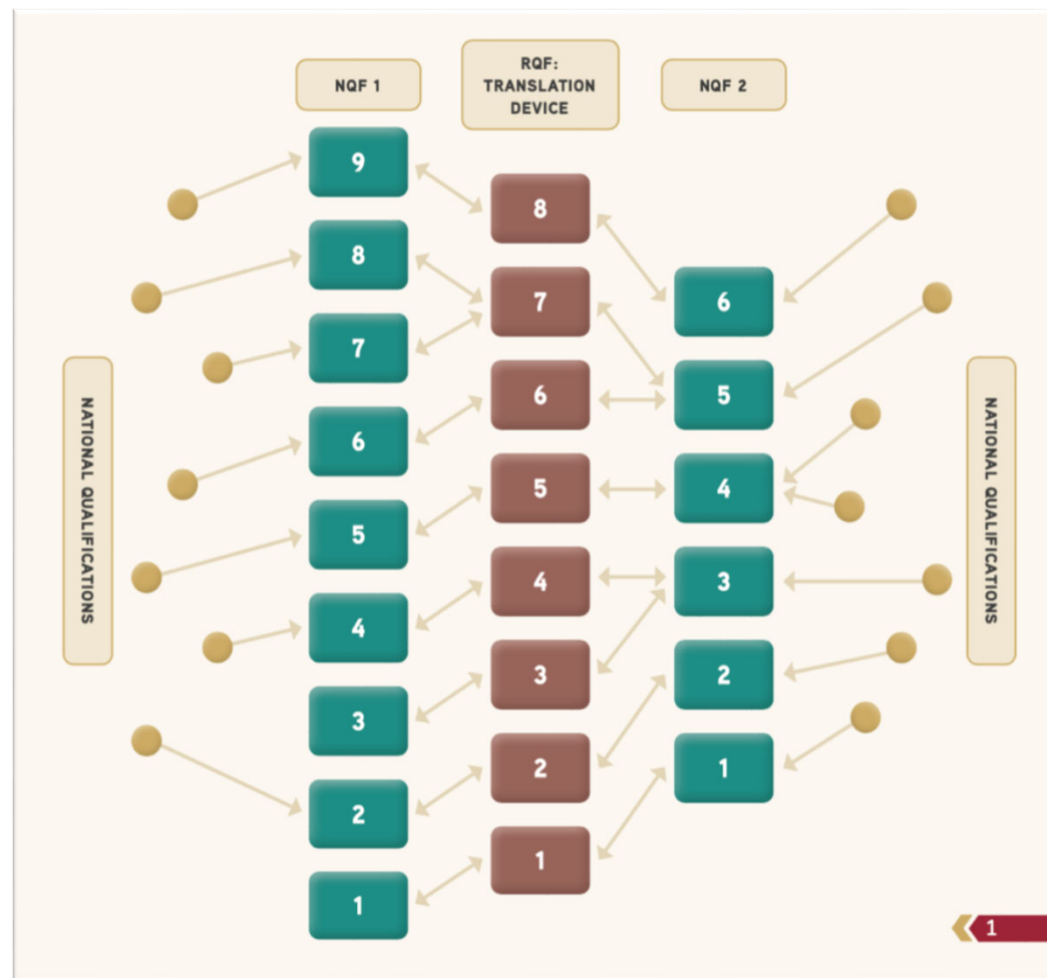


CINTERFOR TRAINING COURSE

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL
QUALIFICATIONS
FRAMEWORKS

EDUARDA CASTEL-BRANCO

29/07/2021



WORK, TASKS, SKILLS, LEARNING ARE IN TRANSFORMATION

- **Social media manager, Airbnb host, influencer, SEO specialist, app developer, Uber driver, driverless car engineer, podcast producer and drone operator, data scientist, telemedicine, Covid-19 tester...**

- These are just some of the jobs that did not exist 2-10 years ago.
- Changing tasks requiring new combination of humans-machines-AI: new skills
- Hybrid skills genome of jobs
- Climate change, greening: green jobs and skills
- Changing mix of occupations in the economy and changing mix of skills in existing occupations
- Half of us will need re- and upskilling – Post-Covid-19 recovery and build back better



ECOSYSTEM: WORK AND LEARNING - SKILLED HUMAN RESOURCES (PEOPLE)



Occupations, skills, qualifications

Types of skills:
occupational
(job) specific;
transversal;
emerging; digital;
green; social...

