

ETHIOPIA

The Ethiopian National Qualifications Framework (ENQF) is being developed by a taskforce set up in 2007 by the Ministry of Education (MoE). Since 2010, the Higher Education Strategy Centre (HESC) was mandated to coordinate the process of the ENQF development and implementation in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other relevant agencies (Proclamation No. 650/2009 and 691/2011 (HESC, 2011). A sub-framework designed to integrate into the ENQF, the Ethiopian Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework (NTQF), was proposed in 2006 (MoE, 2006c).

1. CHALLENGES THE NQF WOULD NEED TO ADDRESS

The population of Ethiopia is about 80 million and its economy is predominantly agrarian. In keeping with its commitment to participate in the competitive global market economy and become a middle income country by 2025, Ethiopia has set a human resource development agenda to raise the quality of its workforce to international standards and build a culture of entrepreneurship among graduates (Solomon, 2011).

Providing adequate employment opportunities for the growing labour force, particularly for young people, constitutes a major socio-economic challenge. According to the 2007/08 census, 15 to 24-year-olds accounted in that year for 20.5 per cent of the total population. A significant proportion of those young people work in the agricultural sector, distantly followed by wholesale and retail trade, suggesting that young people are mainly engaged in sectors characterised by low productivity and incomes.

Ethiopia's current labour market information system, by which data about the labour market is made available, is insufficiently developed, fragmented, limited in scope and out-of-date. Strengthening the labour market information system is therefore an important objective of the Ethiopian Government (OECD, 2012).

Ethiopia's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system is in dire need of government attention in order to remedy the many challenges it currently faces. The system struggles to coordinate a variety of providers at different qualification levels (MoE, 2008). Demand for TVET far exceeds supply; formal TVET caters for less than 3 per cent of the relevant age group. Partially as a result of underfunding, Ethiopia lacks a qualified corps of TVET teachers/instructors. A mismatch between the content of TVET courses and industry requirements means that many TVET graduates remain unemployed even in occupational fields with a high demand for skilled labour. Employers are not consulted during the planning of courses. Mechanisms for assessment and certification of TVET candidates are inadequate. Since few people are aware of the benefits of TVET, the sector suffers from a lack of prestige (MoE, 2008).

A number of reform initiatives have been put forward in the last twenty years to address the challenges facing Ethiopia's education and training system. The National TVET Strategy was developed in August 2006 (MoE, 2006b). In September 2006 the Federal Ministry of Education developed a National TVET Qualifications Framework (NTQF) to improve the quality and relevance of

the TVET system and create ways to recognize the wide range of formal, non-formal and informal learning existing in Ethiopia, hence opening access to qualifications for previously neglected target groups (MoE, 2006c). A TVET Leaders' and Trainers' Qualifications Framework (TLTQF) was introduced in 2010 (MoE, 2010b).

The Education and Training Policy of 1994 (Teshome, 2005; Solomon, 2011) led to the preparation in 1996 of the Education Sector Development Programme ESDP IV. This programme outlined a comprehensive development vision for the education sector, covering formal, non-formal, initial and further training, provided open access to certification, and created pathways between the general, TVET and higher education sectors (MoE, 2010a).

The national Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) adopted by the Federal Government of Ethiopia for the years 2010 to 2014 identified education as one of the key sectors contributing to the production of high-quality skilled manpower for the Ethiopian economy (Assegidew, 2012).

2. MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The ENQF aims to:

- raise the quality of educational programmes, and hence the credibility of qualifications, by establishing quality assurance processes and setting out nationally valid standards detailing the knowledge, skills and competences expected of graduates of all ENQF qualifications;
- make Ethiopian qualifications more relevant to industry and the labour market;
- promote equity and access to education for all Ethiopians;
- provide mechanisms for the recognition of learning gained in formal, non-formal and informal settings;
- harmonize the three sub-sectors (general, TVET and higher education) by setting out common standards and progression pathways between them, improving the transparency and comparability of qualifications.

The ENQF builds on the objectives of the already existing NTQF (MoE, 2006c), which are to:

- improve the transparency of the TVET qualifications system, ensuring that trainees know what they need to learn and employers know what they can expect of graduates;
- ensure flexibility, transferability and progression between different occupational and training fields and between different training venues;
- eliminate the barriers that currently block horizontal and vertical educational pathways;
- establish and maintain a levels system, based on standards of competence, detailing the knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) acquired by trainees;
- create a single nationally and internationally accepted system against which all learning achievements may be measured and understood.

