

VIET NAM

A working committee has been established and tasked with developing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF). This committee brings together representatives from the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA), the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and other related government departments. The key design actors are MoLISA together with social and professional organizations. Agreements have been reached as to which Ministry will be in charge of which part of the framework. The unified NQF, which will be submitted to the Prime Minister for endorsement by April 2014 is expected to further regional and international recognition of Vietnamese qualifications, thus facilitating educational and labour mobility for Vietnamese citizens.

In the meanwhile, the Vietnamese TVET system is governed by a 5-level National Occupational Skills Standards framework (NOSS). The NOSS is used to create linkages between vocational qualifications and the domestic and international job market. The NOSS will form the basis of the NVQF. The NQF will be established incrementally once better articulation between academic and vocational education and training pathways are established.

1. CHALLENGES THE NQF WOULD NEED TO ADDRESS

In Viet Nam, as in the other rapidly developing economies that comprise the Association of the South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the demand for skilled workers is continuously increasing. Since the introduction of market reforms and the consequent economic expansion known as *Doi Moi*, Viet Nam has had to cope with a serious shortage of skilled workers, largely because the TVET system has been unable to produce sufficient numbers of qualified workers for the labour market. One reason for this is that TVET offered in formal educational settings in Viet Nam often lacks a workplace orientation. Curricula are built around knowledge and skills that do not correspond to labour market and employer demands. Courses are divorced from real-life practice and do not incorporate workplace or industry placements, making it difficult for learners to gain the requisite experience.

Under the influence of international agencies such as UNESCO and the International Labour Organization (ILO), Viet Nam has pursued a strategy of outcomes-based TVET reform to address the skills deficit, starting with modular curriculum pilot projects (Freeland and Vu, 1996). The current NOSS framework has been developed with the direct assistance and involvement of donors and international agencies, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the German Organization for Technical Cooperation (GIZ) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as well as numerous bilateral partners (TVET Program Viet Nam, 2009).

The *Vietnamese Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2011-2020* identifies high-quality human resource development as a strategic national priority (GDVT, 2012b). With this goal in

mind, Viet Nam is currently in the process of reforming its technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system in order to make it better suited to the needs of today's society and economy, both within and outside of Viet Nam.

2. MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS), which will form the basis of the NVQF, were developed according to Decision No. 09/QD-BLDTBXH dated 27 March 2008. Their objectives are:¹

- to link vocational training and the job market;
- to provide enterprises with valuable information about the skills and performance of both potential and current employees, allowing them to make easier and more effective decisions regarding recruitment and payment;
- to improve the status and salaries of employees;
- to ensure that assessment and the issuing of national occupational skills certificates are carried out by competent authorities.

3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

MoLISA has been designated as responsible for setting principles, procedures and guidelines and for inspecting and managing NOSS in cooperation with social and professional organizations. Viet Nam will also establish a National Skills Standard Developing Committee (NDC) with representatives from national authorities, social partners, trade associations and scientists. Skills qualifications will be issued in agreement with MoLISA.

Vietnam has two organizations for the accreditation of qualifications: the General Department of Vocational Training (GDVT) and MOET's Department of Testing and Accreditation (Bateman, et al. 2012). MOET requires all technical and vocational colleges, senior colleges and universities to publish comprehensive information regarding quality assurance, expenditure and income and training quality (learning outcomes) on their own websites. This is called the 'three disclosures requirement'. GDVT has established a dedicated unit to take charge of new qualifications, quality assurance and national planning.

4. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS AND THE USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

NOSS levels are based on 3 major groups of criteria:

- i) the scope, level of difficulty and complexity of a task;
- ii) the degree of flexibility and creativity in task performance;
- iii) the level of coordination and responsibility in task performance. See Table 1 below.

¹ See also Chi Truong, 2012; GDVT, 2012*b*, p. 16; Bateman et al., 2012.