Policy issues: skill
mismatch: gaps,
shortage; over- &
under-qualification;



ISCO 08: JOBS & OCCUPATIONS

❖ Jobs

- A set of tasks or duties performed by a person (for an employer or in self-employment)

❖ Occupations

- The kind of work performed in a job
- A set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterized by a high degree of similarity.



QUALIFICATIONS



AND QUALIFICATIONS
FRAMEWORKS



PURPOSES OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Signal to employers what holders know and are able to do (“learning outcomes”)
- May be a prerequisite to access certain professions (regulated)
- Education and training providers / bodies: help determine level and content of learning achieved by an individual; validation of learning outcomes
- Expression of personal achievement
- Progress in study and professional life
- Lifelong learning: multiple ways of leaning
- Validation of skills from experience
- Employability
- Mobility: between jobs, study paths, countries



QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

DIFFERENT SCOPES

National

- Inclusive, comprehensive
 - Fully integrated
 - Amalgamation of sub-frameworks under 1 inclusive NQF

Sectoral

- Higher education
- Technical-vocational education and training

REGIONAL

QUALIFICATIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

Qualifications: means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards

National qualifications framework: means a policy and instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society;

COMPONENTS OF NQF: A SYSTEM

MAP OF REFERENCE LEVELS

GOVERNANCE, STEERING, PARTICIPATION

FUNCTIONING: RULES, TOOLS

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

QUALITY ASSURANCE

MIS: REGISTER, DB QUALIFICATIONS

MONITORING SYSTEM

ROLE OF NQF...

NQF are:

- ...to better describe existing systems (Transparency)
- ...tool for modernising education and training systems (Reform)
- Require:
 - Intellectual scrutiny
 - Adequate resourcing
 - Democratic participation
 - *“Made by walking reflectively, accountably and boldly” (SAQA)*

NQF are not:

- Quick fixes for all issues of Education and training systems (N-Q-F)
- Stand-alone tools – disconnected from the “eco-system”
- “Documents”...without action and accountability

REGIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

- “RQF: A broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification in another country” (ASEAN QRF

- Regional qualifications frameworks are sometimes known as **transnational qualifications frameworks, meta frameworks or common reference frameworks**.
- These frameworks are developed in communities of countries mainly to facilitate **mutual trust in qualifications and to make qualifications systems more understandable**.
- In doing so they aim to enhance learner and worker mobility and to support other shared initiatives such as **credit transfer systems or free trade agreements related to goods and services**.

RQF AIMS

- RQFs, have grown out of communities of countries with an aim ‘to facilitate mutual trust in qualifications and promote student and worker mobility; therefore, they are linked to other initiatives related to mutual recognition of qualifications, of goods and of services’.
- To develop a common understanding and strengthen transparency of member country qualifications.
- Seek commonalities and clarify differences.
- Build mutual trust across the community of countries.
- Countries that have a regional, economic or social identity, or wish to see one develop, have cooperated in the development of regional qualifications frameworks (RQFs).



RQF initiatives identified and investigated

1. African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)	9. Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Eastern Africa
2. Arab Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (AQF; ANQAHE Model)	10. Marco de cualificaciones Alianza del Pacífico (Pacific Alliance) (MCAP)
3. ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)	11. Marco de Cualificaciones para la Educación superior centroamericana (MCESCA)
4. CARICOM Qualifications Framework (CQF)	12. Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards/Pacific Qualifications Framework (PQF)
5. Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement supérieur (CAMES) ⁸	13. Southern African Development Community (SADC) Qualifications Framework
6. ECOWAS Regional Qualifications Framework of West Africa	14. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Regional Qualifications Framework
7. East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE)	15. Transnational Qualifications Framework for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (TQF VUSSC)
8. Gulf Qualifications Framework (GQF)	



