

ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework

Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National
Qualifications Frameworks (AANZ-0007)

Consultation Paper

Andrea Bateman, Bateman & Giles Pty Ltd

Dr Mike Coles, Mike Coles Ltd

May 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	3
THE REGIONAL ASEAN CONTEXT	4
PROPOSED FRAMEWORK	4
SCOPE AND PURPOSE	4
PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES	6
<i>Principles</i>	6
<i>Quality assurance</i>	7
STRUCTURE	9
<i>Learning outcomes</i>	9
<i>Levels</i>	11
<i>Level descriptors</i>	12
REFERENCING PROCESS	15
<i>Criteria for referencing</i>	16
<i>Panels</i>	17
<i>Referencing Guidelines</i>	18
GOVERNANCE	19
CONCLUSION	20
ACRONYMS	21
BIBLIOGRAPHY	22
APPENDIX 1: EAS TVET QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK	24

BACKGROUND

The basis for an ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework goes back to the ASEAN Framework Arrangement on Services (AFAS) of 1995 that was agreed to by ASEAN economic ministers. AFAS was aimed at substantially eliminating restrictions to trades in services among ASEAN. Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRAs) for qualifications in major professional services were initiated to enable the qualifications of professional service suppliers to be mutually recognised by signatory Member States.

In 2007, the ASEAN Economic Blueprint (ASEAN 2007) was signed by member countries. It called for areas of cooperation, including the recognition of professional qualifications (ASEAN 2007). In addition to MRAs in Engineering and Nursing that had been completed in 2005 and 2006 respectively, five additional MRAs were concluded between 2007 and 2009 in the fields of architecture, surveying, medical practitioners, dental practitioners and accountancy. Another important component of the blueprint was the creation of the free flow of skilled labour through 'harmonisation and standardisation' (ASEAN 2007:18).

ASEAN is also linked to the Asia – Pacific region through cross membership of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Asia-Pacific Quality Network (APQN). As well, several ASEAN countries that participated in an APEC Mapping of Qualifications Frameworks (Burke et al, 2009) indicated in principle support for the concept of a regional qualifications framework.

The initial draft of the concept proposal for the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework was developed through the Project on Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworks (AANZ-0007) which was part of the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area (AANZFTA) Economic Cooperation Work Programme (ECWP), specifically under ECWP's services component. This draft concept proposal was considered during the 1st AANZFTA Joint Committee Meeting in May 2010 in Manila and approved inter-sessionally in July 2010.

The draft concept proposal of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework was provided to ASEAN participating countries prior the ANNZFTA Regional Qualifications Framework Forum held in late April 2011. The feasibility of a regional common reference framework was discussed in a broad sense, but no decisions were made by the participants regarding the preferred construction or features of the regional common reference framework or what might be the clear purposes for a framework. The final draft version of the concept proposal was enhanced and refined following discussions with the participating countries at the ANNZFTA Forum and at in country workshops¹.

This consultation paper aims to assist countries in their discussions with their stakeholders as to the design of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework. As part of the consultation process, member countries are to provide a written response to the framework design and make it possible to agree to a final design by participating members.

Documentation to be used in the consultation process includes:

- **Consultation paper (May 2013)**
- **East Asia Summit TVET Quality Assurance Framework – extract (included in this Consultation Paper)**
- **Draft ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (May 2013).**

Member countries are to provide to the ASEAN Secretariat by 2 September 2013 a written response to the proposed ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework.

¹ Workshops were held in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

THE REGIONAL ASEAN CONTEXT

ASEAN countries have a combined population of almost 600 million². There are considerable differences in the population levels, sizes of economies and levels of per capita income across member countries. While there are labour flows between member countries they are not as great as those of some other regions. Nevertheless ASEAN is a robust entity and has been active in building mutual economic and social cooperation between member countries.

The ASEAN region is typical of other global regions in the patterns of NQF development across countries. Some countries have established comprehensive National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), while others have well established sectoral framework, and others are yet to develop or are in the process of developing qualifications frameworks.

Within this context the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework aims to accommodate different types of NQFs that are at different stages of development, ranging from the in principle and conceptual to the fully developed and functioning NQFs.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

Scope and purpose

A regional qualifications framework or a common reference framework could be defined as ‘a means of enabling one framework of qualifications to relate to others and subsequently for one qualification to relate to others that are normally located in another framework’ (Commission of European Communities 2005, p. 13).

Tuck (2007) says that ‘a common reference framework respects well established national traditions while simultaneously providing a clear basis for mutual recognition and mobility of labour’ (p. 6). He also states that many countries have a long established qualifications system (not necessarily qualification frameworks) while others have been engaged in the processes of reform and that a common reference framework will strengthen a common understanding and cooperation.

Regional common reference frameworks can:

- deepen integration and harmonisation;
- create a common identity;
- facilitate:
 - transparency of multiple complex systems;
 - mobility of workers and students;
 - recognition and credit transfer; and
- support economic imperatives such as removal of barriers to trade .

It is recognised that there is a need to develop a mechanism to be able to compare qualifications and to provide opportunities for credit transfer across the participating countries. By providing an overarching or ‘meta framework’ countries will be able to compare their qualifications with other countries’ qualifications enabling learner and worker mobility.

² UNESCO data, reference year 2009, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Pages/default.aspx>

The distinctive characteristics and purpose of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework should not be confused with those of any national qualifications framework. Overarching or 'meta frameworks', such as the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, have very different functions to that of NQFs and aim to add value to the NQFs.

PROPOSAL

The agreed scope and purpose of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework are noted below.

Scope

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, a common reference framework, will function as a translation device to enable comparisons of qualifications across participating ASEAN countries.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework addresses education and training sectors and the wider objective of promoting lifelong learning.

Purpose

The purpose of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is to enable comparisons of qualifications across countries that will:

- Support recognition of qualifications
- Facilitate lifelong learning
- Promote and encourage credit transfer and learner mobility
- Promote worker mobility
- Lead to better understood and higher quality qualifications systems.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework will support and enhance each country's national qualifications framework or qualifications system while providing a mechanism to facilitate comparison and transparency.

The Framework will link the participating ASEAN NQFs or qualification systems and become the ASEAN's mechanism for recognition of its qualifications against other regional and international qualifications systems.

ISSUE

The scope and purpose of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework should be clear and reflect the needs and aspirations of the ASEAN member countries.

Consultation point 1:

(a) Are the scope and purpose of the ASEAN QRF clear for your country? If not what changes are proposed.

PRINCIPLES

Initial country feedback confirmed four principles. The agreed principles of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework are noted below.

1. The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is based on agreed understandings between member countries and invites voluntary engagement from countries. Therefore it is not regulatory and binding on countries.
2. The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework by design aims to be a neutral influence on national qualifications frameworks of participating ASEAN countries.
3. The process for endorsing the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework shall be by mutual agreement by the participating countries.
4. Countries will be able to determine when they will undertake the processes of referencing their qualification framework, system or qualification types and quality assurance systems against the framework.

ISSUE

However, to encourage countries to undertake the referencing process and therefore develop mutual understanding and trust, the ASEAN QRF will only be effective when most, if not all, countries have completed the referencing.

OPTIONS

The options include:

- No deadline set for national referencing
- A deadline is agreed for all countries to have referenced to the AQRF.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that there be a deadline placed on the countries to finalise the referencing process. It is proposed that the end of 2018 is the deadline for member countries to reference to the AQRF.

Consultation point 2:

(a) Are these principles agreed by your country?

(b) Is setting a deadline for referencing appropriate? If not what is suggested and why?

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled'³. In relation to training and educational services, 'quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in educational services provided by training providers under the remit of relevant authorities or bodies. It is a set of activities established by these relevant authorities or bodies to ensure that educational services satisfy customer requirements in a systematic, reliable fashion' (Bateman et al 2009, p. 8).