Table 1: Level Descriptors of the Framework for the National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS)

Certificate	Principles defined by Decision 9
Certificate 1	<p>Certificate 1: Can perform simple, repetitive tasks. Demonstrates basic knowledge of technology and is able to apply this knowledge. Can receive instructions and take limited responsibility for tasks. Requires direct supervision.</p>
Certificate 2	<p>Certificate 2: Can perform simple and repetitive tasks along with some more complicated tasks. Demonstrates basic and some specialized knowledge of technology and is able to apply this knowledge to solve typical on-the-job issues. Can consider, predict and explain information. Can work in a team and sometimes independently. Takes responsibility for outcome and output.</p>
Certificate 3	<p>Certificate 3: Can perform most complex tasks independently without supervision. Demonstrates both basic and specialized knowledge of technology and is able to apply this knowledge to solve typical on-the-job issues. Can identify, analyze and evaluate information. Can supervise and instruct a work team whilst taking responsibility for weld quality and team output.</p>
Certificate 4	<p>Certificate 4: Can perform most complex tasks independently without supervision. Demonstrates a broad knowledge of technology and the skills, knowledge and initiative required to deal with complex technical issues. Can interpret results of analysis and assessment, and can use these results to make recommendations and provide input to research and management. Can lead a work team, taking responsibility for all operations and for weld quality and team output.</p>
Certificate 5	<p>Certificate 5: Can perform all tasks fluently, skilfully, independently and with total self-control. Demonstrates a comprehensive knowledge of technology. Can analyze, forecast and design in order to solve both technical and management issues. Can interpret results of analysis and assessment. Can take the initiative to manage and lead a team, taking responsibility for team output and ensuring that weld quality and workmanship are in accordance with specified standards.</p>

Source: GDVT (2008).

Note: Decision 9 refers to Decision No. 09/QD-BLDTBXH dated 27 March 2008 concerning the development and issuance of National Occupational Skills Standards.

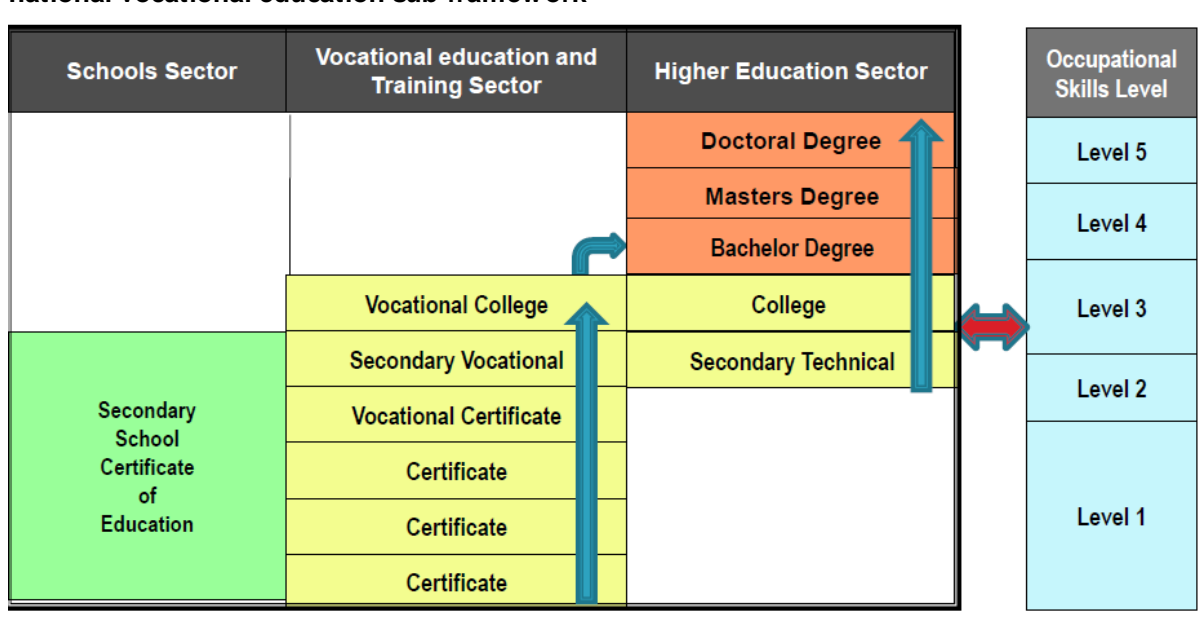
The structure of NOSS consists of three parts:

- An **occupation description** covering scope, working position, working conditions and environment, context of task performance, and necessary tools, machines, equipment and devices for task performance.
- A **list of tasks** enumerating the tasks to be performed and arranging them by skill level.
- **Standards** on task performance, covering task description, performance criteria, essential skills and knowledge, performance conditions, and criteria and methods for evaluation (GDTV, 2012, p. 18).