NQF

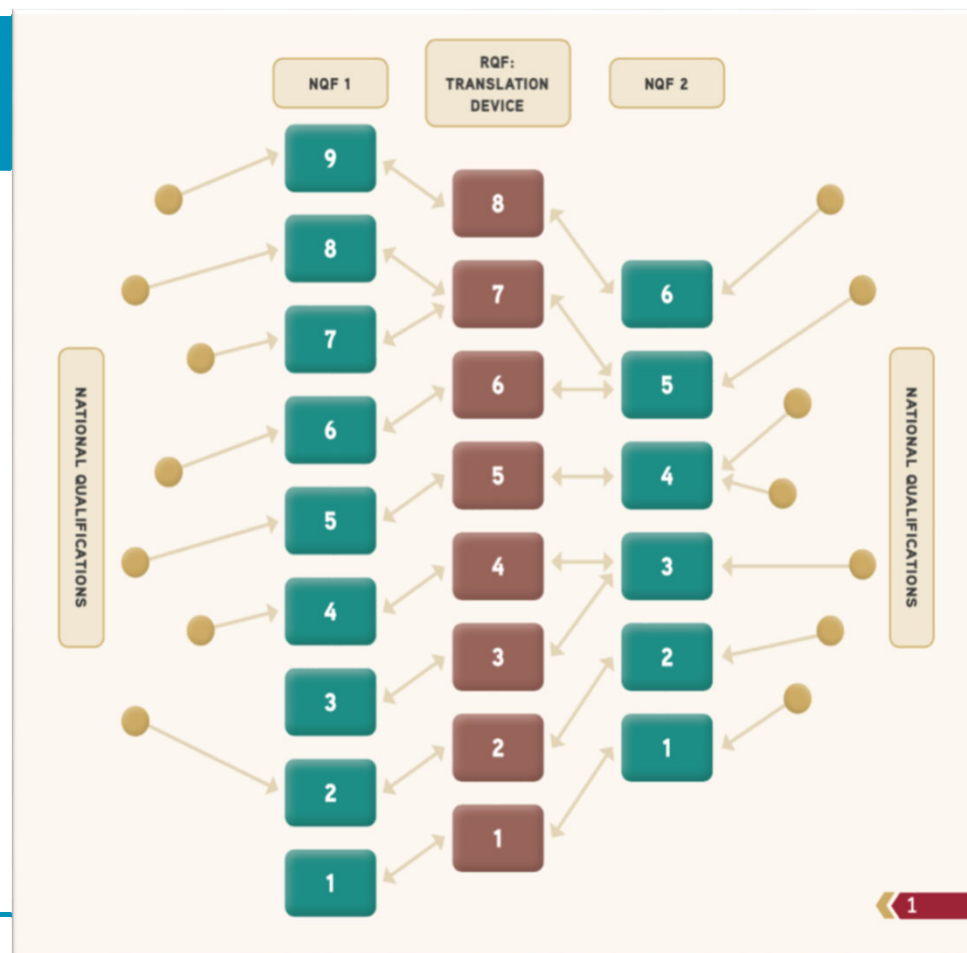


RQF



RQF - NQF

- RQFs that are common reference frameworks or meta frameworks have different functions to that of NQFs.
- RQFs are seen more as a translation device by which countries can compare their levels and their qualifications



RQF AS ENABLERS OF NQF

- A key underpinning concept of any RQF is that they **support and add value** to NQFs or national qualifications systems.
- There appears to be an acceptance view that the regional initiatives (that is the development and implementation of an RQF) provides **a strong avenue for facilitating policy learning** across the community of countries
- RQFs 'have a **coordinating effect** and this is often due to the **guidance** offered to countries on the commonalities and differences between the national approach and the approaches in other countries'.
- RQFs **do not replace NQF** or reduce in anyway the scope of the national approach, nor do they diminish the sovereignty of the individual members within the community of countries