Quality assurance is needed to protect the interests of people who gain the qualifications; to build confidence in the qualifications amongst their users, including employers; and to enable qualifications and learning to relate across areas and levels so that people can move from one program of learning to another.

In more recent years with the globalisation of economies there has been an increased flow of labour between countries. With these flows it is important that the national qualifications that are held by workers are recognised by the employers in other countries. Given that employers are unlikely to know the details of individual qualifications it is important that they have confidence in the qualifications systems of the workers' countries.

Quality assurance of qualifications across national qualifications systems therefore has emerged in recent years as a core purpose of NQFs (Allais 2010, Bjørnåvold & Grm October 2011, Tuck 2007). This has both internal and external purposes. It provides internal protection to learners (students and workers), and to employers for the quality of the qualifications that are issued. It provides assurance for employers in other countries that nationally recognised qualifications from the home country are of high quality, and assurance for companies that wish to invest in the home country that the nationally recognised qualifications of the workforce indicate appropriate standards of skills and knowledge. This is particularly true when a framework is linked to other international frameworks of high standing.

NQFs by themselves cannot deliver quality in nationally recognised qualifications. However, they form a basis for the mechanisms that are used to assure quality in qualifications.

ISSUE

A NQF without an accompanying quality assurance system is unlikely to be effective in building the quality of and trust in the national qualifications.

As the common reference framework is to be used across the ASEAN countries, the framework is underpinned by agreed quality assurance strategies to maximise the level of confidence in the referencing process and in the value of the region's qualifications. These strategies should be complementary to the national approach. The strategies could be documented in a range of ways, and could include one or a mix of the following:

- an agreed regional quality assurance framework (as is the case with the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET);
- a set of agreed quality assurance standards (as is the case with the newly established PQF and its associated regional strategies); and
- a set of broad criteria against which the structure of the NQF and national quality assurance strategies are assessed against (as is the case with the EQF referencing process).

³ AS/NZS ISO 9000:2006: Quality management systems—Fundamentals and vocabulary, June 2006, p. 9.

OPTIONS

Making the quality assurance processes of responsible agencies explicit can provide confidence in the national qualifications issued as they apply to the ways qualifications are developed, operated and certificated. The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework need not have quality assurance processes other than noting that member country qualifications systems must have quality assurance processes in place, this is especially so if national qualification frameworks are not regulatory in nature but open models and simply communications devices. However, for the sake of trust the provision of an explanation of each country's quality assurance processes is to be included in the referencing process.

In Phase 1 of the development of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework it was proposed that the AQRF be underpinned by a set of agreed quality assurance principles and broad standards related to:

- the functions of the registering and accrediting agencies;
- education and training providers;
- systems for the assessment of learning and the issuing of qualifications; and
- regulation of the issuance of certificates.

However since the final concept proposal for the AQRF in 2011 the East Asia Summit member countries have confirmed the East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework (2012). This framework includes benchmark requirements including:

- **5 key principles** (transparency, accountability, continuous improvement approach, flexibility and responsiveness, comparability); these are included in Appendix 1
- **Agency quality standards** relate to governance, accreditation of programs and certification of qualifications, as well as the regulation and monitoring of providers
- **Quality indicators** aim to support the evaluation and continuous improvement processes of agencies and providers. The indicators can be used to evaluate the performance of a country's TVET sector at both national and provider level⁴.

Although this quality assurance framework is focused on the TVET sector it was developed cognisant of international higher education regional frameworks and developments; and also cognisant of its potential role as a quality assurance framework to underpin the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework. Given that the ASEAN member countries are also members of the EAS countries the EAS TVET Quality Assurance Framework avoids duplication or confusion.

⁴ Relevant sections of the final concept paper for the EAS TVET Quality Assurance Framework are in Appendix 1.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework will use the East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework quality principles, agency quality standards and quality indicators as the basis for the agreed quality assurance standards. The East Asia TVET Quality Assurance Framework is to be used as the benchmark for evaluating the quality assurance processes (for all education and training sectors).

The referencing process will include member countries referencing their education and training quality assurance systems against the East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework.

Consultation point 3:

(a) Is the East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework a suitable quality assurance framework for promoting and strengthening trust in the integrity of national qualifications across member countries?

Options to be explored if the East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework is to be used include:

- Adopting only the principles
- Adopting the principles and the agency standards
- Adopting the principles, the agency standards and the quality indicators.

(b) Should member countries be required to demonstrate against all aspects of the EAS TVET QAF?

OR

(c) Should member countries be required to demonstrate against the EAS TVET QAF principles, and then be provided with the option of referencing against the EAS TVET QAF quality standards and the quality indicators?

(d) If not what other options are proposed. Please explain why?

Structure

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The shift to learning outcomes has been a key feature of national qualification frameworks and regional common reference frameworks (Allais 2010, Bjørnåvold & Grm 2011, Keevey et al 2010, Tuck 2007). Bjørnåvold & Grm (2011) note that

‘The use of learning outcomes in established and emerging frameworks responds to the need to ensure coherence and overview’...and that ‘learning outcomes based level descriptors in comprehensive NQFs introduce common language across sectors of education and training, helping make the system more coherent and permeable’ (p. 30).

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and its descriptors aim to support the development of national qualifications frameworks and the recognition of informal and non-formal learning and promote credit towards qualifications.

ISSUE

The notion of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework being based on learning outcomes is critically important. However, some member countries do not have qualifications frameworks or system based on learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes can be the basis for facilitating the recognition and credit transfer of learners and workers by emphasising the results of learning rather than by focusing on inputs such as length of study.

The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework aims to complement and support different types of national qualifications frameworks or systems within the region, however some NQFs are not based on learning outcomes.

OPTIONS

The options could be:

- Accept countries for referencing only when it is agreed that their qualifications frameworks or systems are broadly based on learning outcomes
- Develop a strategy to include all ASEAN countries in referencing to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework and encourage the further development of learning outcome based approaches.

PROPOSAL

To promote the use of learning outcomes as a key feature of qualifications, the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is based on descriptors of levels of complexity of learning outcomes. These descriptors aim to facilitate comparisons of and links between qualifications and qualifications systems across the member countries.

To reference against the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, national qualifications frameworks or qualifications systems should have qualifications 'demonstrably based on learning outcomes'. For national qualifications frameworks that are not based on learning outcomes, the referencing process and report should demonstrate progress towards a learning outcomes based approach.

Consultation point 4:

- (a) To what extent are learning outcomes used in your country?
- (b) Is it reasonable to expect all countries to be in a position to have qualifications frameworks or systems largely based on learning outcomes?
- (c) Should countries be required to demonstrate progress towards a learning outcomes based approach in the referencing process?

LEVELS

The structure of qualification frameworks generally include levels of complexity of learning outcomes, expressed as level descriptors.

ISSUE

The number of levels in the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is best determined through common understandings of national and sector qualification frameworks across ASEAN countries. Consideration also needs to be given to other external reference points which this framework may refer to e.g. EQF (8 levels), PQF (10 levels).