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

Viet Nam does not yet have a unified National Qualifications Framework. However, one of the models proposed for a Vietnamese NQF can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The proposed model for a unified National Qualifications Framework and national vocational education sub-framework



Source: Cao Quang Dai and Bui The Dung, 2011.

Certification of skills is regulated under Circular No. 15/2001/TT-BLDTBXH dated 10 May 2011 (GDVT, 2011). Testing for certification will take place at GDVT-licensed testing centres. Testing projects will be developed for the certification of each skill level in every occupation. Procedures to develop the testing projects are regulated by Decision No. 571/QD-TCDN dated 3 November 2012 (GDVT, 2012a). By 2012, 14 testing centres had been approved and 40 testing projects developed. By 2020 it is expected that 400 Occupational Standards will have been set and certificates issued to about 6 million workers (Nguyen Chi Truong, 2012).

Non-formal education and training constitute an integral part of the education and training system in Viet Nam (MOET, 2006). Non-formal education is the responsibility of the Continuing Education Department. It includes literacy and post-literacy for adults, non-formal basic education equivalency programmes, and life-skills programmes conducted through community learning centres (CLC) for youths and adults who lack access to formal education or have dropped out of formal school (ibid.). Since 1997 a number of open universities and open faculties have been established to develop distant or part-time education for those unable to enrol in full-time higher education courses.

The MOET has developed a proposal that requires all Vietnamese tertiary educational institutions to adopt an outcomes-based approach in their educational programmes (MOET, op. cit.) and to develop mechanisms for the recognition and validation of non-formal learning. The latter may lead to exemptions from entry requirements or from parts of a formal learning programme. Learners may also be granted some credit towards qualifications as a result of recognition of their prior learning.

Steps are also being taken to promote lifelong learning in the workplace. A number of factories and companies have established continuing training centres where their workers can acquire new knowledge and skills (MOET, op. cit.). The portfolio method is a documentation system adopted in these centres that allows learners to identify and make visible their own competences, building their confidence and broadening their employment options for the future. Moreover, workplace training benefits organizations as well as workers by allowing them to observe and recognize the competences of their staff. The information thus gained can be taken into consideration for staff development and personnel planning.

6. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

One of the chief motivations for the development of the NQF is to facilitate labour migration in the ASEAN region, as well as to harmonize skills standards and qualifications across the ASEAN member states. At the 17th ASEAN Summit in 2010 in Hanoi, on Viet Nam's initiative, ASEAN leaders approved the *Joint Declaration of Human Resources and Skills for Economic Recovery and Development*.

In 2010, Viet Nam, Laos and Thailand agreed to create a framework for mutual recognition of qualifications and technical skills in three occupations. This regional policy was called *Implementing the Strategic Framework and the Action Plan for Human Resource Development in the Greater Mekong Subregion*, and was funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The three occupations concerned are: (1) Room and building attendance (performed by Laos and Thailand); (2) Automobile technology (performed by Viet Nam, Laos and Thailand) and (3) Welding (performed by Laos and Viet Nam). As a result of this agreement, some trainees in each of the three countries were recognized and issued with certificates.

The government considers this policy an encouraging start on which to build. A number of subsequent steps are envisaged, including the development of a general framework of standards for certain popular occupations. Mutual recognition of qualifications and certificates among the ASEAN countries will result in more effective transfer of labour, which will contribute to the goal of forming an ASEAN economic community by 2015.

8. LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE PLANS

The government views the development of the NQF and NVQF as an important step towards improving the relevance and quality of vocational training in Viet Nam. The country is working towards the NQF and NVQF incrementally. An important building block is the designing of the National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS) which will form the basis of the NVQF. The NVQF levels will in turn need to correspond to the levels of the academic/educational qualifications so as to come up with a unified NQF.

However, important challenges remain. Initially, industry stakeholders played an active role in designing the National Occupational Skills Standards, but now this task is largely being performed by training institutions. This limits NOSS' labour market relevance, the very factor that was identified as crucial to Viet Nam's educational reform. A regulatory framework is therefore urgently required to designate tasks and responsibilities for enterprises, both helping

and compelling them to resume an active role in designing the content of occupational standards.

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