	Functions and rationale – between RQF and NQF	
Area of comparison	NQF	RQF
Main function...	To act as a benchmark for the level of learning recognised in the national qualifications system	To act as a translation device to enable comparison of levels of qualifications across member countries
Developed by...	National governments, in many cases through national agencies set up for this purpose	Countries in a region acting jointly, mostly facilitated by a regional body or regional association
Sensitive to...	Local, national and regional priorities (e.g. levels of literacy and labour market needs)	Collective priorities across member countries (e.g. enabling mobility of learners and workers across borders)
Currency/value depends on...	The extent of regulatory compliance required; the level of buy-in from key role-players (such as industry, learning institutions and professional associations); the perceived or real value to the broad population	The level of trust between member countries; the transparency of national quality assurance systems; mutually agreed regional priorities
Quality is guaranteed by...	Adherence to nationally agreed quality assurance systems, exemplified in the practices of national bodies and learning institutions	The common application of the referencing criteria and guidelines, as well as the robustness and transparency of the national referencing process, and national quality assurance systems
Levels are defined by reference to...	National benchmarks which may be embedded in different learning contexts, e.g. school education, work or higher education	General levels of learning complexity across all contexts that is applicable to all countries

5 PROMINENT RQF

RQF	Endorsement	Member countries
EQF	Recommendation of the Council of the European Union (2008; 2017) 36 referenced; many use EQF levels on their qualifications	EU Member States, plus 11 countries that are working towards implementing the EQF - Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (European Economic Area countries), Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey (candidate countries), Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo ** (potential candidates) and Switzerland
PRQS/PQF	2011 initial agreed version, no formal agreement noted	States of the Pacific Island Forum: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Australia and New Zealand do not formally engage with the framework.
AQRF	2015, agreement endorsed by the ASEAN Economic Ministers, ASEAN Education Ministers, and Labour Ministers	Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam
SADC QF	2011 – 2016; no legislation	Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe
TQF VUSSC	2008 concept paper endorsed by VUSSC interlocutors	Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Kiribati, Lesotho, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland, The Bahamas, The Gambia, The Solomon Islands, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu and Vanuatu

EQF	Common reference framework, translation device	Support lifelong learning and better link formal, non-formal and informal learning Improve transparency, comparability and portability of qualifications	Qualifications within frameworks or systems Comprehensive. All forms of learning
PRQS /PQF	Common reference framework, act as a translation device	Establish comparability Facilitate recognition of qualifications for portability of learning and integration of labour mobility	Comprehensive - formal (school, higher education, technical and vocational education and training) and non-formal learning
AQRF	Common reference framework, act as a device to enable comparisons of qualifications	Support recognition of qualifications Promote learner and worker mobility Encourage qualifications frameworks that can facilitate lifelong learning Encourage national approaches to validating learning gained outside formal education Lead to better understanding of qualifications systems Promote higher quality qualifications systems	Education and training - informal, non-formal and formal learning (includes but is not limited to post compulsory schooling, adult and community education, TVET and higher education)
SADC QF	Mechanism for comparability and recognition of qualifications	Providing a mechanism for comparability and recognition of qualifications in SADC, Facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications in all Member States Harmonising qualifications wherever possible Promoting the transfer of credits within and among Member States and even beyond Creating SADC regional standards where appropriate	General education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), higher education, lifelong and out-of-school or non-formal education
TQF VUSSC	Common reference framework; act as a translation instrument for the classification of VUSSC qualifications, and for the promotion of lifelong learning	Deepen integration and harmonization Support economic imperatives such as removal of barriers to trade Create a common identity Facilitate: Transparency of multiple complex systems Mobility of workers and students Recognition and credit transfer	TQF has been approved as a unified qualifications framework that includes higher education qualifications and post-secondary technical and vocational qualifications offered through the VUSSC. TQF encompasses adult basic education and training, vocational education and training, as well as higher education.

RQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

- Within the design of an RQF much emphasis is placed on the level descriptors, as they are seen as the key structure that enables 'NQFs and national qualifications systems to align with or "talk to" each other'. It is these level descriptors to which national qualifications frameworks or systems are referenced and on which transparency is based.
- Many RQFs make clear statements that the framework is based on learning outcomes, e.g. SADCQF, PQF, EQF.
- Within the RQF, the level descriptors are written as **generic learning outcomes** that can be applied across the education and training sectors. These learning outcomes may reflect some or all of the domains of the participating NQFs or include aspects that they wish to encourage in NQFs within the community of countries.

RQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

RQF	Levels	Domains
EQF	8	Knowledge, Skills, Responsibility and Autonomy
PRQS/PQF	10	Knowledge and Skills, Application, Autonomy
AQRF	8	Knowledge and Skills, Application and Responsibility
SADC QF	10	Knowledge, Skills, Autonomy and Responsibility
TQF VUSSC	10	Knowledge and understanding, skills and wider personal and professional competencies

RQF AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Building mutual trust and strengthening transparency across the community of countries is predicated not only on the transparency of qualification structures and outcomes, but also on the **quality assurance arrangements** that apply to **qualifications formulation and approval** and the provision of those qualifications by education and training providers.
- Trust in qualifications provides confidence to the holder of that qualification and to stakeholders that the individual has actually acquired the learning outcomes associated with the qualification.
- How qualifications are quality assured and the responsible bodies (such as quality assurance agencies, qualifications agencies) established to manage the functions of quality assurance vary enormously from country to country.
- **Quality assurance arrangements are built into the RQF design in essentially two different ways: as criteria used within the referencing process, or as associated quality assurance framework that is agreed to by the member countries.**

APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN RQF

RQF	Approach to QA
EQF	The referencing process includes 10 criteria and procedures (Annex III). Criterion 5 notes that the national quality assurance system/s are consistent with the principles in in Annex IV. Annex IV includes 10 quality assurance principles.
PRQS/PQF	The PQF is part of regional register for Pacific qualifications –the Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards. The register and the framework are accompanied by a set of quality assurance standards for agencies (including the registration of providers and accreditation of qualifications) and minimum standards for providers. The quality assurance standards are supported by various policies and procedures, guidelines and criteria. All qualifications accredited by recognised responsible bodies in the member countries may be entered onto the register and are to be aligned to the PQF.
AQRF	The referencing process includes 11 criteria. Criterion 6 notes that the national quality assurance system(s) are described. It names three benchmarks for evaluating quality assurance processes within the member state: East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework (which includes the quality principles, agency quality standards and quality indicators), International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) Guidelines of Good Practice for Quality Assurance and the ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework for Higher Education. The ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework outline standards for external quality assurance agencies and for provider (internal) quality assurance.

APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE IN RQF

SADC QF	Includes 16 quality assurance guidelines agreed by the member countries. The document does not describe how these quality assurance guidelines will be applied, for example within a referencing process or as an agreed set of quality principles that will be strived for in each country. For example, Principle 2: Ensure the planning for and provision of adequate financial resources for the provision of high-quality education and training at all levels in the region.
TQF VUSSC	This RQF notes that the quality assurance mechanisms adopted is a flexible rather than prescriptive approach. The TQF relies on the quality assurance system/s of the national quality assurance agencies (or other recognised agencies) of the member states. It is proposed that the providers and quality assurance agencies will subscribe to the guidelines. There are 7 principles related to providers, and 7 principles related to the national the national quality assurance agencies (or other recognised agencies) of the member states. There are 7 principles related to the TQF Management Committee.