OPTIONS

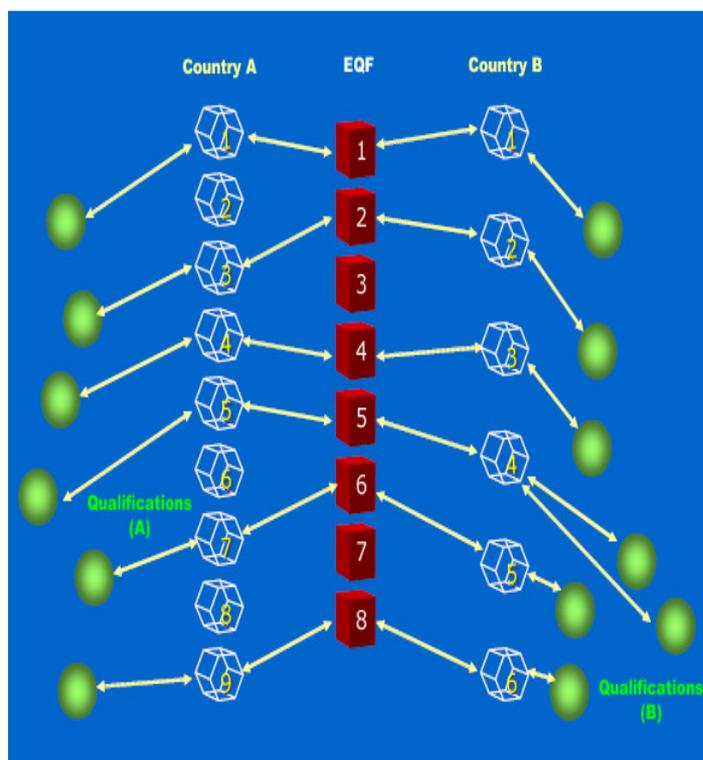
The ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework should be a simple and broadly based hierarchy of levels that reflects levels of learning in formal education and non formal settings for learning such as work.

The options for the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is to adopt an eight level framework similar to the European Qualifications Framework, or a 10 level framework (such as the Pacific Qualifications Framework). Qualifications frameworks across the region and beyond vary: there are 8 level frameworks (such as Malaysia) or 10 level frameworks (such as Australia and New Zealand) that address all education and training sectors. Other frameworks within the ASEAN region include Thailand with 6 higher education levels (with a proposed 9 level NQF), Singapore (WSQ) with 7 TVET levels and Philippines with 6 TVET levels and 4 higher education levels. More recently, Indonesia has confirmed a 9 level NQF framework, Brunei Darussalam has confirmed a 9 level NQF framework and Cambodia is proposing an 8 level NQF framework.

As the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework is a common reference framework the number of levels do not need to be the same as that of the member countries' NQFs but should clearly describe levels of learning complexity to which the various NQF levels can be compared. There is no requirement for NQFs to have the same number of levels as the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework. In this instance, comparisons are made on a 'best fit' alignment of the hierarchy of learning complexity.

The EQF experience has shown that an 8 level regional framework is sufficiently flexible to address the variations across member countries qualifications systems or frameworks.

Figure 1: EQF referencing



The initial concept proposal was that there be eight to ten levels of learning complexity, but this was changed to eight levels of learning complexity following the regional forum. Feedback from the in country workshops indicated that the majority of participating countries considered that for the common reference framework eight levels is the optimum number of levels of complexity of learning. Other options suggested were seven, nine or ten levels.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework include eight levels based upon a hierarchy of complexity of learning outcomes.

Consultation point 5:

(a) Is eight levels the most appropriate number of levels for an ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework? If not please nominate the number of levels and provide a rationale. Please consider the possible implications for other ASEAN countries.

LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Domains typically are used within qualifications frameworks to describe areas of learning. The domains for the level descriptors vary across qualification frameworks. The aspects of learning that are included in the domains (for each level) reflect each country's education system and its relationship to the country's history and economy.

ISSUE

What kind of domains would be suitable for the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework? Below are a selection of national and regional qualifications frameworks with their domains.

Table 2: Framework domains

Framework	Domains
Australian Qualifications Framework	<p>Summary – includes an outcome statement of the type of knowledge and skills a graduate will have for work and/or learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge – is described in terms of depth, breadth, kinds of knowledge and complexity • Skills – are described in terms of kinds and complexity and include cognitive skills • Application of knowledge and skills – refers to the application of knowledge and skills in context and in terms of autonomy, responsibility and accountability.
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Cognitive skills • Practical skills • Social skills • Autonomy • Responsibility
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Knowledge: depth and breadth ○ Skills: Instrumental and systemic skills, judgement • Personal competence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Social competence: Team/leadership skills, involvement and communication ○ Self competence: Autonomy/responsibility, reflectiveness and learning competence
Indonesian Qualifications Framework	<p>General description - outlines characteristics, personalities, working attitude, ethics, morality of every Indonesian human being and is applied to every level</p> <p>Specific descriptors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills in fulfilling the job and competence • Coverage of science and/knowledge • Methods and levels of competence in applying science/knowledge • Management skills.
Malaysian Qualifications Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge • Practical skills • Social skills and responsibilities • Values, attitudes and professionalism • Communication, leadership and team skills • Problem solving and scientific skills • Information management and lifelong learning skills • Managerial and entrepreneurial skills.
New Zealand Qualifications Framework	<p>The Level Descriptors have three domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge – relates to the type of knowledge • Skills – relates to the kinds of skills as well as the problems and solutions applied • Application (of the knowledge and skills) – refers to the level of self management, management of others and responsibility.
Philippines National Qualifications Framework in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process • Responsibility

Framework	Domains
the TVET sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application
Thailand Higher Education Qualifications Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics and moral – related to habits of acting ethically and responsibly in personal and public life in ways that are consistent with high moral standards. Ability to resolve value conflicts through application of a consistent system of values • Knowledge - the ability to understand, recall and present information including: knowledge of specific facts, knowledge of concepts, principles and theories and knowledge of procedures • Cognitive skills - the ability to apply knowledge and understanding of concepts, principles, theories and procedures when asked to do so; and analyse situations and apply conceptual understanding of principles and theories in critical thinking and creative problem solving when faced with unanticipated new situations • Interpersonal skills and responsibilities - the ability: to work effectively in groups, and exercise leadership; to accept personal and social responsibility, and to plan and take responsibility for their own learning • Numerical analysis and communication and information technology skills - the ability: to use basic mathematical and statistical techniques, - communicate effectively in oral and written form, and to use information and communications technology
The Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context • Knowledge • Skills: applying knowledge, solving problems, learning and development skills, information skills, communication skills • Responsibility and independence
EQF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge – knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual. • Skills - cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments) • Competence – responsibility and autonomy
Pacific Qualifications Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge and Skills – the kind of knowledge and skills involved • Application – the kinds of issues or problems to which the knowledge and skills are applied • Degree of independence – the amount of independence, or organisation that is required to solve problems or complete tasks

Domains commonly used in national qualifications frameworks are knowledge and skills, application, and autonomy and independence.

However a common reference framework cannot include all options presented by member countries. To enable all member countries to reference to the regional framework, RQF descriptors must remain broad and general, with the specificity of outcomes based in each country's NQF. It is not implied that NQFs will have the same domains as the RQF. The referencing process is based on a matter of judgement that will be made more difficult if there are aspects in the regional common reference framework that are not evident in national qualifications frameworks.

OPTIONS

RQF level descriptors will remain general, with the specificity of outcomes based in each country's NQF. It is not implied that NQFs will have the same domains as the RQF. The referencing process is based on a matter of judgement that will be made more difficult if there are aspects in the regional common reference framework that are not evident in national qualifications frameworks.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the level descriptors are based on the notion of competence which is the ability that extends beyond the possession of knowledge and skills. It includes:

- Cognitive competence involving the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially
- Functional competence (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they work in a given area
- Personal competence involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation
- Ethical competence involving the possession of certain personal and professional values⁵.

The proposed level descriptors include three domains:

- Knowledge and skills
- Application
- Responsibility and accountability

The Knowledge and Skills domain includes the various kinds of knowledge such as facts and theories as well as the skills used, such as practical and cognitive skills.

The Application domain includes the context in which the knowledge and skills are used in practice; for example study and work.

