



AFGHANISTAN

Initiated in 2008 by the Government of Afghanistan, the Committee on Education and Skills Policy (CESP) was formed to lead the development of the Afghanistan National Qualifications Authority (ANQA), the Afghanistan National Qualifications Framework (ANQF) and the establishment of the TVET Board in the country. The secretariat of CESP has developed the legal and operational framework for the establishment of the ANQA and ANQF, which will put in place policies, structures, facilities and mechanisms to deliver relevant, equitable and cost-effective education and training in Afghanistan.

CESP is led by the first Vice President and composed of five government ministers: the Ministers of Education, Labour and Social Affairs, Higher Education, Finance and Economy. The CESP Secretariat has developed the ANQA, including all legal and operational frameworks, to date. The proposed ANQF is now in the final stage of approval.

CESP has decided to work on the establishment of the TVET Board as the first Board to be developed under the ANQA. Regulations and standard operating procedures (SOPs) have been developed and nationwide awareness and communication campaigns are planned.

1. CHALLENGES THAT THE NQF WOULD NEED TO ADDRESS

The economic challenges faced by Afghanistan include addressing industry and commerce requirements for a pool of skilled labour, and ensuring that ordinary men and women get gainful employment and decent work. Afghanistan's economy consists mostly of micro-enterprises in the informal sector and subsistence agriculture. 70 per cent of the women have never attended school and the literacy rate is very low (MoLSAMD, 2007).

As for technical and vocational education and training (TVET), the lack of proper governance and the lack of an overarching body to coordinate and manage TVET are difficult issues. Other challenges include addressing the rigidity of the existing system; putting in place functioning mechanisms of quality assurance; and regulating, registering and accrediting training providers. Removing hurdles of an outdated curriculum, which is currently not responsive to the needs of learners and employers, is another challenge. This situation is further complicated by the lack of trained and qualified teachers/instructors. Presently, there are no mechanisms for the recognition of prior learning. Generally, the quality of provision is poor.

Afghanistan still lacks a long-term vision for the continuing vocational education and training (CVET) of adults. As a result there is low incentive for adults to continue to learn and to build on the knowledge, skills and competence they acquired through non-formal and informal learning. Currently the majority of Afghans, especially those historically excluded from national education, training and skills development gain their learning and competences through non-formal grassroots programmes in non-formal settings and informal apprenticeships.

In general, all the educational institutions have little capacity to train current participants or prepare new entrants for the labour force with the needed skills.

2. MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The ANQF is seen by the Government as an important policy instrument for:

- coordinating and improving education and training quality;
- making qualifications more responsive to the needs of the country;
- assisting citizens who are historically excluded from the national education, training and skills development system;
- adopting an integrated approach to education, training and skills development by registering all qualifications and competency standards in the ANQF;
- recognising the different forms of learning and their specific contributions to the entire spectrum of education and training;
- expanding access, progression and mobility within and across all learning sectors;
- developing a comprehensive policy on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL);
- ensuring that all qualifications in the ANQF are subject to a quality-checking process;
- helping individuals to plan their education and training career progression;
- offering programmes (courses) that lead to recognised qualifications; and
- helping employers to recruit workers with qualifications relevant to the labour market.