3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

In June 2004 a team of inquiry into governance, leadership and management in higher education produced a report entitled the Higher Education System Overhaul (HESO) report, recommending the development of a National Qualifications Framework for Ethiopia. The intention was to design a qualifications framework focusing on post-secondary certification (post Grade 12) and providing mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning and for skills upgrading in the workplace (MoE, 2004).

The endorsement of Higher Education Proclamation No. 651/2003 (FDRE), which was repealed and replaced by Proclamation No. 650/2009, constituted a major step forward in educational policy making. The new Proclamation states that 'the Ministry [of Education], the Centre [HESC], and the Agency [HERQA] shall also guide institutional quality enhancement efforts as well as curricula development through a national qualifications framework that shall, as the case may be, determine or indicate core learning outcomes or graduate competences'. (Assegidew, 2012; emphasis added by

author). At the same time, tools for public sector reforms such as Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR)¹ and Balanced Score Card (BSC)² of public institutions created a need to reorganize the sub-sectors of education and training and establish the ENQF (HESC, 2011).

The period between 2004 and 2008 saw limited progress on the ENQF despite several attempts to maintain momentum through strategy papers, consultative documents and implementation plans (Assegidew, 2012). The reason for this was that Ethiopia's education and training policies continued to emphasize formal education to the neglect of non-formal and informal learning. As a result, awareness of the ENQF was low in both the public and private sectors, and there was little interaction between education and training providers, and the labour market. Moreover, an overwhelming variety of models and suggestions from other countries ended up complicating, rather than facilitating the design process of the ENQF. Various organisations such as SAQA, DeLPHE, GIZ, NUFFIC and the Tuning Project for engineering and technology programmes offered different models of NQFs and proposed different orientations for the education system (British, American, German and Australian) (Ibid, p. 90). The influence of other international developments such as the South African Development Community (SADC) regional qualifications framework, the European Qualifications Framework and the African Qualifications Framework proposed by the African Union further complicated proceedings.

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was appointed in January 2008 to provide technical assistance to the ENQF Taskforce with financial aid from an Italian contribution to the Education Sector Development Programme (ENQF Taskforce, 2008). The responsibilities of the ENQF Taskforce were:

- to consider how best to harmonize the existing national qualifications;
- to regulate national standards of knowledge and skills by defining qualifications levels with descriptors based on learning outcomes;
- to create a system for comparing qualifications, making them more comprehensible to learners, providers and employers and thus increasing confidence in the national qualifications system;
- to investigate procedures to improve access to learning and possibilities for credit transfer and progression;
- to investigate the establishment of dedicated agencies to manage, monitor and evaluate the ENQF and support further reform;
- to hold discussions with all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure a common and deep understanding on all matters relating to the ENQF;
- to develop a Consultative Document for the Development of a National Qualifications Framework for Ethiopia (ENQF Taskforce, 2008).³

The most recent developments in ENQF-related policy have had a direct effect on implementation of the ENQF (Assegidew, 2012). This can be seen in the preparation of a road map and strategy to establish an ENQF Advisory Group, a Technical Working Group and an ENQF Management Information System.

4. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS AND THE USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The ten-level ENQF covers general education, TVET and higher education. The level descriptors from the work with SAQA in 2008 will be reworked and presented to the partners and stakeholders for comments (ENQF Taskforce, 2008).

¹ Business Process Re-Engineering (BPR) is tool for strengthening managerial capacities of public institutions

² Balanced Score Card (BSC) is a tool to measure and analyze organizational and individual performance information for timely informed decision making in public institutions

³ This was completed in 2008 and is awaiting formalization (Assegidew, 2012).