The Responsibility and accountability domain includes the level of independence for example the capacity to make decisions and the responsibility for oneself and others.

The level descriptors are focused on the three domains and do not make explicit reference to personal competence or ethical competence such as attentiveness, intercultural awareness, active tolerance and acceptance of diversity, as well as democratic patterns of behaviour and socially responsible behaviour. These attributes are considered to contribute to the capacity of people to know things, act skillfully and show responsibility and accountability.

Consultation point 6⁶:

It is proposed that for the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework three domains will be used.

(a) Would other domains be more suitable for linking with national qualifications frameworks? If other suggestions are proposed please provide a rationale and consider the possible implications for other ASEAN countries

Referencing Process

Referencing is a process that results in the establishment of a relationship between the levels of the common reference framework and that of the national qualifications framework (NQF) or system.

⁵ Coles & Werquin (2006), p. 23.

⁶ Refer to draft ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (May 2013).

CRITERIA FOR REFERENCING

In terms of the referencing process for the EQF, Coles et al (2011, p. 10) indicate that ‘only national qualifications levels are formally linked to the EQF through the referencing process’ and that ‘there are no qualifications directly referenced to the EQF and there is no process envisaged to make this a possibility’. Coles et al (2011) also states that referencing to the EQF is best achieved through a national qualifications framework (NQF).

The referencing process of the EQF requires each country ‘to refer their national qualifications levels to the EQF and publish a report. The referencing process includes meeting 10 referencing criteria and also includes comparing ‘the descriptors of the levels of the national qualifications framework or system with those of the EQF (written as learning outcomes)’ (Coles et al 2011, p. 28). When comparing the levels of the national qualification framework and that of the common reference framework there may not be a direct alignment, however the notion of ‘best fit’ generally applies. This notion of ‘best fit’ requires an agreement between the stakeholders so ‘that there can be confidence in the outcome of the approximation’ (p. 32)⁷.

ISSUE

To establish the comparability of ASEAN country framework levels or qualification types, countries will need to refer their qualification framework levels or types or qualification system to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework. However, countries could, if there is no national qualifications framework, align their benchmark level qualifications or qualification types to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework.

To ensure that the referencing process promotes mutual understanding and ensure consistency of approach and reporting, criteria could form the basis of the referencing process.

OPTIONS

Options include:

- To agree to a set of criteria that each country must use in reporting its referencing process and outcome
- To agree to a set of criteria that each countries must use plus adoption on a country-by-country basis of additional criteria members might find useful.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework referencing process will:

- For those countries with a NQF, identify in a broad sense the best fit of levels of the national frameworks to that of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
- For those countries without a NQF, identify for national qualification types or for key qualifications, the best fit to the level of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
- Include confirmation that the accrediting and registering agencies meet agreed quality principles and broad standards.

⁷ Coles et al (2011) note that the notion of best fit does not mean that qualifications in the level are considered equal, or equivalent or hold the same value.

It is proposed that an ASEAN specific set of criteria based on the European experience be used to structure the referencing process.

Consultation point 7⁸:

(a) Should criteria for referencing form the basis for the referencing process?

If so, are the draft criteria appropriate for your country? Is the additional information sufficient?

If not please include other criteria and the reasoning for inclusion.

PANELS

To facilitate mutual trust, the referencing report undertaken by each participating ASEAN country should confirm that their quality assurance system and implementation of quality assurance strategies meet the agreed quality assurance principles and standards. However, these quality assurance requirements should be broad and flexible enough for countries to use as a reference point in the development or refinement their own processes.

In the Pacific, for inclusion of national qualifications on the proposed Pacific Register for Qualifications and Standards, participating country agencies are to demonstrate that they meet the minimum standards for agencies (including registration and accreditation processes).

As noted previously the ASEAN member countries could adopt the East Asia Summit TVET Quality Assurance Framework as the agreed quality assurance principles and broad standards. By adopting the EAS TVET Quality Assurance Framework this will avoid confusion and duplication of referencing requirements across the two regional groups of member countries and frameworks.

ISSUE

The EQF referencing process also includes a requirement for an international expert to be involved. Coles et al (2011) note that including 'international experts in the referencing process is designed to help generate confidence and mutual trust in a country's referencing outcome by the international community' (p. 25). However, the role and level of participation could vary and Coles et al (2011) note that: 'experience so far suggests that two or three international experts can be used effectively'.

OPTIONS

The options available are:

- one or more international experts be included in on the panels
- Experts are from within or external the ASEAN members countries
- ASEAN member country observers are included to promote capacity building.

⁸ Refer to draft ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (May 2013).

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the referencing process requires each country to set up a referencing panel of key stakeholders. This panel is to include at least one international representative⁹, plus an additional observer from one of the other ASEAN countries.

It is proposed that the referencing process includes a single report that is approved by major stakeholders. To facilitate mutual understanding referencing reports will utilise the relevant terms in the Glossary. The Glossary terms have been based on international definitions where applicable to ensure international applicability.

Consultation point 8:

National referencing panels are required to carry out the referencing process.

(a) Is the inclusion of one international expert (from within [or outside] the ASEAN region) and one observer from within the ASEAN Secretariat sufficient to promote mutual trust and transparency in the referencing process of each country?

If not, please propose an alternative and explain the reasoning.

REFERENCING GUIDELINES

It is proposed that:

- The referencing process includes a single report that is approved by major stakeholders. To facilitate mutual understanding referencing reports will utilise the relevant terms in the Glossary.
- The ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework should be accompanied by referencing guidelines to inform and support the referencing process.

ISSUE

Countries will need support and guidance as to how to undertake the referencing process. However, the guidelines developed to support member countries should be suitably flexible to enable all countries to reference their qualifications framework or qualifications system.

OPTIONS

Options include:

- Provide a detailed set of Guidelines, a form of manual, to ensure all countries follow agreed procedures
- Do not provide guidelines as these may restrict member countries in the referencing process.

⁹ The international expert could be external to the ASEAN member countries or internal to the ASEAN member countries but the international expert should not be a representative of the referencing country or the observer's country.

- Provide some additional details to explain the criteria to assist member countries in the referencing process.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that that criteria and some additional information is provided in the guidelines.

Consultation point 9¹⁰:

- (a) Do the referencing guidelines provide sufficient support to your country?
- (b) Does providing additional information for each criterion provide the appropriate level of guidance for your country? If not please propose changes.
- (c) Are there any other sub-guidelines that need to be developed? Please propose additions.

Governance

As previously mentioned it was proposed that the ASEAN Qualifications Regional Framework will not be regulatory in nature but will be voluntary and based on agreed understandings.

ISSUE:

However, once the framework is established the main issue for the ASEAN countries is the maintenance, use, evaluating and updating of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework. This would involve testing and validation of the level descriptors (as was the case for the AQF)¹¹, and some mechanism for assessing whether it is providing the enabling function for member economies (Burke et al 2009). Both the EQF and the PQF have agencies responsible for the management and review of the effectiveness of the common reference framework. There will need to be capacity for guidance and support to be given to participating countries if the ASEAN Qualifications Regional Framework is to be effective. There will need to be capacity for the maintenance of the framework, as well for monitoring its effectiveness and its implementation across member countries.

Consideration needs to be given to the resource implications involved in such functions, and the need for an agency with a strong knowledge base and expert personnel. One option would be to set up a stand alone agency to carry out the functions. Another option may be to locate these functions within the ASEAN Secretariat. Both of these options have resource and capacity implications. A decision on the governance should take into account the nature of existing and potential bilateral and multilateral agreements on qualifications between member countries as well as their professional associations and education and training providers.

