

GHANA

Ghana's National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework (NTVETQF) was launched on 23 October 2012 following the passing of law LI 2195 under the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) Act on 3 September 2012. The new eight-level framework is tailored to the present realities of the Ghanaian education system and labour force. Its qualifications are designed to merge seamlessly with Ghana's existing qualifications, whilst also providing the improvement and modernisation necessary to take Ghana's education system into the future.

1. CHALLENGES THE NQF WOULD NEED TO ADDRESS

The education and training currently on offer in Ghana is failing to meet the needs of the country's labour market. The majority of graduates lack the skills required for effective participation in industry. In a Nuffic report (Gondwe and Walenkamp, 2011, p. 41), a spokesperson for the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (2009) is quoted as saying: "Yet the fact that our educational system continues to pour unskilled, semi-skilled, and unemployable young graduates into a job market with comparably few job opportunities, shows there is a need for sober reflection and deeper thoughtfulness on the kind of policy interventions which will be needed to overcome the challenges".

Current statistics reveal that over 90 per cent of employees in Ghana have less than secondary education and that only 9.4 per cent of graduates enter the labour force from secondary and higher education institutions. The Nuffic report concludes that "even if these graduates who enter the labour market were perfectly aligned and suited to the requirements of the labour market, the labour market would still have a problem since 90 per cent of the workforce would still not have passed through the education system at an advanced enough level, or at all, to benefit from improvements" (Gondwe and Walenkamp, 2011, p. 41).

The Ghanaian labour market is fragmented and uncoordinated, making it difficult to gather data. It is doubtful whether some of the agencies which are supposed to gather information on groups of learners actually exist.

Together with the numerous African heads of state and ministers of education gathered at the last ADEA¹ meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Ghana believes that NQFs should no longer be reserved for formal qualifications, as is currently the case in most countries in the region, but should also take into account the informal and non-formal means by which many people acquire technical

¹ Every two or three years, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) organizes a major conference on key educational challenges facing African countries. At the last conference in Burkina Faso in 2012, which gathered together 650 representatives of some 45 countries including four heads of state and 33 ministers of education, participants strongly agreed that it is time to move away from the traditional dichotomies between post-primary education and TVET, and between TVET and alternative paths to technical and vocational skills development (TVSD).

and vocational skills. In keeping with this belief, NTVETQF qualifications are modular and outcomes-based and are not restricted to academic attainment.

2. MAIN POLICY OBJECTIVES

The NTVETQF has the following objectives:

- To bring all post-basic, occupation-oriented qualifications together under a unified qualifications framework
- To facilitate access to further education and training for individuals in technical and vocational occupations
- To improve product and service quality by ensuring uniform standards of practice in the trades and professions
- To promote access to lifelong learning for all, especially those working in the informal economy

3. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS AND LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS

The NTVETQF is governed and coordinated by the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET), a semi-autonomous body under the Ministry of Education. COTVET is responsible for coordinating TVET programmes in both public and private TVET institutions. It answers to a 15-member board made up of stakeholders from various sectors, including industry.

Act 718 of 2006, which established COTVET, has been mandated to set up five standing committees to support its activities. The following committees are currently operational:

1. The Industry Training Advisory Committee (ITAC), which is responsible for national occupational standards development
2. The National Training Quality Assurance Committee (NTQAC), which is responsible for quality delivery in the TVET sector
3. The National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework Committee (NTVETQFC), which is responsible for overseeing the NTVETQF, taking into account non-formal and informal learning
4. The National Apprenticeship Committee (NAC), which is responsible for the preparation of apprenticeship policy to support the national apprenticeship programme
5. The Skills Development Fund Committee

COTVET has teamed up with a number of leading employers to develop Competency-Based Training (CBT) programmes. The CBT approach is currently being rolled out on a national scale. CBT programmes have been successfully piloted in three TVET institutions: Accra Polytechnic (HND in Plant Engineering, Level 5), Accra Technical Training Centre (Certificate 2 in Welding and Fabrication, Level 4) and the National Vocational Training Pilot Centre in Accra (Certificate 1 in Electronics, Level 3).

Nevertheless, significant challenges remain. Participation from industry stakeholders in the creation of CBT programmes and the training and assessing of students has so far been limited. Many TVET institutions have neither the infrastructure nor the teaching staff they need to deliver CBT programmes, and coordination problems across the many different ministries implementing the programmes are rife. Partly as a result of these difficulties, the quality of students admitted onto CBT programmes is variable at best.

COTVET is making efforts to develop demand and supply analysis to support the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning in Ghana.

COTVET and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) are currently working together on the introduction of demand-oriented, competence-based TVET curricula which will incorporate creative and innovative skills acquired through work and informal learning. It is hoped that these curricula will produce students who are better capable of responding to the practical demands of a wide variety of workplace challenges.