3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

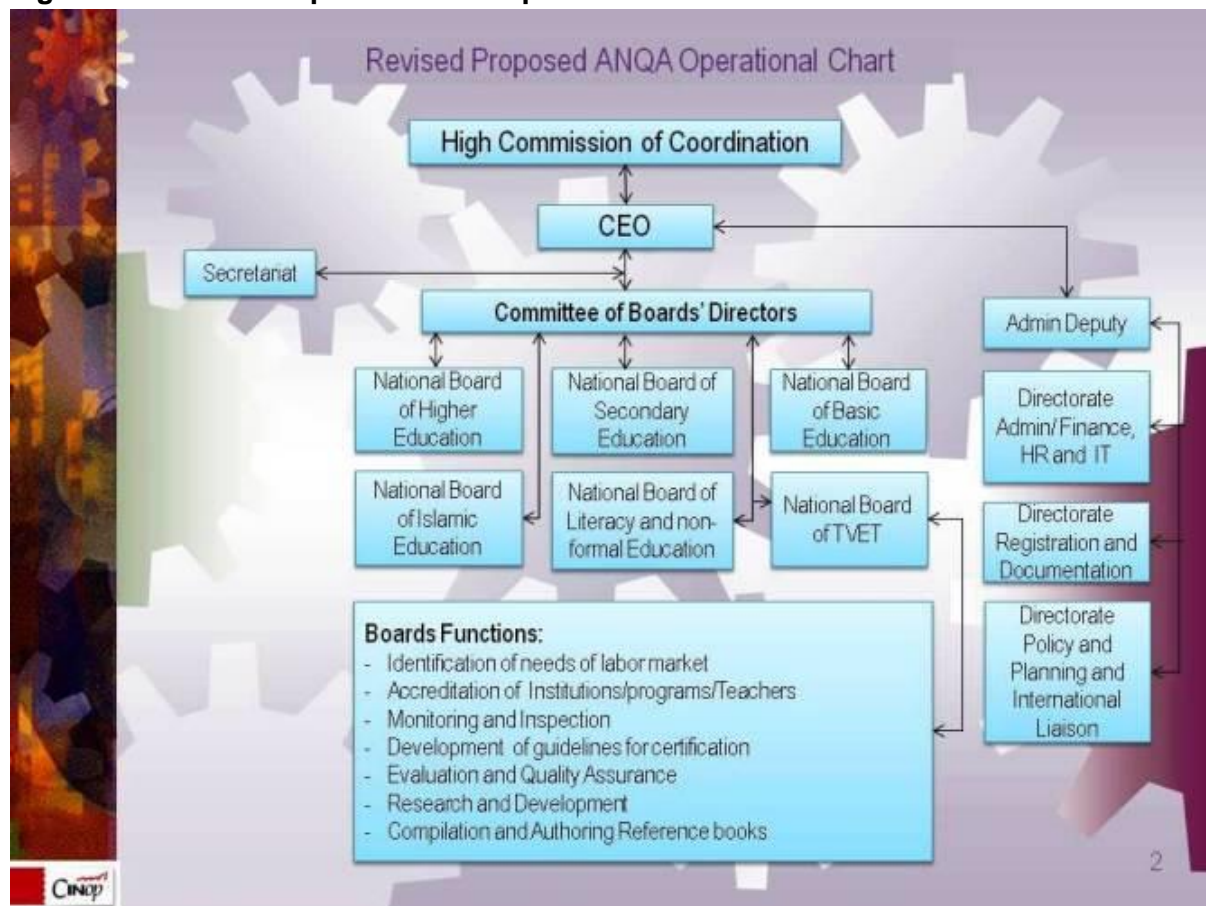
The Committee on Education and Skills Policy (CESP) works towards the creation of the ANQA/ANQF. The CESP is established under the Chairmanship of the Vice President and comprises the Vice President, Minister or Deputy Minister-level representation of the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Martyrs and Disabled (MOLSAMD), and a representative of the Ministry of Finance (MOF).

The CESP-Secretariat, with the technical assistance team, works in close coordination with the concerned departments and other relevant ministries and agencies involved in TVET to facilitate the creation of the ANQA/ANQF.

The CESP is to be gradually replaced by new regulatory bodies that are statutory bodies having been approved by an Act of Parliament, and independent of all ministerial linkages. This includes the Afghan National Qualifications Authority (ANQA) and the awarding boards, such as, the National Board for Primary/Basic Education, Secondary Education, the National Vocational Education and Training Board, the Islamic Education National Board, Literacy and non-formal Education National Board and the Higher Education National Board. The Awarding Boards' functions are to identify needs of the labour market, accredit institutions and programmes, undertake monitoring and inspection, develop guidelines for certification, research and development. The awarding boards are legal authorities, where, each board reports to a Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

The Afghanistan National Qualification Authority (ANQA) is an apex body responsible for the governance and management of the NQF. In addition, it will coordinate policy across government ministries and ensure adequate involvement of stakeholders; establish and promote the maintenance of standards, skills, and competences leading to the award of qualifications in the areas TVET, General Education, Islamic Education and Basic Education and Higher Education; and finally, promote and facilitate access, progression and mobility through the Framework. Figure 1 gives the revised proposed ANQA Operational Chart.

Figure 1. Revised Proposed ANQA Operational Chart



Source: CESP, Concept and Information of ANQA/ANQF, n.d.

The CESP will put in place the necessary administrative, legal and regulatory foundations needed to establish the ANQA in a time-bound manner.

Monitoring and Evaluation and Quality Control and Assurance Units within the Ministry of Education and, Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Labour will be under the direct supervision of the deputy Minister in charge for the TVET sector. The first ever Educational Joint Sector Review (EJSR) involving all agencies, partners and funders took place on 26 and 27 June 2012.

4. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS AND USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The ANQF has 8 levels in order to allow for the full range of qualification types in the education, training and skills development system.

The level descriptors cover three areas (CESP, 2010, pp. 65–81):

- (i) knowledge and understanding;
- (ii) practice and skills, i.e., applied knowledge and understanding;

(iii) attitudes and competences, further divided into generic cognitive skills; communication, ICT and numeracy skills; and autonomy, accountability and working with others.

Level descriptors are written in terms of learning outcomes. In other words, the knowledge, skills and responsibilities expected of the graduate of a learning program at a specific level should align to the knowledge, skills and responsibilities expressed in the level descriptors for that specific qualification framework level.

Each ANQF-registered qualification, whether incorporating unit standards or not, is designed as a whole to serve a specified purpose.

In the process of establishing the ANQF, an integrated framework based on the Irish model has been envisaged in order to embed formal, non-formal and informal training and education without privileging one sector over the other.

Table 1. Afghanistan National Qualifications Framework

| ANQF Levels | Literacy and basic education | Secondary and higher education | TVET | Islamic education |
|-------------|--|---|--|--|
| L8 | | H.E. / Ph.D. | | |
| 7 | | H.E. / Master's degree | | |
| L6 | | H.E. / Bachelor's degree | | |
| L5 | | Tertiary Education / Grade 14 diploma | Tertiary TVET / Grade 14 Diploma | Tertiary Islamic Education / Grade 14 Diploma |
| L4 | | Advanced Certificate High School/Grade 12 | Advanced Certificate TVET High School | Advanced Certificate Islamic High School |
| L3 | Intermediate Education / Grade 9 Certificate | | Intermediate Vocational Education and Training Certificate | Intermediate Islamic Education / Grade 9 Certificate |
| L2 | School Preparation Literacy LC Progression Literacy LB Foundation Literacy LA | | Vocational training Certificate | |
| L1 | Basic Level | | Apprenticeship | |

Source: CESP, 2010, p. 61.

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

The ANQF and TVET Board (as the first Board under the ANQF) will be established through an Act of Parliament... This is expected to promote lifelong learning, in particular, the recognition of non-formal and in-formal learning as a right. The aim is to motivate adults to continue learning and to remedy the situation where presently, under the existing qualifications system, only non-formal and informal learning that is equivalent to grade six of formal school is recognised, and only on the condition that the learner is of a suitable age for the level which he/she is assessed, and that the learner continues his/her education in a formal school (Nasry, 2013).

The majority of Afghan people gain training and education in non-formal or NGO-run training centres. Skills are generally gained in the informal economy by working as apprentices with masters, fathers or brothers. This learning will be officially recognised or certified once the qualifications framework is fully established. A recognition system for the informal sector linked to the ANQF is envisaged. In the meanwhile, the National Skills Development Project (NSDP) has developed a methodology for the assessment of skills based on a competency-based training (CBT) approach. The assessment includes identification of competences, and collection of evidence on performance and knowledge that can be compared to the required occupational standards. Only if competences are demonstrated will a certificate be issued, if not, then the learner is recommended to do a further training course. Non-formal education and training is offered mainly by the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and by NGOs. The updating of standards with a focus on occupational skills standards is undertaken by these ministries.

As of now, the progression pathways in the National Qualifications Framework reflect the situation as it exists on the ground in Afghanistan. For example, currently, TVET and Islamic Education goes up to grade 14 only. However, if in the future, the TVET and Islamic education track of education are going to provide specialised degrees of higher education, then the levels of qualifications in those two areas could be revised to higher levels of qualifications in accordance with the approval of respective boards under the ANQA (CESP, 2010, p. 63).

6. LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE PLANS

An important lesson is the setting in motion of a consultative process between the Government and all national stakeholders to decide on the final version of the ANQA/ANQF.

The eight levels and the six education programmes of the proposed ANQF (Basic Education, Secondary Education, Technical and Vocational Education, Islamic Education, Literacy and Non-formal Education and Higher Education) are ready to move on to the next stage of their development.

A crucial element in the further development of the framework is how well it caters for all segments of society, particularly for the under-privileged members of society.

The next steps to be taken revolve around the drafting of the acts for legal status and implementation, and to have further consultations with all stakeholders to do so (CESP, 2010, p. 5).

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