Wherever the monitoring and evaluation functions are finally located, the responsible agency needs to have full acceptance of its authority amongst participating ASEAN countries, and, importantly, a willingness of those countries to cooperate and provide the necessary data and information to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the framework.

¹⁰ Refer to draft ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (May 2013).

¹¹ http://www.agf.edu.au/Portals/0/Documents/Empirical%20Validation%20of%20the%20AQF%20-%20Final%20Technical%20Report%20Volume%201_May%202010.pdf

OPTIONS

The options available for the ongoing management of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework include:

- Committee based within the ASEAN Secretariat
- Independent agency.

Consultation at the country workshops confirmed that there needed to be a responsible agency for the management of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework. All countries indicated that this agency needs to be independent from any single country within the ASEAN association. One country indicated that its representation should be multi-sectoral (in terms of education sectors) and should include all major stakeholders within the region. A number of countries assumed that the responsible body would be the ASEAN Secretariat.

A number of countries noted that each country will need to nominate an in country representative for contact and liaising with the independent body; and that selection of this nominee should be the decision of each country. Some countries nominated a relevant agency within the country.

PROPOSAL

It is proposed that a board or managing committee be established by the ASEAN Secretariat. It is proposed that the board or managing committee be made up of national representatives (from a NQF or responsible body in each country) and an independent expert, and be responsible for the ongoing management of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework.

Consultation point 10:

- (a) Is the notion of a managing committee suitable for the ongoing management of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework?
- (b) What might its terms of reference be?

CONCLUSION

This consultation paper has highlighted key areas for discussion your country and put forward draft referencing guidelines and draft level descriptors for your consideration. It is the role of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework Taskforce, who is given the remit by the participating countries, to consider member country responses and finalise the concept design.

ACRONYMS

AANZFTA – ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Area

AFAS - ASEAN Framework on Services

APEC – Asia Pacific Economic Community

APQN - Asian Pacific Quality Network

AQF – Australian Qualifications Framework

ASEAN - Association of South East Asian Nations

EAS – East Asia Summit

EQF - European Qualifications Framework

IQF – Indonesian Qualification Framework

MQF – Malaysian Qualifications Framework

NQF – National Qualifications Framework

NZQF – New Zealand Qualifications Framework

PQF - Pacific Qualifications Framework

RQF - Regional Qualifications Framework

TVET – Technical and Vocational Education and Training

WSQ – Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications System

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allais Stephanie (2010) *The implementation and impact of National Qualifications Frameworks: Report of a study in 16 countries*, International Labour Office, Geneva.
- ASEAN (2007) ASEAN Economic Blueprint, accessed via worldwide web, www.aseansec.org/21083.pdf
- AS/NZS ISO 9000:2006: Quality management systems—Fundamentals and vocabulary, June 2006
- Australian Qualifications Framework Council 2011, *Australian Qualifications Framework*, South Australia.
- Bateman, A, Keating, J, Burke, J, Coles, M, & Vickers, A (January 2012) *Concept Design: ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework*, Education and Training Governance: Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworks (AANZ-0007), ASEAN Secretariat.
- Bateman, A, Keating, J and Vickers, A (2009) *Quality assurance systems in vocational education and training*, DEEWR, Canberra.
- Bjornavold, Jens and Coles, Mike (2010) *Added value of national qualifications frameworks in implementing the EQF*, European Qualifications Framework Series: Note 2, European Union, Luxembourg.
- Bjørnåvold, Jens and Grm, Slava Pevec (October 2011) *The development of national qualifications frameworks in Europe*, Working paper No 12, CEDEFOP.
- Burke, G, Keating, J, Vickers, A, Fearnside, R, Bateman, A (2009) *Mapping Qualifications Frameworks across APEC Economies*, APEC Secretariat, sourced from www.apecknowledgebank.org/file.aspx?id=2029
- CEDEFOP (2011) *Glossary: Quality in education and training*, Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- CINTERFOR (2005) CARICOM process for workforce training, assessment and certification, accessed via the worldwide web March 2010 www2.ilo.org/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/news/biblio/car_wtac.htm
- Coles, M, and Oates, T, (2004) *European reference levels for education and training: An important parameter for promoting credit transfer and mutual trust*, CEDEFOP.
- Coles, Mike; Ulicna, Daniela; Andersen, Tine; Mernagh, Edwin and Luomi-Messerer, Karin (2011) *Referencing qualifications levels to the EQF*, European Qualifications Framework Series: Note 3, European Union, Luxembourg.
- Coles, M and Werquin, P 2006, *Qualification system: Bridges to lifelong learning*, OECD, Paris.
- Commission of European Communities (2005) *Commission Staff Document: Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*, p 13.
- Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia (2012)- *Indonesian Qualification Framework- Presidential Decree No.8/2012- Implication and Implementation Strategies*, ISBN 978-602-9290-17-2.
- European Communities (2008) *The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)*, Belgium
- European Qualifications Framework (2010) *The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning*, accessed via the worldwide web March 2011 ec.europa.eu/education/pub/pdf/general/eqf/leaflet_en.pdf
- European Qualifications Framework (2009) *Criteria and procedures for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF*
- Iredale Robyn (2009) *The recognition of skills in the Asia Pacific Region*, Research conducted for SKILLS-AP ILO Regional Skills and Employability Program.
- Keivy James, Chakroun Borhene & Deij Arjen (2010) *Transnational Qualifications Frameworks*, European Training Foundation.

- Keevy, J, West, P, Schmidt, A, Hope, A, Lene, P, Manabile, E (2008) *Transnational Qualifications Framework for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth: Concept Document, The Commonwealth of Learning (COL)*, Canada.
- Malaysian Qualifications Agency (20??) *Malaysian Qualifications Framework*, Kuala Lumpur, accessed from the worldwide web March 2011, www.mqa.gov.my/en/utama_mqf.cfm
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority April 2011, *Requirements for listing and maintaining qualifications on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework - Te Taura Here Tohu Mātauranga o Aotearoa*, v2, Wellington, New Zealand.
- Office of the Higher Education Commission (2006) *National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Thailand: Implementation Handbook*, Bangkok, accessed via the worldwide web March 2011 www.mua.go.th/users/tqf-hed/news/FilesNews/FilesNews8/NQF-HEd.pdf
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (2009) *SCQF Handbook: User Guide*, The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership.
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community (September 2011) *Pacific Qualifications Framework*, Secretariat of the Pacific Board for Educational Assessment, Fiji.
- Singapore Workforce Development Agency (2007) *Singapore Workforce Skills Qualification System: An Introduction*, Singapore.
- Tuck Ron (2007) *An Introductory Guide to National Qualifications Frameworks: Conceptual and Practical Issues for Policy Makers*, International Labour Office.

APPENDIX 1: EAS TVET QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK



Concept Paper

EAST ASIA SUMMIT Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework

Volume II: Extract for AANZFTA consultation

Andrea Bateman, Bateman & Giles Pty Ltd

Prof Jack Keating, University of Melbourne

Assoc Prof Shelley Gillis, Victoria University

Chloe Dyson, CDA Consulting

Prof Gerald Burke, Monash University

Dr Mike Coles, Mike Coles Ltd

June 2012

The EAS TVET Quality Assurance Framework project report consists of four volumes:

- Volume I – Final Report
- Volume II – Concept Proposal
- Volume III – Self Assessment Guide
- Volume IV – Country Overviews

Volumes II–IV should be read in conjunction with Volume I, but can be accessed separately in response to different audiences and different purposes.

Acknowledgments:

The team would like to dedicate the final report and accompanying documents to Professor Jack Keating, University of Melbourne. Jack was a member of this team and was the principal author of the background section in the Concept Paper (Vol II). Jack died 21 July 2012 after a short illness. He was a friend, mentor and longstanding colleague to all members of the team and will be sadly missed.

