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European Inventory on NQF 2012
TURKEY

Introduction

A comprehensive NQF (Turkish qualifications framework, TQF) is being developed in Turkey. It aims to bring together a national vocational qualification system (NVQS), led by the vocational qualifications Authority, a qualifications framework for higher education, developed in the Bologna process, and integrate them with the qualifications awarded by Ministry of National Education. Draft level descriptors for a comprehensive framework have been prepared.

Passing the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) Law (No 5544, 2006) was the most important legal stage for developing a national vocational qualification system of labour market oriented qualifications. Through this law, a tripartite Vocational Qualifications Authority was established in 2006, coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security with a wider range of stakeholders, including the Ministry of National Education. Its main objective was to develop the national vocational qualification system and framework, based on occupational standards and with strong sectoral involvement.

According to the law amendment (November 2011), the NQF is defined as 'Principles of qualification designed in compliance with the EQF; and gained through vocational, general and academic education and training programmes including primary, secondary and higher education as well as other learning routes.' By this definition it is clearer that NQF (TQF) is a comprehensive framework, comprising all qualifications from all learning paths. Another new law article determines the scope of the qualifications to be included in the NQF (TQF) as all quality assured qualifications are to be incorporated.

The main challenge is to link these qualification systems and processes in a coherent and comprehensive national qualifications framework. Developments of national standards and cooperation and coordination between the Vocational Qualifications Authority, Ministry of National Education and the Council of Higher Education is crucial to development of a more coherent national qualification system.

Main policy objectives

Setting up a national qualification system and national qualifications framework is seen as an important instrument to support national reforms in education and qualifications. According to government programme documents, including the action plan for the strengthening of relationship between education and employment, one of the main objectives of creating an NQF is to reduce mismatches and increase effective employment and training programmes.

Compared to EU Member States, employment in Turkey is still low, especially among women; at 23.8% (2008) this is well below the lowest EU performers (ETF (2010) ([1]). Also, educational attainment of the population is still low ([2]) compared to EU Member States.

The VET system is undergoing major reform with substantial EU support; development of occupational standards, which are the basis for validating non-formal learning, is under way. Educational standards, defined by the Ministry of National Education, are different from those used in the system of vocational qualifications, under the remit of the Vocational Qualifications Authority (European Commission et al., 2010, Turkey, p. 1) ([3]). However, they are increasingly being used for reform of VET standards and curricula. After the process of aligning national curricula with occupational standards and the quality assurance of training institutions is completed, schools will be allowed not only to issue the school certificate, but also a secondary level vocational qualification (European Commission et al., 2010, Turkey, p. 1).

The following policy objectives are addressed by developing the NQF:

· to strengthen the relationship between education and training and employment;
· to develop national standards based on learning outcomes;
· to encourage quality assurance in training and education;
· to provide qualifications for vertical and horizontal transfers and develop national and international comparability platforms;
· to ensure access to learning, advances in learning, and recognition and comparability of learning;
· to support lifelong learning.

On a short-term basis, all new VQA qualifications developed according to the new legislation (Law 5544) will be included in the NVQS.

In the medium-term, it is expected that all formal qualifications (secondary and higher education diplomas and other qualifications) will be placed in a single comprehensive TQF, consisting of three subframeworks; progression between all kinds of qualifications will be possible. One of the expected benefits is that, through the NQF, the qualifications will be more labour-market oriented and dynamic. For individuals, the NQF will provide career mobility, flexibility, all kinds of learning activities to be valued, and progression routes to be clearly defined.

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[1] *Country information note 2010: Turkey.* 2010, p. 2.
http://www.etf.europa.eu/pubmgmt.nsf/(getAttachment)/371E87C744EDB330C125773800300A15/$File/NOTE864C9X.pdf [accessed 5.12.2012].

[2] According to Eurostat data for 2010 only 28.4% of the population (aged 24-65) completed upper secondary education, and reducing early school leaving (46.6% for age 18-24) is a big challenge.

[3] *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2010: country report: Turkey.* http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77657.pdf [accessed 26.11.2012].

Stakeholder involvement and framework implementation

The work on NQF development was initiated by the Ministry of National Education in 2005 through the EQF consultation process. Since the Vocational Qualifications Authority was established in 2006, it has been coordinating the process together with the Ministry of National Education, the Council of Higher Education and other stakeholders.

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The VQA become operational in 2007, governed by an assembly and executive board. Employee, employer and professional organisations are members of the executive board of the VQA with representatives from government: the Ministries of Labour and Education, and the Council of Higher Education.

The Council of Higher Education is in charge of developing a qualifications framework for higher education.

As Turkey has decided to adopt a more comprehensive approach and to link better initial VET and the emerging national vocational qualification system, an NQF Preparation Commission was established in August 2010. Its main task was to prepare a proposal for a comprehensive NQF. In April 2011 a Feedback Forum consisting of 80 relevant institutions was established to provide feedback to the NQF development studies and a two-day briefing event was held to inform the members of the forum about the NQF concept and recent studies in Turkey. During the second half of 2011 and mid 2012 an NQF (TQF) consultation paper was prepared consisting of all the technical and administrative issues related to TQF and presented to the Feedback Forum members and other main stakeholders. Consultation was carried out during summer to obtain comments and advice from forum members and the general public.

