



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Final observations and the way forward

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Peer learning conference:

**Do National qualifications frameworks make a
difference?**

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Some statements...

- We are not flying blind – we are walking reflectively....
- NQF = No Quick Fix....
- Don't oversell NQFs.....
- Perhaps is impact too strong a word – perhaps we should speak of the contributions made by NQFs



Observations on positive impact....

NQFs have influenced cross-sectoral cooperation; have brought together stakeholders; facilitated linking of policies and starts to take on a bridging function....

NQFs have benefitted VET; has contributed to better equivalence between VET and other types of qualifications; have made Higher VET (EQF 5-8) more



Observations on positive impact....

NQFs have strengthened the learning outcomes and competence approach in education and training; they have facilitated a more systematic approach; improved equivalence between types of qualifications

NQFs have strengthened and facilitated the implementation of validation/Recognition of prior learning



Observations on negative impact....

Few NQFs reach individual citizens, learners, students. The awareness among end-users is still too weak; we have built the 'back office' but given too little attention to the 'front office'

Learning outcomes have in some cases been implemented 'on paper' but not always in reality; still resistance (from politicians, teachers, students); the approach can not be taken for granted



Observations on impact research

Four aspects:

- What is to be researched?
- Why research?
- Who should research?
- How can we do research?



What is to be researched?

When researching impact of NQFs, it must be observed that they are:

- Complex and multi-purpose
- Always embedded in (national) context
- Always evolving and developing in phases/moving from design and implementation to operation (and possible impact)
- Their starting point will vary and reflect the (strength of) the system in which they operate



Why do we research?

Research:

- Facilitates evidence informed policy development (not evidence based)
- Should be planned from the beginning; it should not wait until impacts have been achieved, it supports the reflective walking...
- Allows stakeholders to revise, to revisit, to challenge, to legitimize...



Who should do the research?

Research must be based on:

- A combination of impartiality/independence and insider's insight
- External and independent researchers and insightful insiders



How to do the research?

Some existing weaknesses

- Lack of empirically strong research
- Ill defined entities of research
- Ideological bias
- Over-emphasis on descriptions
- Existing quantitative data not used – over-emphasis on qualitative methods ('stories')



How to do the research?

- Time is always a factor when researching NQFs, sequencing is needed, the evolution of QFs must be taken into account
- Never study NQF in isolation. It is necessary to understand the conditions for impact (and use 'surrounding data')
- Avoid focussing on results alone, also focus on process
- The purposes of the framework, and how they are prioritised, will and should influence the research



How to do the research?

- Avoid narrow scientism
- Do not expect direct causality
- 'Meaning' is important, numbers and stories should be combined and in balance
- A theory of change is needed, pure description is insufficient
- Detailed models for description have been developed and can be used



Proposals

- Immediately carry out literature review to make use of academic research
- Provide an overview over existing evaluations, their purposes and methodologies
- Facilitate independent research through national and/or European programmes to support independent research
- Use Erasmus to support wide and diverse research in countries and between clusters of countries
- Connect research on NQFs to research in 'neighbouring areas' to capture the 'surrounding' context this instrument operates in
- European cooperation; partnerships between researchers; experts and policy makers
- Link between impact studies and EQF referencing?