The team would also like to acknowledge the support provided by the member countries and their representatives in the refinement of the Concept design, of the development of the individual Country Overviews and of the development of the Capacity Development Plans.

PART B: EAST ASIA SUMMIT VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Background

In 2010 Australia and the ASEAN Secretariat cooperated to convene two workshops of an East Asia Summit (EAS) Senior Education Officials Taskforce. A key outcome of this workshop was the proposal for an East Asia Summit Technical and Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework (EAS TVET QAF).

The EAS TVET QAF consists of a set of principles, guidelines and tools to assist EAS countries to develop and assess the quality of their TVET systems and set out improvements accordingly.

The EAS TVET QAF forms a coherent package capable of guiding the design and implementation of measures to strengthen quality assurance at the country level as well as providing a basis for alignment between national TVET systems across the East Asia Summit region.

The 18 member countries of the East Asia Summit (EAS) include the ten Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) as well as Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Russia and the United States.

The participating countries provided feedback to the draft concept paper via online discussion, written responses and discussions emanating from the East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework (EAS TVET QAF) Workshop, which was held in Canberra, Australia, 26 – 28 March 2012. The workshop was attended by high level delegates from 16 EAS member countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, Australia, India, China, Japan, New Zealand, Korea and the Russia) as well as representatives from SEAMEO VOCTECH based in Brunei and the ASEAN Secretariat.

Scope

The EAS TVET QAF will function as a common reference quality assurance framework that will:

- Help EAS countries assess, develop and improve the quality of their TVET systems
- Guide the design and implementation of measures to strengthen quality assurance at the country level
- Provide the basis for alignment between national TVET systems across the region
- Increase transparency of and consistency in TVET policy developments and thereby promote mutual trust, worker and learner mobility as well as lifelong learning.

The EAS TVET QAF does not replace or attempt to define national quality assurance systems, instead it aims to support and guide initiatives in relation to quality assurance at the national agency level. The EAS TVET QAF is voluntary and non binding in nature. Agencies are defined as:

- accrediting agencies are those entities that manage program accreditation under national legislation e.g. national qualifications agencies, official review boards or other nationally approved bodies or agencies with the remit to establish achievement standards and/or accredit qualifications; and

- registering agencies/ bodies are those entities that responsible for registering education and training providers e.g. national qualifications agencies, official review boards or other nationally approved bodies or agencies. Providers are a training organisation that plans and delivers education/training and assessment services that leads to the award of qualifications or components of qualifications.

For the evaluation of outcomes, it may be that one or both of these agencies are responsible or that an independent agency is responsible.

Purpose

The key purposes of the EAS TVET QAF are to:

- Enable countries to promote and monitor the improvement of their quality assurance systems;
- Facilitate cooperation and mutual understanding between member countries; and
- Support other initiatives within and across the region that enhance connectivity, integration, education and labour mobility e.g. ASEAN Regional Qualifications Framework.

The EAS TVET QAF has a number of benefits including:

- Facilitating the sharing of good practice
- Providing for concrete means to support an evaluation and quality improvement culture at all levels
- Supporting and promoting lifelong learning
- Contributing to evidence based policy and practice.

Framework

Underpinning approach

Quality assurance is a component of quality management and is ‘focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled’¹². In relation to training and educational services, ‘quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in educational services provided by training providers under the remit of relevant authorities or bodies. It is a set of activities established by these relevant authorities or bodies to ensure that educational services satisfy customer requirements in a systematic, reliable fashion’¹³.

The EAS TVET QAF, developed at the regional level, has the capacity to be applied at participating country level by relevant agencies, and can inform national requirements for providers.

The EAS TVET QAF is based on a systematic approach to quality assurance and includes agency obligations and suggested provider obligations.

The EAS TVET QAF is also based on a continuous improvement cycle based on the notion of plan, do, check and act. The framework encourages participating country, via relevant agencies, to foster and support a quality assurance culture.

¹² AS/NZS ISO 9000:2006: Quality management systems—Fundamentals and vocabulary, June 2006, p. 9.

¹³ Bateman et al 2009, p. 8.

The EAS TVET QAF includes monitoring processes for agencies, including internal and external quality audit/review; as well as standards and indicators to inform the quality assurance process which can be applied at the agency and the provider level.

The evaluation and monitoring processes include evidence based and outcomes based principles that can be supported by a range of data sources (both qualitative and quantitative).

The concept design of the EAS TVET QAF includes a number of components:

- Principles
- Quality Standards
- Quality indicators
- Governance arrangements.

The design is outlined in Figure 1.

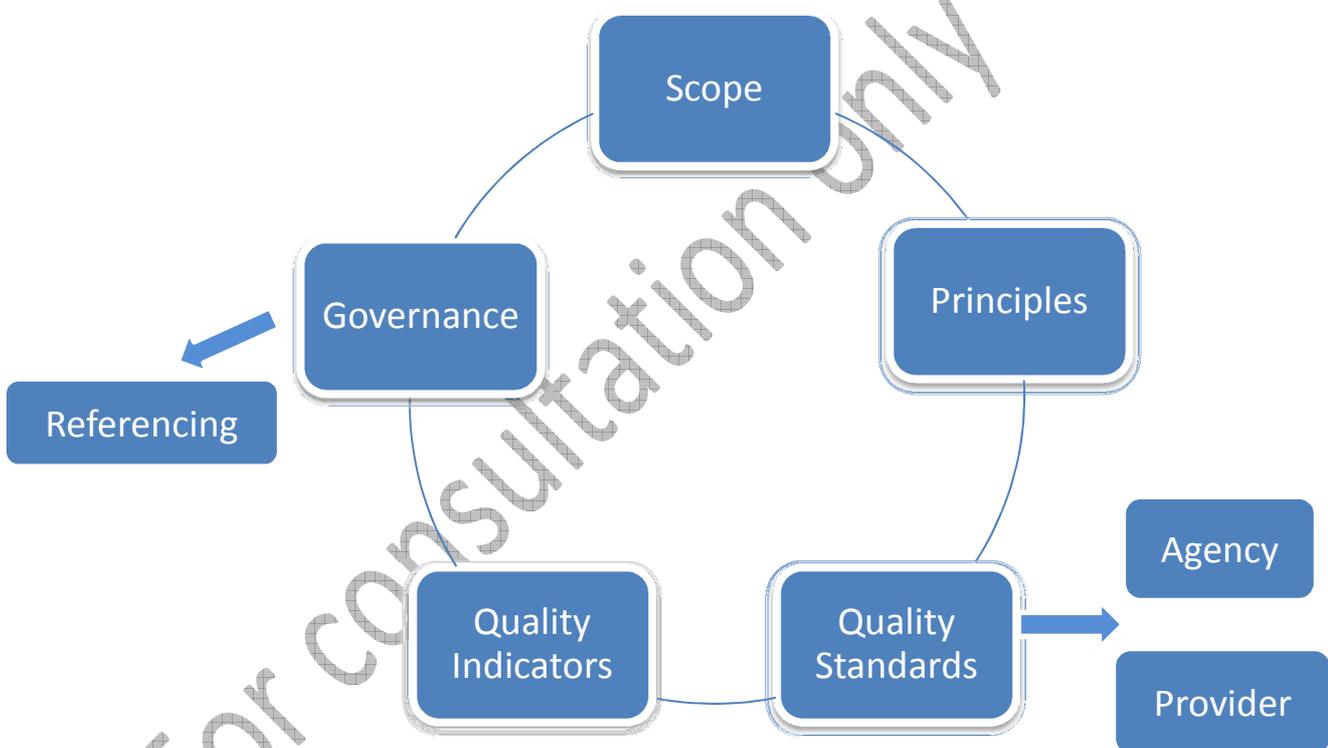


Figure 1: The Concept Design of the EAS TVET QAF: Component Relationships.

