Viet Nam

The Vietnamese Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2011-2020 defines human resource development – and in particular high-quality human resources – as a strategic national priority (GIZ, 2012). In this context and with the prime purpose of meeting the needs of national and local labour markets together with broad social demands, Viet Nam is reforming its VET system as a whole and has established a 5-level *National Vocational Qualifications* (NVQ) framework as part of that effort. The key design actors are the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) together with social and professional organisations. The expectation is that the Vietnamese NVQ will further cross-border and international recognition of national qualifications, thus facilitating educational and labour mobility for Vietnamese citizens.

The challenges that the NQF needs to address

In Viet Nam, as in other rapidly developing economies that comprise the Association of the South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the demand for skilled workers is continuously increasing. Since the introduction of market reforms and the consequent economic expansion known as *Doi Moi*, Viet Nam has had to cope with a serious shortage of skilled workers. This skill shortage is aggravated by the fact that the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system has been unable to produce sufficient numbers of qualified workers for the labour market. One reason for this is that TVET offered in formal educational settings often lacks a workplace orientation. It is divorced from real-life practice and does not integrate placements in the world of work. Moreover, curricula are built around knowledge and skills that do not correspond to labour market and employer demands for skills.

To address the skill deficit, Viet Nam has pursued a strategy of outcomes-based TVET reform, largely influenced by international agencies such as UNESCO and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), starting with modular curriculum pilot projects (Freeland and Vu, 1996). The current NVQ framework has been developed through direct assistance and involvement of donors and international agencies, such as International Labour Organisation (ILO), the German Organisation for Technical Cooperation (GIZ), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), as well as numerous bilateral partners (TVET Program Viet Nam, 2009).

Main policy objectives

Article 2 of Decision 68/2008 of the Vietnamese Ministry of Labour on Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) on the assessment and granting of national qualifications and occupational skill standards states that national qualifications are designed to:

- recognise learners’ prior skills accumulated through study and experience, thus encouraging enhancement of skill levels, improving workforce quality and boosting the international competitiveness of Vietnamese industry;
- inform workers, employers and vocational institutions about worker skill deficits, prompting them to alleviate such deficiencies;
- serve as a basis for in-job placement and remuneration appropriate to employees’ skill levels (GDVT, 2010).
Involvement of stakeholders

For the purposes of developing the NVQ, MoLISA has been designated as responsible not only for setting principles, procedures and guidelines but also – in cooperation with social and professional organisations – for inspecting and managing National Skills Standards (NSS). To date, NSS for 129 occupations have been developed, of which 10 have already been released for use. These standards are made up of three components: occupation descriptions; a list of tasks; and performance criteria, including critical skills and essential knowledge; they also include assessment criteria and methods (Cao Quang Dai and Bui The Dung, 2011). 19 Skills Testing Centres are in the process of being set up (Cao Quang Dai and Bui The Dung, 2011). Viet Nam will also establish a National Skills Standard Developing Committee (NDC) with representatives from national authorities, social partners, trade associations and scientists. The skills qualifications will be issued in agreement with MoLISA.

The General Department of Vocational Training (GDVT) has established a dedicated unit to take charge of the newer qualifications, quality assurance and national planning. However, the weakness of industry networks to support the development of market-oriented skill standards and sector strategies constitutes a key challenge for the effectiveness of its work (Comyn, 2009). In the view of Vu and Freire (2006), the absence of entrepreneur involvement inhibits the participation of the private sector in consultation processes. The participation of local partners such as entrepreneurs’ associations, clubs of TVET school principals, actors at province or district level, teachers’ associations, not to mention the private sector, is poor at the TVET policy and strategy formulation levels (ibid.).

The limited legislation system for implementing national skills standard assessment linked to the vocational training and certification system remains a challenge and there is no regulation of the link between skills certificates and academic certificates in the national education system. There is also lack of experience in developing skills standards and skill assessment (Cao Quang Dai and Bui The Dung, ibid.).

Level descriptors and use of learning outcomes

The Vietnamese NVQ (see Table 1 below for a visual representation) also intends to foster better articulation between academic and vocational education and training pathways; at each of the five levels, national occupational skills standards will form the foundation of the qualifications offered (Cao Quang Dai and Bui The Dung, op. cit.). The level descriptors are based on scope, difficulty and complexity, flexibility and creativeness, together with the degree of responsibility and autonomy in carrying out the task. Figure 1 (below) lists the principles for level descriptors.

Table 1 Viet Nam Qualifications Framework

![Table 1 Viet Nam Qualifications Framework](image)

Source: Cao Quang Dai and Bui The Dung, 2011
Progression pathways and recognition and validation non-formal and informal learning

Non-formal education and training constitute an integral part of the education and training system in Viet Nam (MOET, 2006). Non-formal education is the responsibility of the Continuing Education Department. It includes literacy and post-literacy for adults, non-formal basic education equivalency programmes, and life-skills programmes conducted through community learning centres (CLC) for youths and adults who lack access to formal education or have dropped out of formal school (ibid.). However, Viet Nam has yet to develop mechanisms for the identification, documentation and recognition of informally acquired competences. Mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning could also be used to develop continuing professional training for those adult educators who work in CLCs and non-formal basic education programmes. While these adult educators have much expertise, this goes largely unrecognised. In this case, recognition of their prior non-formal and informal learning could be used to rectify this.

In the field of higher education, the Ministry of Education and Training has developed a proposal that requires all Vietnamese tertiary educational institutions to develop learning outcomes approaches in their educational programmes (MOET, op. cit.). The Ministry’s other core proposal is to develop mechanisms for the recognition and validation of the outcomes from non-formal learning in higher education.
education institutions, leading to exemptions from entry requirements or from parts of a formal learning programme. Learners could also be granted some credit towards the qualifications for which they are aiming. In addition, since 1997 open universities or open faculties have been established to develop distant or part-time education.

With regard to in-company training, many factories and companies have established continuing training centres for their workers to acquire new knowledge and skills (MOET, op. cit.). Organisations benefit because the competences of their staff become visible and can be taken into consideration for staff development and personnel planning. Through the portfolio method competences are made visible for the learners as well as for their future engagement in social and economic functions.

Lessons learned and ways forward

The NVQF marks a new departure with respect to establishing standards in that it switches the emphasis from input-oriented to outcome-oriented perspectives. It has been suggested (Young, 2005) that the government should implement this new approach incrementally, proceeding gradually through each level and sector of education. In addition, writing more generally from an international perspective, Young (op. cit.) recommends a non-directive, facilitative policy process as another ingredient of successful NQF implementation. Burke et al. (2006) recommend the establishment of a reliable quality assurance system for TVET as one of the crucial elements for the successful application of the NVQ (Burke et al., 2006).

The current NVQ framework has been developed with the direct assistance and involvement of donors and international agencies. Sometimes this assistance comes in the forms of pre-packaged quick and easy solutions to difficult educational and economic problems (Nguyen Thi Kim Quy, 2013). The capacity to effectively absorb an increasing overseas development assistance inflow has been pointed out by several authors (Vu and Freire, op. cit.). Furthermore, despite an abundance of donor-led activities in TVET in Viet Nam, the donor community is heterogeneous and weakly organised (Nguyen, 2009; Vu and Freire, op. cit.).

References


