

## **What is a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and what benefits can it bring to the Seychelles?**

### **What is an NQF?**

Simply put, a national qualifications framework (NQF) is a formal system for describing qualifications. It is an instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies using level descriptors. Each level is defined by a set of learning outcomes expected at that level.

The qualifications on an NQF are defined by learning outcomes, i.e. clear statements of what the learner must know or be able to do whether learned in a classroom, on-the-job, or less formally.

By looking at an NQF, one can see the comparability of different qualifications and how learners can progress from one level to another, within and across occupations or industrial sectors; and even across vocational and academic fields. This is the case if the NQF is designed to include both vocational and academic qualifications in a single framework.

The scope of qualifications frameworks may be different for each country depending on the type of education system present. Some may include all levels of education while others may choose to omit the general education phase; some may have a legal basis whereas others represent a consensus of views of social partners. One common characteristic is that all qualifications frameworks provide a basis for improving the quality, accessibility, linkages and public or labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally.

### **How will an NQF benefit Seychelles?**

The competency qualifications rely heavily on the input and participation of industry and other stakeholders in the development process to ensure the relevance of the developed materials to local stakeholder needs. Thus it can be said that a well developed and implemented NQF will help to create multiple ways for the acquisition of competencies and ensure that developed materials are of 'registrable' quality as stipulated by the registration requirements of the NQF. In addition to that, developed materials are always benchmarked with international best practices to ensure comparability of the qualification and mobility for the learners.

Because an NQF presents a comprehensive picture of the qualifications landscape; it can also be a useful tool in education and training reforms and a vital reference point for

lifelong learning. In some countries including Seychelles, NQFs act as a reference point for assessing and recognising learning acquired in non-formal and informal settings.

*What other benefits do NQFs bring to education?*

Qualifications frameworks do not operate in isolation, but are typically found at the national, regional, and international levels. This creates advantages such as:

- Build trust among countries
- Encourage information sharing
- Facilitate communication

There is a need for national qualifications frameworks to relate and communicate with each other. They do not and cannot stand alone. Thus the reason for the different initiatives such as the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF), SADC Qualifications Framework (SADC QF), the Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF). These act as facilitators for the advancement of qualifications frameworks.

A major advantage of the ACQF for example; apart from the recognition of qualifications, is that countries can speak the same language and have a common understanding and tool when it comes to the evaluation of different qualifications. But for this to happen and be a success there needs to be trust and trust comes by way of communication and getting to know other NQF systems of other countries.

These initiatives combine efforts to do the following:

- Reduce the circulation of fake qualifications
- Promote the provision and dissemination of information on qualifications
- Improve the speed at which qualifications are confirmed
- Empower countries to develop their own qualifications framework

History and experience have shown that without dialogue and consensus, it is difficult to advance any agenda, which is why social dialogue remains the key factor in encouraging the development of NQFs around the world.