increase competitiveness of their workforce globally

Diversity of education & training systems in Europe

Transnational trust, enable the exchange of qualifications internationally

European Qualifications Framework

The core of the framework: the 8 EQF levels

- Relate system to system
- Enable reference to all learning
- Generic descriptors, not a blue print for NQFs
- Indicate the **learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences)** relevant to qualifications at that level in any system of qualifications

The EQF process

2008   EQF approved

2008   EQF advisory group established

2008   Referencing criteria agreed

2010   Referencing of national levels completed

2012   National qualifications mention EQF levels

A tight timetable…

EHEA (*Bologna framework*)	EQF
HE Sector led, Council of Europe 46 countries participating,	EU initiative, 32 countries signed up
Meta framework for European Higher Education Area	Reference framework for lifelong learning (including HE)
Based on 3 cycles and intermediate cycle	8 level framework L5 – L8 aligned with FEHEA descriptors
Focuses on HE frameworks and main HE qualifications	Supports the establishments of NQFs Levels for all types of learning/ achievements at different levels
Learning outcomes are the basis	Learning outcomes are the basis
To be established 2010	To be established by 2010

Implementing EQF through NQFs

- EQF recommends that countries establish NQFs.

- Basic principles and 8 level structure inspire national frameworks,

- Bologna 46 countries started to develop qualification frameworks for HE now gradually integrated into NQFs covering all EQF levels & supporting LLL

- Mutual trust between countries & stakeholders deciding success

- Other countries are looking for ways to connect with EQF

Challenges

Ambitious timeframe, can lead to policy copying and borrowing, and a focus on the formal education sectors and qualifications

The whole world seems to be developing Qualifications Frameworks

But all QFs are different & respond to specific challenges

Existing QFs are **different from each other**

QFs are **tools** to respond to changing labour and educational needs in demographically changing societies

To what extent are QFs addressing concrete challenges? e.g. improved access, enhancing basic & core skills, providing second chances, up skilling people, increase competitiveness, addressing skill shortages and aging labour forces, recognise qualifications & skills from migrants, provide more flexibility, mobility, facilitate career changes, enhance quality & QA

QFs are **partial tools** and need to be part of larger reforms, including improved opportunities for skills acquisition

In the end QFs should deliver people with **more opportunities** to fulfil their personal, economic and societal potentials

Who supports and owns the framework? – the importance of agreement among stakeholders

- QFs are developed on the basis of negotiation, and consensus between stakeholders
- Beyond the Ministries of Education - who is involved?
- Are all the relevant stakeholders involved?
- Who leads the implementation process?
- Radical top-down approach or agreed changes built on compromise?
- Balancing past experience and future goals?
- Involving or excluding providers as partners?

Development stages of qualification frameworks

Exploratory stage	No decision yet. But there is often need for relevant qualifications & quality improvement. Contacts between stakeholders made. Classifiers, standards & curricula reviewed.
	Challenges: reaching different stakeholders, building a common understanding, managing expectations, considering alternatives
Conceptual stage	Countries make first moves. Stakeholders identified. Discussions take place on ingredients. The concept & rational for the national QF is formulated.
	Challenges: NQF is seen as goal rather than tool. Focus on features & high level expectations, but without a clear case why the country needs a specific NQF. Focus on existing formal sector. Believe in NQF as one model that fits all countries. Use EQF as the blue print.
Design stage	Countries working on design of their NQF. This is the phase in which deals are done. Work focuses around technical features the institutional frameworks and the benefits.
	Challenges: Few countries look at all subsectors together. Design often hampered by absence of clear national concept and rational. No research on appropriate mechanisms. There is a great risk of copying from quite different contexts.

Development stages of qualification frameworks

Testing stage	**Testing new mechanisms of the framework:** **Examples how to describe qualifications, qualification types, level descriptors, credit system, databases of qualifications, learners, courses, providers, examination centres, accreditation procedures, assessment and certification procedures, recognition of prior learning, institutional roles (coordination bodies, regulators, awarding bodies, sectoral bodies), information and guidance systems for learners and employers, etc, etc.** **<u>Challenges</u>: Ensuring money and time to test. Ensuring critical evaluation. There is a risk that this phase is skipped all together.**
Implementation phase	**Framework is approved. Institutions to support framework created. NQFs become operational in stages, normally starting with populating the QF with qualifications, followed by access for learners/candidates, provision, assessment, certification and possible transfer of results and progression of the learners. Framework coordination (or regulation) needs to be ensured. Quality assurance is becoming a real concern at this stage.** **<u>Challenges:</u> The implementation raises many practical issues including funding. Managing change. Implementation driven too much top down may lead to conflicts & lack of trust. Too much bottom up driven approaches are difficult to link. The practical tasks are opportunity for learning but effects take years to manifest.**

Development stages of qualification frameworks

Review and redesign phase	**Research around frameworks can provide valuable lessons for policy learning, and increase the effectiveness. Research and peer learning can be done in cooperation with other countries, but the transferability of experiences from abroad are limited by the fact that each framework is a response to a specific situation.** **A review of the frameworks is normally carried out after 5-7 years of operation. Frameworks normally develop by addressing perceived weaknesses, which become apparent during independent reviews of the frameworks. These lead to reconceptualisation and redesign and the cycle starts again.** **Challenges:** **Learning about the QF development process requires independent research capacity. Learning should start as early as possible. Politicians and implementing institutions may not want to know about things that go wrong. Critical academic researchers may lack the understanding of the practicalities involved in developing frameworks.**

Conclusions

- Many countries in Europe have decided to develop QFs. This development is stimulated by the EQF

- NQF is not about implementing EQF nationally, but about how national qualifications are related to one-another

- These QFs are meant to improve the functioning of deployment of people, opening up E&T systems and improve quality (assurance).

- QFs cannot lead to these results on their own, but need to be part of wider E&T reforms

- Every QF is different: a unique response to a given situation. It changes overtime.

- The development & implementation of QFs takes years; It requires resources, commitment of stakeholders and adaptability

- The development passes through different stages, in a dynamic and iterative way (looking backwards and forwards and changing direction sometimes).

Thank you for your attention

For questions: please contact Arjen Deij arjen.deij@etf.europa.eu