

BOTSWANA

An impact study conducted in 2006 by Cardno Agrisystems concluded that Botswana's education system lacked credibility due to the absence of clear learning pathways and recommended the establishment of a National Qualifications Framework to address this problem (Tau and Modesto, 2009). Following this recommendation, since 2007 Botswana's Ministry of Education and Skills Development has been working towards the establishment of the Botswana National Credit and Qualifications Framework (BNCQF), assisted since 2010 by a Europe Aid project.

The BNCQF will merge the two already existing partial frameworks: the Botswana National Vocational Qualifications Framework (BNVQF) and the Botswana Technical Education Programme (BTEP). Established in 2004, the BNVQF covers vocational education and training (VET) and has no links to general or higher education (Tao and Modesto, 2009). The BTEP, by contrast, is a college-based qualifications framework which facilitates partnerships between higher education institutions and leading employers in order to provide learners with the entrepreneurial skills that industry and commerce demand (OECD, 2008).

1. CHALLENGES THE NQF WOULD NEED TO ADDRESS

The Republic of Botswana has been one of the fastest growing economies in Africa over the last three decades, emerging in 2012 as an upper middle income country with a per capita GDP of US\$16,800 (CIA World Factbook, 2013). However, employment growth has been unable to match economic growth. This is largely because Botswana depends solely on diamonds as a commodity and has so far been unable to diversify its economy (Siphambe, 2007). Although Botswana's territory is vast, covering 582,000 square kilometres, its population remains sparse at 2.031 million (World Bank, 2011). Adult literacy (age 15 and over) stands at 84.5 per cent and youth literacy (ages 15–24) at 95.3 per cent. The primary school completion rate is 92 per cent.

2. MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The BNCQF's overall aims are twofold: to reform Botswana's education system and to improve communications between stakeholders. As a tool for educational reform the BNCQF aims to:

- bring all national qualifications together under a single internationally recognized classification system, covering the general, TVET and tertiary education sectors;
- provide qualifications that are quality-assured, nationally and internationally comparable, and portable;
- improve the transparency of qualifications so that they convey clearer information about learner competences and knowledge;
- rectify the current mismatch between qualifications and the labour market by making qualifications programmes more responsive to labour market dynamics;

- align Botswana's education and training system to the global market, making Botswana's qualifications more internationally competitive;
- facilitate learner mobility and progression, both within and outside Botswana with the help of mechanisms for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and for credit accumulation and transfer;
- establish a qualifications register to keep track of accredited qualifications, programmes, courses, training providers and awarding bodies;
- ensure the accessibility of qualifications to learners, members of government, employers, education providers and members of the public;
- establish an overarching independent regulatory body responsible for policy-setting and implementation of the new system.

As a communications tool, the BNCQF aims to ensure that all stakeholders involved:

- receive and disseminate clear and accurate information concerning the knowledge, skills, responsibilities and degree of independence of holders of a particular qualification;
- understand and use the terms mentioned in the qualifications framework in the same way;
- understand the roles they are expected to play in the development of qualifications;
- understand the relationship between formal, informal and non-formal learning;
- appreciate the systemic change in Botswanan education and training which will be brought about through the shift in focus towards learning outcomes (Modungwa and Molwane, 2011).

3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

Botswana's National Human Resource Development Strategy (NHRDS) called for the establishment of an independent statutory body to develop and implement the BNCQF. This body is the Botswana Qualifications Authority (BQA). The BQA is responsible for setting up a national regulatory system for education and skills development. It performs the core functions of: (i) registration and accreditation; (ii) quality assurance; and (iii) advising the Minister of Education and Skills Development on all policy matters relating to the BNCQF. Most importantly, the BQA is responsible for bringing together the different strands of the currently fragmented education and training system.

4. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS AND THE USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The BNCQF has 10 levels. It is outcomes-based and credit-based, and incorporates unit standards for TVET, title definitions and level descriptors.

Table 1. Sample structure of the BNCQF

Education and training sub-systems				
LEVEL	GENERAL EDUCATION	TECHNICAL & VOCATIONAL	TERTIARY EDUCATION	LEVEL
10			PhD, Ed.D,	10
9			Masters,	9
8			Bachelors Degree with Honours Post Graduate Diploma	8
7			Bachelors Degree. E.g BA, BSc, B.Ed	7
6		Diploma e.g BTEP	Diploma e.g DSE	6
5		Certificate e.g. BNVQF 3 BTEP Advanced Certificate		5
4	BGCSE	BNVQF 2 Trade Test B		4
3		BNVQF 1, Trade Test C BTEP Foundation		3
2	Junior Certificate ABEP 4			2
1	PSLE, ABEP 3 OSEC			1

Source: Modungwa and Molwane, 2011.

The ten levels are differentiated by the complexity of learning required. Each level descriptor explains what the holder of a qualification at that level is expected to know and be able to do. The three sub-frameworks are linked in order to ensure coherence between higher education and TVET, and to promote the perception that these sectors are equal in value (Modungwa and Molwane, 2011).

5. PROGRESSION PATHWAYS AND RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Creating links between academic and vocational qualifications is an important function of the BNCQF. Three nationally valid systems help to fulfil this function: the quality assurance system, the system of credits upon which qualifications will be based, and the proposed common RPL and Recognition of Current Competences (RCC) system. The BNCQF is helping to implement the RPL and RCC system, which is intended to assess and recognize learners with informal and indigenous skills (Modungwa and Molwane, 2011).

Training institutions have already started to design new curricula based on learning outcomes (Modungwa and Molwane, 2011), and a number of new programmes have been launched targeting specific groups of learners. The Adult Basic Education Programme (ABEP) is an important bridging programme within the BNCQF (Department of Non-Formal Education, Curriculum Blueprint Draft 2007) which combines core skills training with work experience. Already in 2007 it prepared adults for entry to levels 1 and 2 of the BNCQF. Similarly, the Structured Work-Based Learning (SWBL) programmes created in the context of the BTEP are aligned to a suite of college-based Technical Education Qualifications developed between 1997 and 2007 by the Department of Vocational Education and Training (DVET) Botswana, with the aim of making training more consistent with employers' demand for skills.

The Centre for Continuing Education at the University of Botswana has also designed and implemented non-credit programmes covering a variety of areas which aim to open access to those without formal education, thus promoting BNCQF-aligned mobility between conventional and less conventional courses.

REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The 10-level, outcomes-based and credit-based design of the BNCQF has been deliberately adopted in order to align it with the regional framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

The BQA has already had some successes, notably:

- developing a vision statement and branding device;
- embedding the BNCQF within the existing Human Resource Development Council and strategy;
- revising and re-designing the qualifications framework, turning it into an integrated and comprehensive framework;
- developing a legal framework for the BQA and BNCQF;
- developing a draft communication strategy;
- conducting a study on credit systems and policies;
- developing BNCQF policy;
- benchmarking with other countries in the SADC region.

The next steps to be taken are:

- establishing a monitoring and evaluation unit;
- developing a formal methodology to measure the impact of the qualifications framework on the education and training system;
- developing a marketing and communications strategy to help stakeholders, learners and the general public understand the changes to the learning system brought about by the introduction of the BNCQF (covering pedagogy, programme design and delivery);
- developing a consistent and sustained programme of information sharing between government and stakeholders.

However, significant challenges remain. These include a dearth of local expertise, inflexible financial resources, insufficient time, poor understanding of the goals of the BNCQF by stakeholders, and insufficient buy-in (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2010). The government foresees overcoming these challenges by improving communications between stakeholders, and aligning the BNCQF with the interests and needs of different sectors and stakeholders.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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