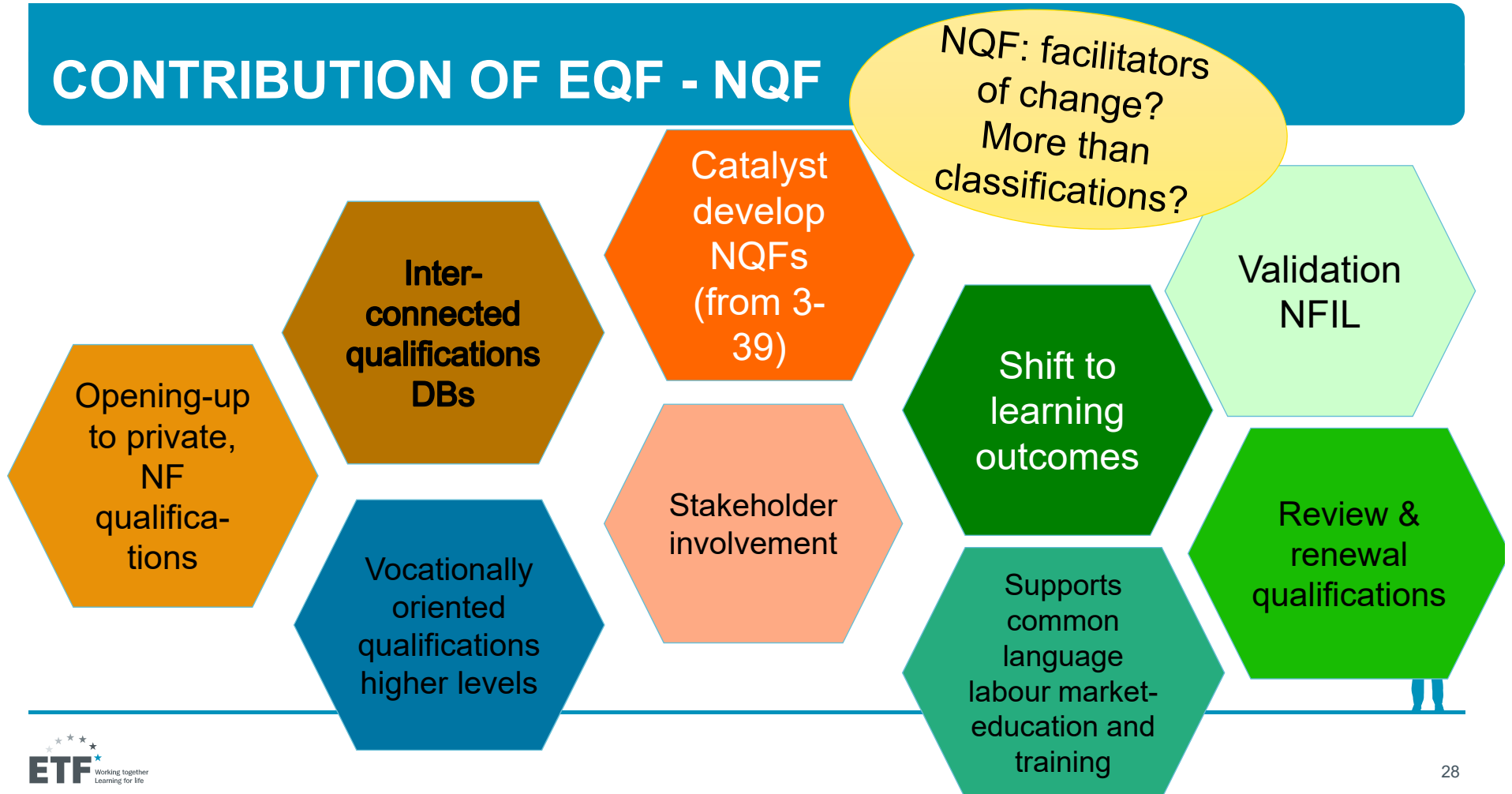
APPROACH TO REFERENCING

RQF	Referencing approach
EQF	Within the European Union (EU), the EQF referencing process requires participating member states to reference their qualifications levels or qualifications system to the EQF levels. There are 10 referencing criteria and procedures, included as Annex III of the EQF Recommendation of 2017. EQF published a series of five EQF technical notes on key themes and issues of referencing to EQF.
PRQS/PQF	There is little documented on the process of referencing or aligning NQFs to the PQF. However, the process is limited to an alignment activity, led by the secretariat.
AQRF	Within ASEAN, the AQRF, the participating member states are to reference their NQF level descriptors to the AQRF levels, and also for those countries without a QF to be able to reference key qualifications to the AQRF. There are 11 referencing criteria.
SADC QF	For SADC QF the process for comparing NQFs or systems has been trialed as an alignment process. There are 10 alignment criteria (refer to Appendix 4) accompanied by steps for the alignment process (which is a self-assessment exercise) and an adjudication process (ACQF 2021). Alignment activities have been undertaken by Seychelles, and South Africa; with the reports publicly available. In 2021 Mauritius submitted the revised alignment report for approval.
TQF VUSSC	The RQF makes it clear that the 'referencing process essentially draws on the commonalities of NQFs, in that most NQFs have reference levels describing types of skills and knowledge in various qualifications, quality assurance principles and guidelines, and methods for recognizing learning gained in different programmes and contexts' (Commonwealth of Learning 2015, p. 27). In addition, it is noted that the process needs to be clear and that established criteria will strengthen the process. Referencing criteria were affirmed in 2017 (Commonwealth of Learning 2017)

RQF – SUCCESS FACTORS

- Shared goals and vision of benefits (regional - national)
- Shared concepts, criteria, procedures
- Mutual respect between countries of the RQF
- Commitment and political consistency: this is a medium-long term engagement
- Roadmap – milestones – monitoring – feedback
- Mutual learning, sharing solutions and practices, capacity
- Governance: complementarity national-regional level steering
- Resources: financial, instruments, support to countries

CONTRIBUTION OF EQF - NQF



ROLE OF NQF IN THE RENEWAL OF QUALIFICATIONS

Comprehensive NQF makes it possible to identify weak points in the national qualification system (as some countries have done for level 5).

