

Peer learning conference Thessaloniki 9-10 November 2017

Do national qualifications frameworks make a
difference? Measuring and evaluating NQF impact

Guidelines for working group session 1

The peer learning conference focuses on the following key question:

What would be lost if your country did not have an NQF? Do national qualifications frameworks make a difference in policies and practices and to the learners and citizens they are supposed to benefit?

In the first working group session, this question will be addressed from the policy-makers' perspective – looking at the NQFs from the perspective of the stakeholders involved in their development and implementation. It is important to acknowledge the particular character and purpose of NQFs as multilevel, dynamic and evolving tools; their objectives might change over time. Comprehensive frameworks, such as those now developing in Europe, address multiple stakeholders, interests and objectives, sometimes pointing in different directions. These objectives might also differ in relation to different parts of the education, training and qualification system, e.g. in relation to VET, HE or general education. Finally, it is important to explore how NQFs interact with the specific political, institutional and social contexts in which they operate. It is important to discuss whether, and to what extent, the original purposes of NQFs have been achieved.

We can observe that different countries operate with different purposes for their NQFs. As pointed out in Cedefop's monitoring reports (2009-2017) ⁽¹⁾, there is a clear difference between those seeing their NQFs as instruments for better describing qualifications (transparency and communication) and those seeing them as instruments for reform. The monitoring reports also point out that that this distinction between communication and reform frameworks gets somewhat blurred as frameworks become operational. Policy-makers are expected to account for the consequences of their decisions. In the case of NQFs, this will inevitably involve brokering between political interests and research findings.

⁽¹⁾ <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/national-qualifications-framework-nqf>

Given this difference in the stated purposes of NQFs, the working group should address the following specific questions.

- (a) What were the original purposes for the NQF? Have these changed? If yes, in which direction?
- (b) In which areas are NQFs making a difference today and in which areas is impact less visible?
- (c) In which areas do you expect NQFs to make a difference in the future?
- (d) What conditions are necessary for NQFs to make a difference?
- (e) To what extent are NQFs accepted as a permanent, integrated part of education and training (and employment) systems?

Structure of the working group session

The first working group session will address these questions from the perspective of the policy-makers, i.e. the stakeholders involved in setting up and operating the frameworks (national education and employment authorities, NQF implementation agencies, social partners, etc.). The discussion will be divided into three main sections:

- (a) presentation of two countries in each working group followed by a Q&A session (30 minutes);
- (b) discussion in smaller groups of five to six participants covering different cases of NQFs (45 minutes);
- (c) summary of discussions (15 minutes).

The summary of discussions will be delivered in the form of four to six key points from each small group to be presented to the overall working group.