Principles

The EAS TVET QAF is underpinned by the following five key principles.

Transparency

Encourage mutual trust across the region. The quality assurance framework promotes transparent standards and measures of quality.

Accountability

Encourage the evaluation and reporting of agency practices and performance against the standards and measures.

Continuous Improvement Approach

Foster a quality improvement culture at all levels. The quality assurance framework encourages the use of a balance of strategies that enhances the provision of training services within and across the region to meet the changing and future needs of stakeholder groups.

Flexibility and Responsiveness

Value and promote flexibility at all levels. Flexibility relates to the design, delivery and review of the quality of TVET to meet the varying needs of countries and their stakeholders.

Comparability

Provides the benchmark for individual country quality assurance systems or framework. The framework will enable countries to compare quality assurance systems and to enhance confidence in the comparability of qualifications across the region. Comparability requires continuity as a notion of consistency. Quality systems should not change rapidly and should be consistent in their application to enable comparisons and maintain confidence.

Standards

Within the EAS TVET QAF standards are referred to as:

- *quality standards* which are the technical specifications for assuring quality at the agency and provider level (including governance, registration and accreditation); or
- *achievement standards* which are statements approved and formalised by a recognised agency or body, which defines the rules to follow in a given context or the results to be achieved. These can take a variety of forms including competency, assessment, educational, occupational or certification standards; or
- *data standards* which are the data specifications for data collection and reporting.

The EAS TVET QAF's quality standards operate at two levels and include agency requirements and suggested provider requirements.

Both the agency quality standards and the provider quality standards are described in terms of:

- governance;
- registration; and

- accreditation.

In terms of country agencies; the governance standards focus on effective management of an agency's resources and key functions in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to stakeholder needs. The registration and accreditation standards focus of the key functions of an agency, which are:

- registration of providers; and
- accreditation of achievement standards.

In terms of providers, the suggested quality standards are supporting information that may apply in relation to agencies developing or reviewing their quality assuring requirements for providers and the provision of TVET. The suggested quality standards for providers are included in Appendix 1.

The quality standards take a systematic approach to quality assurance; they require planned processes that aim to provide confidence in educational services, they include agency (and provider) obligations, and have a focus on continuous improvement.

Therefore the EAS TVET QAF includes quality standards based on three key elements:

- establishment;
- accountability; and
- improvement.

The **establishment element** is 'focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled'¹⁴.

The **accountability element** is focused on confirming that quality requirements are fulfilled.

The **improvement element** is focused on confirming performance is continuously improved.

¹⁴ AS/NZS ISO 9000:2006: Quality management systems—Fundamentals and vocabulary, June 2006, p. 9.

Agency quality standards

The Agency quality standards can be applied both within and across the participating EAS countries. In some instances countries can review their quality assurance system to ensure that it addresses all key requirements as described in the quality standards; however for other countries it will inform the establishment of agencies and/or responsible bodies that have oversight of quality assurance arrangements in TVET in their country.

Table 1: Agency quality standards:

<i>Establishment (providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled)</i>	<i>Accountability (confirming that quality requirements are fulfilled)</i>	<i>Improvement (confirming that performance is continuously improved)</i>
1. Governance		
<p>1.1 The Agency has explicit goals and objectives.</p> <p>1.2 The Agency's responsibilities and/or competence, governance and probity arrangements are clearly determined and made public.</p> <p>1.3 The Agency has a structure and systems in place to ensure it is adequately resourced, managed effectively and maintains its independence in decision-making.</p> <p>1.4 The Agency has a system for managing complaints; and appeals related to decisions made by the Agency.</p>	<p>1.9 The Agency systematically monitors and reviews its performance to ensure that it continues to meet its goals, objectives and obligations across all of its key functions¹⁶; and to inform regulatory policy.</p> <p>1.10 The Agency monitors the research and development strategy to confirm its effectiveness.</p> <p>1.11 The Agency is subject to cyclical independent external quality audit¹⁷.</p> <p>1.12 Agency performance is reported to stakeholders.</p>	<p>1.13 The performance of the Agency is continuously improved in response to research, data collected and outcomes of external quality audit.</p> <p>1.14 Improvements to the TVET system are made in response to research and data collected.</p>

¹⁶ Registration of providers and accreditation of achievement standards (i.e. certification standards).

¹⁷ Quality audit refers to a systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining audit evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria are fulfilled (AS/NZS ISO 19011:2003: Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing, p. 1). Some countries may refer to audit activity as an external independent review or evaluation or assessment.

Establishment (providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled)	Accountability (confirming that quality requirements are fulfilled)	Improvement (confirming that performance is continuously improved)
<p>1.5 Strategies are in place to promote cooperation and collaboration between agencies, across borders.</p> <p>1.6 A system is in place for the monitoring and continuous improvement of all of the Agency's functions and to inform regulatory policy in light of the outcomes.</p> <p>1.7 The Agency has a defined research strategy for ongoing development of the TVET system.</p> <p>1.8 A national data standard is in place that ensures the consistent and accurate capture of TVET information¹⁵.</p>		
2. Registration		
<p>2.1 An open, transparent and rigorous system is in place to register providers and approve program delivery against quality standards and/or criteria¹⁸.</p> <p>2.2 A public register of approved providers is maintained.</p>	<p>2.5 Providers are audited to ensure that they continue to meet the quality standards.</p> <p>2.6 Data on provider performance¹⁹ and compliance is collected and analysed and used to inform registration policy.</p> <p>2.7 Data on provider performance²⁰ and compliance is made public.</p>	<p>2.8 The registration system is improved in response to data collected on provider performance.</p>

¹⁵ Refer to Appendix 2 for an exemplar national data standard.

¹⁸ Suggested provider quality standards are included in Appendix 1.

¹⁹ Performance data relates to the four aspects in the Quality Indicators displayed in Table 3.

²⁰ Performance data relates to the four aspects in the Quality Indicators displayed in Table 3.

Establishment (providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled)	Accountability (confirming that quality requirements are fulfilled)	Improvement (confirming that performance is continuously improved)
<p>2.3 A process is in place for systematically monitoring and reviewing provider registration and performance to inform registration policy.</p> <p>2.4 A transparent system is in place to ensure consistent registration decisions, sanctions, conditions and rewards to providers.</p>		
3. Accreditation		
<p>3.1 An open, transparent and rigorous system is in place to accredit programs against agreed standards/criteria and to maintain consistency in decision-making.</p> <p>3.2 A public register of accredited programs is maintained.</p> <p>3.3 A process is in place for systematically monitoring and reviewing accreditation decisions to inform accreditation policy.</p> <p>3.4 Requirements for issuing qualifications to students are clearly defined.</p> <p>3.5 Requirements for recognising prior learning and the provision of articulation pathways are in place and made public.</p>	<p>3.6 Reaccreditation of programs is achieved through maintenance of standards.</p> <p>3.7 Consistency of accreditation decisions is maintained through moderation and professional development.</p> <p>3.8 Accreditation data is publicly reported and informs educational and/or labour market policy.</p>	<p>3.9 Accreditation systems are improved by acting on stakeholder feedback.</p>

Quality Indicators

The quality indicators in the EAS Quality Assurance Framework for TVET are intended to support the evaluation and continuous improvement processes of agencies and providers. The indicators can be used to evaluate the performance of a country's TVET sector at both national and provider level.

The quality indicators are not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive but instead, have been designed to provide agencies and providers with a range of possible indicators for selection/adaption to meet the varying needs, requirements and approaches to quality assurance.

The conceptual model that underpinned the design of the quality indicators has been displayed in Figure 2. This conceptual model can be presented as a national data standard with five major components: Aspects, Themes, Quality Indicators, Measures and Data Sources.