The learning outcomes based level of the NQF is increasingly used as a reference ('calibration') point for qualification developments, allowing stakeholders to

- Align to the relevant level
- Cover and balance the different learning domains (knowledge, skills and competence)

NQF'S OPENING UP TO QUALIFICATIONS OUTSIDE FORMAL EDUCATION SYSTEM



The majority of NQFs have so far limited themselves to the qualifications covered by the formal (public) education and training system



In the last 2-4 years increasing attention to include different types of qualifications



On a longer term basis an area where NQFs can make a difference – better integrate continuing education and training and facilitate lifelong learning. New credentials!



Progress in this area important for the involvement and commitment of stakeholders outside the traditional education and training system





STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT IN NQF

- During the development and implementation stages of QFs we have observed the inclusion of a broad group of stakeholders – notably involving labour market and private stakeholders
- QFs can become platforms for dialogue and communication between different stakeholders, notably education and training and the labour market
- Depends on the willingness to open to qualifications outside the formal (public) systems
- A key question: can this new dialogue can be sustained when the QFs becomes operational? Review, renewal of qualifications and NQF's tools

ENABLERS OF NQF IMPACT

Institutional robustness: NQF mandate as a policy steering and reform tool; systemic linkage

NQF impact

Value & visibility for citizens

Governance: inter-stakeholder (LM, E&T)



NQF ARE HERE TO STAY...BUT ARE IN TRANSFORMATION



Global development: 150 countries; several regional / transnational frameworks (EQF, SADCQF, ASEAN RF, ACQF...)

