

PHILIPPINES

In October 2012, President Benigno Aquino III signed Executive Order 83 establishing the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF). The signing of this executive order came at a time when the Philippines was in the midst of far-reaching reforms to its education system. Designed in 2006 and adopted in 2012, the PQF evolved from the Philippine Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (PTVQF). It is designed to harmonize basic education, technical and vocational education and higher education into a nationwide unified framework of skills and competences.

1. CHALLENGES THE NQF WOULD NEED TO ADDRESS

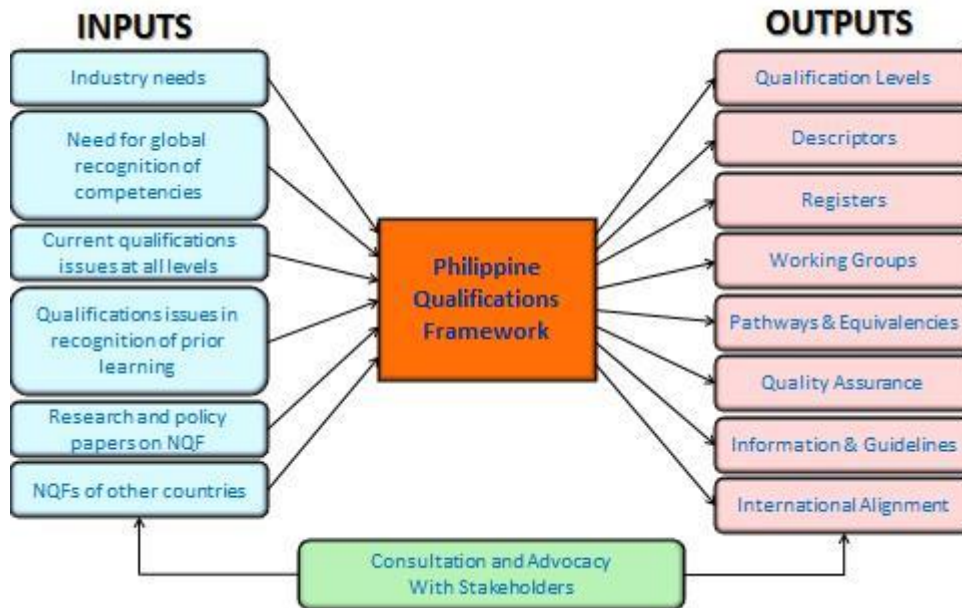
According to the National Statistics Office (NSO), around 2.8 million Filipinos, roughly 7 per cent of the population, are unemployed, while 8.5 million or 22.7 per cent of the working population are underemployed. The PQF aims to address these problems, which are largely the result of a mismatch between the jobs on offer and the skills possessed by the workforce.

2. MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

Taking into the account the key points that emerged in discussions with the National Coordinating Council for Education (NCCE) (Isaac, 2011), the objectives of the PNQF are:

- to provide a basis for an integrated system of lifelong education ‘from cradle to grave’;
- to encompass qualifications in basic education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education, and to develop a system of pathways and equivalencies between qualifications within and across these three sectors;
- to meet local industry needs while ensuring alignment with overseas qualifications and NQFs in order to assist Filipino workers seeking employment and/or further education abroad;
- to make qualifications competency-based;
- to establish descriptors for the full range of proposed qualifications (building on the descriptors already adopted in the PTVQF);
- to develop appropriate quality assurance mechanisms.

Figure 1: inputs to and outputs from the PQF.



Source: Rey, Cariño and Rabago, 2009.

3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

The PQF was designed by the National Coordinating Council (NCC), an umbrella organisation to be chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Education (DepEd), with the following as members: (a) the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA); (b) the Commission on Higher Education (CHED); (c) Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE); and (d) Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) (Sec. 2, EO No. 83 s.2012). The functions of the NCC is to: (1) create technical working groups in support of detailing and implementing the PQF; (2) to harmonize the levels of qualifications with all levels of education; (3) to align education standards and learning outcomes to the level descriptors contained in the PQF; (4) to develop and recognize pathways and equivalencies; (5) to discuss and agree on the elements of the PQF including but not limited to their principles, key features, definitions or terminologies, structure and governance arrangements; (6) to review and update the PQF.