General education qualifications in Ghana fall within the ambit of the Ministry of Education, whereas tertiary qualifications are coordinated by the National Council on Tertiary Education (NCTE) and the National Accreditation Board (NAB), semi-autonomous organizations under the Ministry of Education. The NCTE has the financial authority to approve programmes for public universities, whilst the NAB, which was established through the National Accreditation Board Act 744 of 2007, provides quality assurance for programmes in both public and private tertiary institutions.

4. LEVELS AND DESCRIPTORS AND THE USE OF LEARNING OUTCOMES

The NTVETQF is an eight-level national qualifications framework for TVET. Levels 1 and 2, covering informal apprenticeships, are the lowest and least demanding, whilst level 8 (doctorate in technology) is the highest and most demanding.

Table 1. The Ghana National TVET Qualifications Framework

Level	Qualification	Status	Certifying institution
8	Doctor of Technology	Formal	-
7	Master of Technology	Formal	-
6	Bachelor of Technology	Formal	Polytechnics
5	Higher National Diploma	Formal	Polytechnics
4	Certificate II	Formal	GES-TVET Inst.
3	Certificate I	Formal	GES-TVET Inst.
2	Proficiency II	Informal/Non-Formal	NVTI / Informal trade associations
1	Proficiency I	Informal/Non-Formal	NVTI / Informal trade associations

Source: COTVET Legislative Instrument LI 2195 of 2012.

5. PROGRESSION PATHWAYS AND RECOGNITION AND VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Within the general education system, transfer from one programme to another remains difficult. By contrast, the recently approved TVET qualifications framework is designed to offer learners who opt for the TVET pathway the possibility of credit transfer and progression from the lowest to the highest qualification level in all subject areas.

Validation of informal and non-formal learning is a key component of Ghana's lifelong learning strategy. National regulations on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) have been developed and are in the process of legal formalization. As a first step, the lowest two qualifications, Proficiency I and II, recognize competences from the traditional informal apprenticeship, an important means of training in Ghana. The new RPL policy will enable informal and non-formal learners to benefit from both formative and summative assessment. Some mechanisms for RPL are already in use, such as oral, observation and demonstration-based assessment.

Equivalency programmes which allow non-formal learners to re-enter formal education, leading to a Basic Certificate of Education, are currently permitted only in primary or junior high school (9 years of schooling) (Ministry of Education, 2010). Similarly, recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the TVET sector is currently possible only within National Vocational Training Institutes leading to Trade Test Grades I and II (TVET Final Report, 2007). The NTVETQF will reform this situation, allowing employees to work towards new qualifications on the job through workplace-based assessment. Employees in industry may choose to work towards specific modules only, in order to ensure that their skills keep pace with changes in technology.

6. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The regional referencing of qualifications frameworks in Africa is led by ADEA. At the second meeting of the Inter-Country Quality Node on Technical and Vocational Skills Development (ICQN/TVSD) held

in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 19 to 21 September 2011, the ministers and representatives of the 20 countries present decided to create thematic groups on the following three topics:

- The transition to work
- National qualifications frameworks
- The role of trade and business associations in the field of TVSD

ADEA held a seminar on NQFs on 8 and 9 July 2013 in Abidjan. The seminar produced a final synthesis of the regional referencing of qualifications frameworks in Africa, which was adopted by all participating countries and submitted to the ministerial meeting of the *Inter-Country Quality Node on Technical and Vocational Skills Development (ICQN/TVSD)* in mid-September 2013.

7. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

The following lessons have been learned over the two-and-a-half year period that Ghana has been working on the NTVETQF (Baffour-Awuah, 2013):

It is important to hold regular discussions with all stakeholders so that they feel a sense of trust and ownership of the framework. Since setting up a comprehensive NQF needs to be done incrementally, for a start the country has settled for a sub-framework in the TVET sector and it is hoped that general education will be integrated into a full framework in the future.

Policy makers need to decide which levels of a qualifications framework are the most important. In a country like Ghana where approximately 80 per cent of all basic skills and 82 per cent of economic activity is in the informal economy², the focus needs to be on levels 1 and 2.

In setting up the Committees, it was important to find the right people with the requisite expertise. Committee members must be motivated, and should be well remunerated in order to maintain their motivation.

Obtaining parliamentary approval for the development of the NTVETQF was a vital step which could not have been taken without the commitment of the ministry responsible for TVET. The Minister of Education was instrumental in the passing of Law LI 2195, which laid the groundwork for the framework.

It is essential that governments provide the necessary financial resources to support the establishment and implementation of an NQF. Most of the funding to set up the NTVETQF came from development partners in Ghana, without whose aid the Council could not have achieved any meaningful results.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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