

Promoting Mutual Trust Between Countries through National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)

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A Qualifications Framework is an instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies based on a range of agreed criteria and levels. It is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications and part qualifications, which are defined by different types of learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are clear statements of what a learner must know or be able to do whether learned in a classroom, on-the-job, workshops, seminars or other life experiences, or less formally.

The Qualifications Framework indicates the comparability of different qualifications not only nationally but also internationally; and how learners can progress from one level to another, within and across occupations or industrial sectors.

The development of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) is now receiving considerable international attention. Some of the first countries to develop national qualifications frameworks in the early 1990s included: South Africa, Australia, New

Zealand, Scotland and Ireland. However, over the last twenty years this interest has extended to other parts of the world as countries seek ways to effectively manage the movement of labour across borders.

The development of NQFs has been a major international trend in reforming national education and training systems since the late 1990s. In some cases, it is even regarded as a possible tool, to address concerns of the poor articulation between qualifications and actual skills needs in the workplace and rectify the poor credibility and quality of existing qualifications and training programmes. But while an NQF can be a useful tool in addressing access to lifelong learning and a number of skills challenges, its implementation in a country needs to be fit-for-purpose with clear objectives in mind for it to be successful.

In an increasingly interconnected world, fostering mutual trust between countries is crucial for international co-operation and development. NQFs serve as powerful tools in this endeavour by providing transparent and comparable frameworks for educational qualifications.

Here's how NQFs contribute to building mutual trust:

1. Transparency and Comparability:

NQFs establish clear guidelines and standards for educational qualifications, part qualifications and micro-credentials within a country. By aligning educational levels and qualifications across different educational systems, NQFs enable countries to understand and compare each other's educational achievements with greater clarity and objectivity. This transparency reduces ambiguity and facilitates mutual recognition of qualifications, thereby enhancing trust in the quality and relevance of educational credentials.

2. Facilitating Mobility and Recognition:

One of the primary objectives of NQFs is to facilitate the mobility of learners and workers across borders. When countries adopt compatible NQFs, they streamline the process of recognizing qualifications obtained abroad. This mutual recognition not only benefits individuals seeking educational or professional opportunities in foreign countries but also promotes trust between governments and institutions by ensuring that educational standards meet internationally accepted criteria.

3. Enhancing Collaboration in Education and Research:

By promoting a common understanding of educational levels and qualifications, NQFs encourage collaboration between countries in the fields of education, research, and innovation. Institutions and researchers can more easily engage in joint projects, exchange programs, and partnerships, confident in the equivalence and rigor of qualifications recognized under NQFs. This collaborative environment fosters trust through shared academic standards and practices.

4. Supporting Economic Integration and Development:

Trust in the qualifications awarded by different countries is essential for economic integration and development initiatives. NQFs help create a level playing field by ensuring that educational and vocational qualifications are comparable and respected across borders. This trust facilitates the movement of skilled labor, encourages investment in education and training, and supports economic growth by enabling countries to efficiently utilize human capital across international markets.

5. Promoting Lifelong Learning and Continuous Improvement:

NQFs promote a culture of lifelong learning by providing pathways for individuals to acquire new skills and qualifications throughout their careers. This commitment to continuous improvement enhances trust between countries by demonstrating a shared dedication to educational excellence and adaptability in response to global challenges and opportunities.

Conclusion

National Qualifications Frameworks play an important role in promoting mutual trust between countries by establishing transparent, comparable, and internationally recognized standards for educational qualifications. By facilitating mobility, enhancing collaboration, supporting economic integration, and promoting lifelong learning, NQFs contribute to building a global community founded on mutual respect and understanding. It is important to note that frameworks are not set in stone but need continuous further development and adaptation to changing environments and available resources. For all these decisions learning from the experiences from other countries is necessary. Increasingly, as also educational systems and labour markets are becoming international, there is a need to secure transparency and comparability between national frameworks. As countries continue to adopt and refine their NQFs, they reinforce their commitment to fostering trust and cooperation on a global scale.

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