The government has established four Technical Working Groups (TWGs) with different functions in relation to the PQF:

1. The DepEd has the task to develop information, education and communication (IEC) materials to promote and advocate PQF. It also formulates guidelines, circulars and policy issuances for the approval of the NCC.
2. TESDA is the lead agency that provides information to employers, trainers and trainees on education and training opportunities, licensure and assessment and certification services in professional and skilled qualifications. TESDA also maintains and updates the database of professional and skilled qualifications in the qualification register.
3. CHED is the lead agency for establishing equivalency pathways for education transfer and/or progression between education levels corresponding to the PQF levels. It also develops a National System of Credit Transfer, and facilitates the enhancement and adoption of the Ladderized Education Program consistent with the PQF. CHED develops PQF quality procedures manuals, facilitates the conduct of evaluation and compliance audits and reviews vis-à-vis set standards. CHED also provides recommendations to the NCC based on the results of the evaluation.

4. The PRC is entrusted with the task of conducting studies that compare and benchmark the PQF with other countries and regional/international frameworks. It coordinates with professional organizations with the aim to agree on mutual recognition of qualifications.

Together, these organisations are committed to developing a coherent, internationally benchmarked framework covering basic education, TVET and higher education, as well as wider lifelong learning. A research project entitled 'Defining a Continuum of Philippine Education Competences: Towards a National Qualifications Framework' was commissioned by the NCC in 2004. The results of this research, together with previous work done by TESDA through the Philippines Australia Quality TVET (PAQTVET) project, provided momentum for the establishment of the PQF (Isaac, 2011).

There will also be an extensive programme of advocacy and consultation with key stakeholders, including representatives of Filipino industry, universities, TVET institutions, schools, and others with an interest in an integrated system of qualifications.

All levels of the PQF are governed by a quality assurance system which includes established qualifications standards, programme accreditation and assessment criteria. At elementary and secondary levels, programme accreditation is carried out by the Department of Education (DepEd) under the Permit and Recognition System. TESDA manages all post-secondary technical and vocational education, and has introduced a unified registration and accreditation system for this purpose. CHED manages higher education standards by accrediting programmes in higher education institutions. Certificates are issued by the Federation of Accrediting Agencies of the Philippines (FAAP). As part of quality assurance, CHED has identified around 300 Centres of Excellence and Centres of Development in various disciplines in public and private institutions throughout the Philippines. Graduates of professional programmes must pass the Professional Regulation Commission licensure examinations before being allowed to practise (Isaac, 2011).

4. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS AND THE USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

According to Executive Order 83, the PNQF accomplishes the following functions:

1. It provides a national system of qualification descriptors to measure students' knowledge, skills, values, assiduity and independence.
2. It describes the levels of educational qualifications and sets standards and learning outcomes.

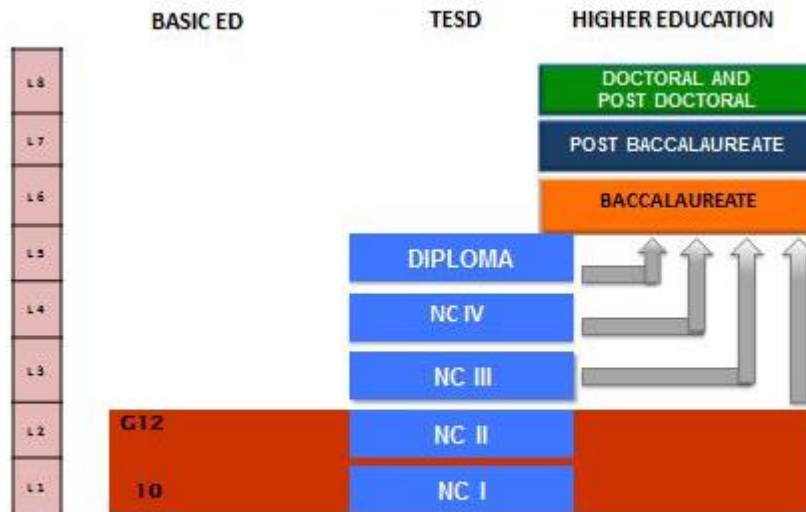
The PNQF is an eight-level framework with sub-frameworks in separate subsystems of the education and training system. For example, there are five levels in the Technical Education and Skills Development (TESD) subsystem National Certificates (NC) I through IV, and Diploma (See figure 1). Attainment of these qualifications requires a combination of technological and methodological competences. For example, an individual who attains the NC III is able to:

1. Perform a wide range of highly skilled operations involving known routines and procedures in a complex work context;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the work process, contribute to problem solving, and make decisions regarding the processes, equipment and materials to be used;
3. Demonstrate responsibility to participate effectively in teams.

For higher academic education, descriptors have been developed for the following qualification levels: Diploma, Baccalaureate, Postgraduate Diploma, Masters, and Doctorate.

The Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2012 notes that the PQF is in line with its proposed K-12 programme (Kindergarten to Grade 12) for preparing and guiding students into the labour force.

Figure 2. The Philippine National Qualifications Framework (PNQF)



TESDA = Technical Education and Skills Development Authority; NC =National Certificate
 Source: Rey, Cariño and Rabago, 2009.

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

Lifelong learning is an important principle for education and training in the Philippines. It stresses the appropriate balance of general and traditional schooling and competency-based training.

Non-formal and informal learning represent an important means of acquiring skills for many Filipinos. TESDA has developed a four-level national certification (NC) system for standardizing and certifying knowledge, skills and aptitudes acquired through non-formal and informal learning. These levels open up pathways for unemployed but skilled people, especially those in rural areas who have learned a trade from their parents.

The PNQF supports the continuing education and training of teachers of TVET. TESDA has developed a dual¹, modular system of training for TVET teachers based on a curriculum developed according to competency standards in the TVET sub-framework of the PQF. Assessment is conducted based on evidence of work performance judged against industry standards. The system allows for recognition of prior learning (RPL), and allows learners to enter and exit at different times/levels and to receive an award for competences attained at any point. Approved training programmes are nationally accredited.

The PNQF also supports post-TVET bridging programmes. These provide an efficient way for students to earn credits towards higher education and increase their employability. They are designed to furnish students with the skills, knowledge and attitudes required by their current or desired job or course of study (Isaac, 2011).

In order to address the issue of RPL, the Philippines has developed an alternative learning system (ALS) which awards the same qualifications and credits as the formal system. Assessment in this system is based on portfolio, interview and/or written examination. Alternative learning programmes exist within all subsectors of the education and training system. For basic education, there is the

¹ School and workplace.

Philippine Education Placement Test for Basic Education Level. For higher academic education, there is the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Programme for Baccalaureate and Master Levels. There is the Competency Assessment and Certification for the Technical and Vocational Education and Training System.

6. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The ASEAN Qualifications and Reference Framework (AQRf) Task Force is working towards a regional framework

7. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

The PNQF is an important tool for education and training reform in the Philippines. It harmonizes qualifications across the country, ensuring transparency in training provision and conformity with nationally fixed standards. It enables both workers and employers to understand policies relating to credit transfer, articulation between academic and vocational education, portability, bridges, pathways and the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning. For public authorities, the PNQF provides quality assurance mechanisms for granting accreditation to providers and stakeholders.

The future plans are for NCC to meet regularly to keep track of the four working groups. In turn, the working groups develop their own work plans and targets and report periodically to the NCC.

Industry sector representatives will be consulted and tapped in the detailing and application of the PQF to ensure alignment of educational outcomes to job requirements (Sec. 4, EO No. 83 s.2012).

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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