All the comments and advice of the various institutions and experts was gathered and taken into consideration by the NQF working group. The TQF consultation paper is being turned into a white paper for approval.

Another study being carried out parallel to TQF White Paper preparation is the development of secondary legislation for the TQF which will be implemented following

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([4]) The certificates awarded under the VQA system are different from awards in formal education and can be provided via a process of validation. The process of aligning formal and non-formal curricula with the standards in this system continues. Once the system of standards is developed, qualifications in the formal system will be aligned with those used in the VQA system. For more information see *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2010: country report: Turkey.* p 1. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2011/77657.pdf [accessed 5.12.2012].

Cabinet approval. All of the issues regarding the development, implementation, management and updating of the TQF will be set out in the secondary legislation. A first draft of the regulation is prepared and there will be consultation with relevant public and social institutions in November 2012.

Apart from the Vocational Qualifications Authority, responsible for developing national occupational standards and vocational qualifications to be placed at levels 1-7, except for the regulated occupations defined in the Law Article 1 ([5]), there are two further bodies responsible for education and national qualifications in Turkey. The Ministry of National Education is responsible for developing qualifications up to the fifth level and The Council of Higher Education is an autonomous public body responsible for planning, steering, governing and supervising higher education institutions and qualifications. An independent Quality Assurance Agency is planned.

Level descriptors and learning outcomes

The proposed draft NQF consists of eight levels defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence. Knowledge is defined as theoretical and/or practical knowledge involving the comprehension of facts, principles, theories and practice. Skill is defined as utilisation of knowledge, problem solving, transferring knowledge and skills to others which requires the ability to use logical, intuitive and creative thinking and dexterity, method, material, tools and instruments. Competence is defined as utilisation of knowledge and skills in an area of work and/or learning by taking responsibility and/or displaying autonomy, determination and satisfaction in learning requirements. Descriptors are still under discussion.

Higher education has determined descriptors in terms of learning outcomes, which are compatible with EQF and QF-EHEA. Competence is further divided into four components: autonomy and responsibility, learning to learn, field specific competences, and social and communication skills with an emphasis on foreign language competences and ICT.

The learning outcomes approach is seen as an essential part of the development of the TQF and is the stated intention of current reform in all subsystems of education and training, supported by main stakeholders. The Ministry of National Education has launched curriculum reform in secondary education (for both general and vocational and technical schools). Vocational qualifications will be learning outcome based.

A format for national occupational standards (NOS) was determined and describes labour market needs in terms of duties and tasks with corresponding performance criteria. At present, 351 occupational standards ([6]) have been approved, mainly at level 2 to 5: an important positive aspect is that labour market actors have been significantly involved in these processes. Qualifications developed from occupational standards are described in

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([5]) VQA Law Article 1 paragraph 2 defines these professions: medical doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, veterinary doctors, engineers and architects as well as any other professions requiring education on a graduate level as a minimum, for which conditions for inception of respective professions are regulated by law.

([6]) http:///www.myk.gov.tr [accessed 5.12.2012].

terms of learning outcomes and recently 120 national qualifications were approved by the VQA. Awarding criteria for bodies setting vocational qualifications were established.

The learning outcome approach is an essential part of the implementation of the NQF for higher education.

A system for validating non-formal learning is at development and piloting stage. The NQF and Vocational Qualifications Authority will play the key role (European Commission et al., 2010, Turkey).

Referencing to the EQF

According to the work plan, the referencing process will start at the end of 2012 following the official approval of the TQF. A working group will be established consisting of national and international independent experts and a draft referencing report is expected to be prepared by mid-2013.

Important lessons and the way forward

A very important condition for establishing an NQF is to have clear responsibilities, defined roles and a coordination body which has a clear mandate. The first step was reaching agreement on establishing the Vocational Qualifications Authority in Turkey in charge of developing and implementing the national vocational qualification system.

As the ultimate goal is to introduce a single comprehensive national framework, encompassing all stages of formal and all kinds of informal learning, it will also be important to develop an effective and sustainable cooperation between stakeholders across all three sectors. Strengthening and adjusting governance structures are also needed and are being discussed. The TQF regulation deals with all of the issues mentioned above and strengthens the basis for TQF.

One important objective of the TQF is to use it as vehicle for developing new occupational standards and qualifications, required by the labour market, and to use them for validation and reform of curricula. To retrain employer engagement in qualifications development seems crucial.

The other challenge is to develop the quality assurance of learning outcomes of education and training underpinning the whole TQF. This would require development of some comprehensive quality assurance approaches and mechanisms in the future.

Main sources of information
The Vocational Qualification Authority is the NCP. Information is available on its website. www.myk.gov.tr [accessed 7.10.2012].
For QF for higher education detailed information is available on its website. http://bologna.yok.gov.tr [accessed 7.10.2012].