Table 1. Levels of the ENQF

ENQF Level	Grade	General and Higher Education	TVET
10		PhD	
9		Master's Degree (240 Credits)	
8		Graduate Diploma (120 Credits)	
7		Bachelor's Degree (360 Credits)	
6		Diploma (120 Credits)	Advanced Diploma (120 Credits)
5	12	Higher Education Entrance Examination Certificate (120 Credits)	Diploma (120 Credits)
4	11		Level 4 Certificate (120 Credits)
3	10	General Education Certificate (120 Credits)	Level 3 Certificate (120 Credits)
2	8		Level 2 Certificate
1		Primary School Certificate (120 Credits)	Basic Certificate
Access	1-4 Including Adult Basic Education		

Source: ENQF Taskforce, 2008

The NTQF (the Ethiopian NQF for TVET) has five levels, from National TVET Certificates I to V (NTQF, 2006c). Occupational standards are formulated in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes (KSA) (Ministry of Education, 2006c). Level descriptors in the NTQF are supported by mechanisms for standard-setting, assessment and certification in cooperation with employers, as well as a competence-based assessment system to support the validation of non-formal and informal learning (Ministry of Education, 2006c).

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

Strengthening progression pathways between non-formal post-primary education and the TVET qualifications framework is one of the key objectives of the ENQF. The Federal Ministry of Education developed the Non-formal TVET Implementation Framework to facilitate this (MoE, 2006a). Mobility in the TVET system takes place horizontally and vertically. Horizontal mobility involves trainees moving from one programme to another in a different occupational field but at the same qualifications level (for example from Accounting Level II to Plumbing Level II). Vertical mobility involves trainees moving from one certification level to another or from a certificate level to a diploma level in the same occupational field (MoE, 2006c).

Whilst progression pathways are relatively easy to identify and maintain within a single sub-framework, the matter becomes more complicated in the context of an overarching ENQF covering all three educational sectors. In this situation, proper coordination between stakeholders is crucial, as the different sectors may fall under different jurisdictions. Additionally, a common language is essential in order to facilitate the transfer of credits from TVET to Higher Education (Assegidew 2012, p. 92).

6. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The Annex to the Protocol for the Establishment of the East African Community (EAC) Common Market on Mutual Recognition of Academic and Professional Qualifications recommends that qualifications frameworks in the region should have ten levels. An audit covering regulated qualifications issued by national examination and awarding bodies in the EAC also resulted in the recommendation of a ten-level framework for academic and vocational qualifications. Other countries with ten-level frameworks include Tanzania, Mauritius and Australia.

Partner States have agreed to harmonize all national qualifications within the EAC. The exercise on Harmonization of the East African Education Systems and Training Curricula is still ongoing.

7. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

Overall, the prospects for implementing the ENQF seem bright. Political will, policy directives and global influence are in place, and importance is already being given in reform initiatives to raising the quality of education in Ethiopia and improving economic growth. One of the main strengths of the ENQF development process is that it provides a platform for dialogue between stakeholders who do not usually interact with one another (Assegidew, 2012, p. 92). The Government of Ethiopia introduced the ENQF not as a stand-alone reform, but as an integral part of other reform initiatives. Making the ENQF operational has been the work of many different reform initiatives over a period of time, a number of which are already bearing fruit.

Nevertheless, ENQF implementation requires hard work. It requires the co-operation of national and regional governments and other relevant stakeholders, as well as an understanding among all concerned parties of how the proposed changes are to be achieved (Teshome, 2005). It is often tempting to favour 'quick-fix solutions', but NQF developments in other countries have repeatedly demonstrated that NQFs are instruments of 'communication, collaboration and cooperation' that entail an iterative development process and take time to become familiar and accepted (SAQA Bulletin, 2012).

A recent study on the critical factors in ENQF implementation (Assegidew, 2012) made the following recommendations:

- More attention should be given to programme design and curriculum development.
- The government should take full ownership of the ENQF by allotting appropriate funds and resources to the ENQF development process.
- The MoE and HESC should facilitate collaboration between different stakeholders, ministries, NGOs and the private sector.
- Labour market linkages should be strengthened and comparability of qualifications improved.
- There should be greater involvement of experienced and knowledgeable academics in research.
- Communication strategies should be developed for 'buy-in' of policy makers' involvement, commitment and persistence.
- The language of the ENQF should be made more comprehensible to the public.
- A strong institutional support base should be established both at the level of manpower and of infrastructure.
- A plan should be developed for implementation and monitoring.

The next step for the Federal Minister of Education is to approve the Consultative Document (HESC, 2011). The HESC will consult with stakeholders, examine current qualifications, implement key pilot projects with universities, TVET institutions and schools, and set up a communications strategy and a database to record qualifications and register institutions.

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