Several NQFs – reforming: ex.: France, Australia

Several NQFs – evaluation: ex.: Slovenia; South Africa; and RQFs too: EQF

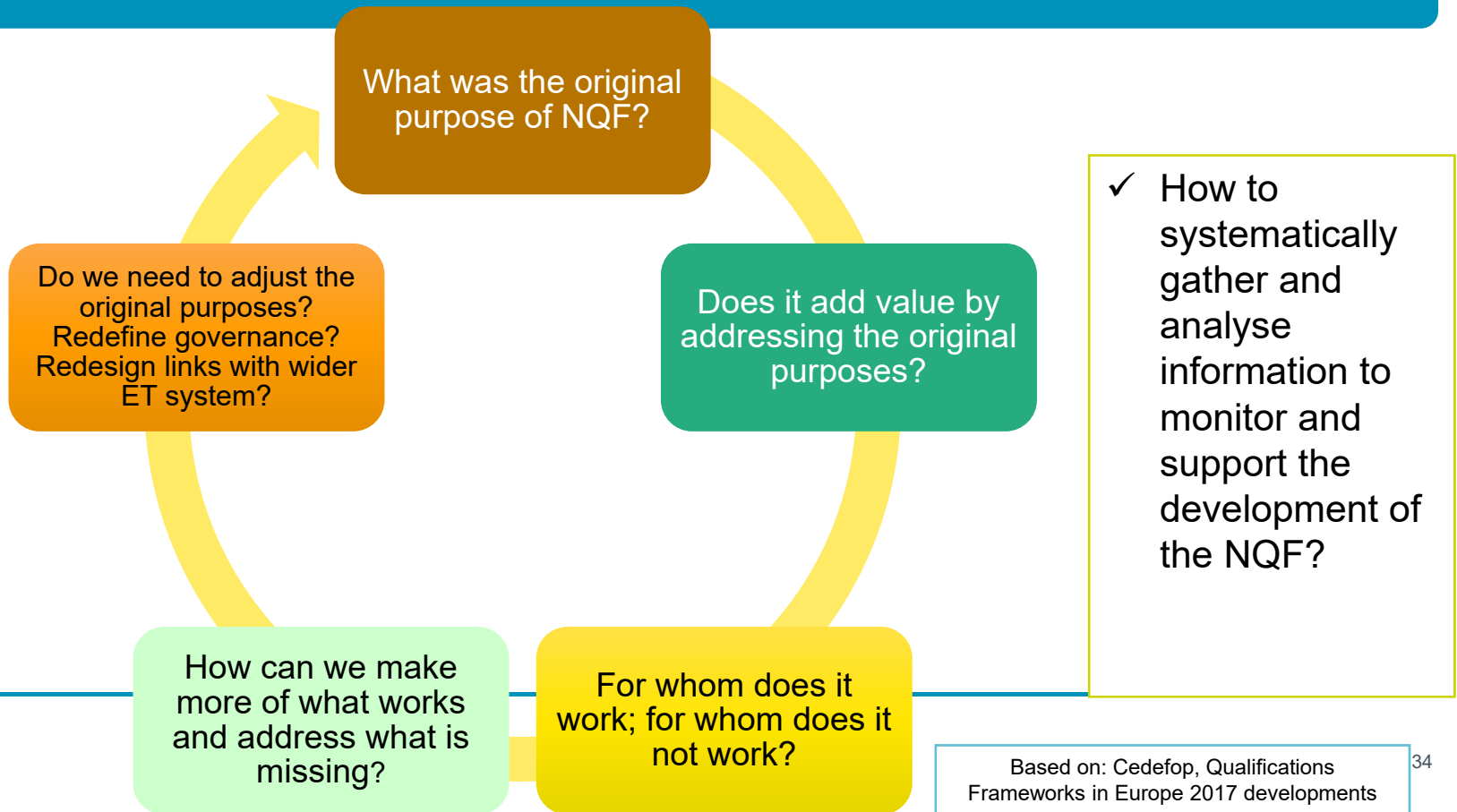
Comparing TVET qualifications: towards a European comparative methodology (Cedefop work underway)

Knowledge base: analyses, evaluations, referencing reports, Global Inventory

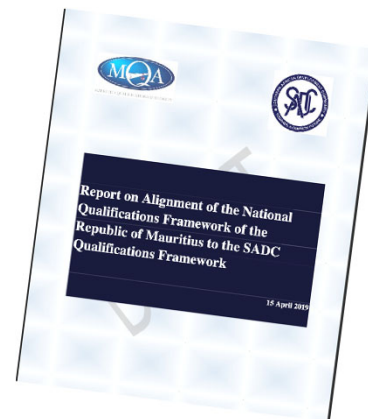
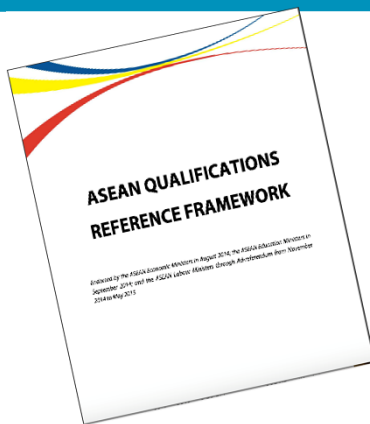
Benefits: although not yet many consistent evaluations, there is evidence of NQF's contribution to modernise education and training systems, contributing to transparency and skills development

Potential not fully tapped: visibility and use by labour market, citizens at large

NQF CANNOT BE STATIC...ANALYSE, MONITOR THEM



KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE ON NQF - RQF



NQF: MAKING A DIFFERENCE, STILL MIXED RESULTS

Benefits:

Learning outcomes orientation

Greater clarity of panorama of qualifications -
map gaps

+ transparency, comparability, trust; facilitate
recognition qualif.

Stakeholders' involvement

Visibility of learning from different contexts /
forms

NQF instruments: digital databases open for
users (national, international platforms)

Information on skills and qualifications for end-
users: digital platforms, INTEROPERABILITY

Weaknesses / mixed status:

Learning outcomes – issues
on consistent application
across sectors

Inclusion Qualifications other
sectors, non-formal

Visibility for end-users

Communication

Articulation - permeability



THANK YOU!



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