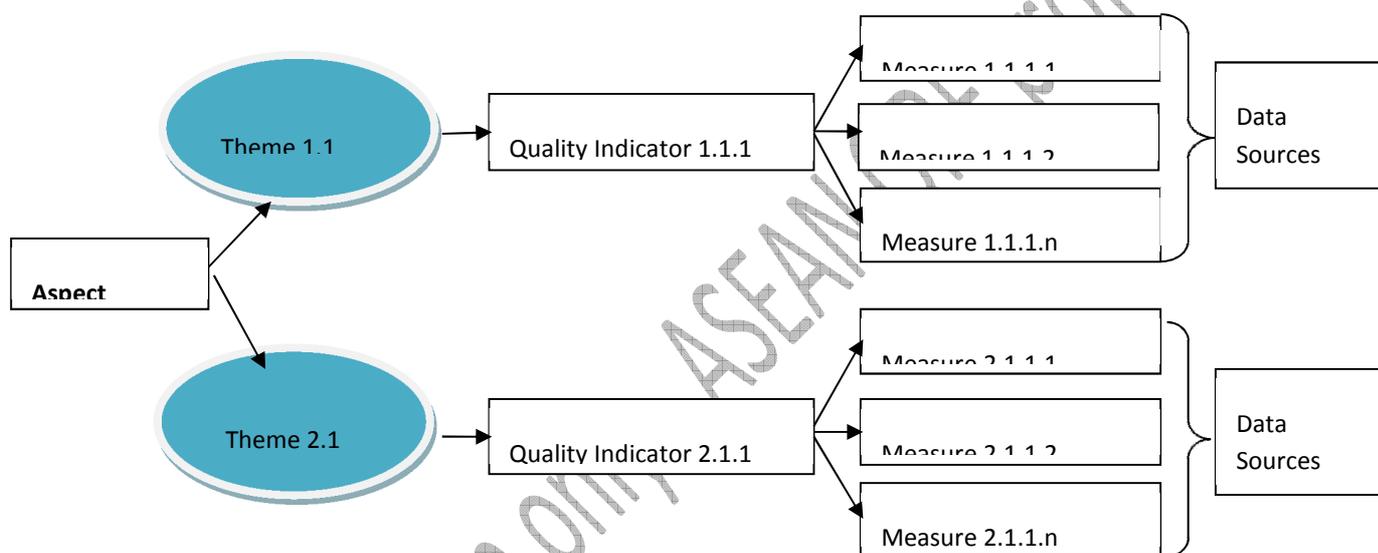


Figure 2: The Conceptual Model for developing the quality indicators.

An analysis of existing quality indicators found elsewhere (e.g. New Zealand, Europe, Australia, USA, Singapore) was initially undertaken to identify a set of common themes. Each theme was then classified according to whether it related to the context, input, process or product aspects of the model. The classification of themes according to these four aspects has been based on Stufflebeam's (2003) CIPP approach to evaluation. The themes and quality indicators that were associated with the background factors typically in place prior to learning have been classified as Context related themes. Those themes that referred to the procedures, resources and processes that can be implemented up front to assure quality have been classified as Input related themes. The Process type of themes refer to the measures of quality that occur during the learning experience whilst the themes that referred to measures of quality in terms of outputs has been classified as Product related. The relationship between the Themes and the Aspects of the model that underpinned the design of the quality indicators, measures and data sources has been presented in Table 7.

Table 2: Relationship between Themes and Aspects.

	Aspects			
	Context	Input	Process	Output/Product
Themes	C.1 Learner Characteristics	I.1 Learning resources and support	P.1 Training and Assessment	0.1 Learner Progress and Attainment
	C.2 Provider characteristics	I.2 Program design and curriculum development		0.2 Comparability of achievement standards
	C.3 Learner Pathways	I.3 Quality of Teaching Staff		0.3 Graduate destinations
	C.4 Recognition of prior learning in all contexts			0.4 Stakeholder satisfaction
	C.5 Labour market influences			

For each theme, a set of indicators has been developed to enable participating countries to monitor and compare the quality of their TVET provision.

The EAS TVET QAF Indicators according to theme are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: The EAS Quality Indicators

Themes	Indicators
C.1 Learner Characteristics	C.1.1 Learner demographic profile
C.2 Provider characteristics	C.2.1 National registration of providers
C.3 Learner Pathways	C.3.1 Flexible and alternative pathways into TVET programs
C.4 Recognition of prior learning in all contexts	C.4.1 Strategies for recognising learning in all contexts including formal and informal educational contexts as well as learning in the workplace
C.5 Labour market influences	C.1.5 Coherence of supply in relation to demand
I.1 Learning resources and support	I.1.1 Access to learning resources and support services
	I.1.2 Provision of services to learners with disabilities.
I.2 Program design and curriculum development	1.2.1 Effectiveness of program design, accreditation and review
I.3 Quality of Teaching Staff	1.3.1 Investment in training of teachers
	1.3.2 Recruitment and retention of high quality teaching staff.
P.1 Training and Assessment	P.1.1 Range and appropriateness of training and assessment strategies employed
O.1 Learner Progress and Attainment	O.1.1 Retention and completion rates
O.2 Comparability of achievement standards	O.2.1 Monitoring achievement standards across time.
O.3 Graduate destinations	O.3.1 Monitoring pathways from TVET to work and/or continuing education
O.4 Stakeholder satisfaction	O.4.1 Graduate and employer satisfaction with the program

To support the quality indicators, operational measures and examples of data sources were identified and presented as an exemplar national data standard; refer to Appendix 2 (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Both the operational measures and data sources have been included as supporting information to the Quality Indicators to assist countries in developing or reviewing their data collection standard. Note that the data sources have been classified as critical and desirable, depending on the level of sophistication of the information systems in place. These data sources have been provided to assist countries and providers to measure their performance against the proposed quality indicators.

Referencing process

A key question to be posed for policy makers of the EAS TVET QAF is how the framework will enhance mutual understanding and collaboration. Critical to this question is how countries will demonstrate alignment of their quality assurance systems or processes to the EAS TVET QAF. Options for policy makers include:

- Self assessment against the EAS TVET QAF; or
- A referencing process that requires countries to formally and publically evaluate their systems to the EAS TVET QAF; or
- Demonstration of quality assurance systems of alignment to the EAS TVET QAF and assessed by a governing agency (refer to Governance section), and nomination onto a website of the governing agency following an external review.

Ongoing alignment to the framework could be undertaken via any of the methods proposed above or possibly through periodic monitoring, possibly over a three year period, with referencing or assessment undertaken by an expert appraisal of the implementation.

The options available to the EAS TVET QAF depend on the governance arrangements and the EAS countries' approach to developing mutual understanding. Possible options include:

1. A regulatory approach that included formal checking to confirm if a country's TVET quality assurance arrangements meets the requirements, i.e. third party audit to certify agency practice. This may also include membership such as INQAAHE, APQN.
2. A voluntary approach that included:
 - A self referencing model (similar to the EQF model with international representation), or
 - A self referencing model undertaken internally.

Feedback from participating countries via the online discussion, the written responses and workshop discussions confirmed that the referencing process could be undertaken:

- As a stand alone quality assurance process; or preferably
- As a broader referencing process between National Qualifications Framework to a regional qualification framework e.g. ASEAN regional qualifications framework requires referencing to key principles as well the NQF – but does not at this stage clearly specify that the referencing will be undertaken against agreed agency standards.

In addition, the EAS TVET QAF referencing process should include:

- Confirmation that the quality assurance system meets the EAS principles, and

- Confirmation that the accrediting and registering agencies meet agreed quality principles and broad standards.

In the EAS TVET QAF the referencing process should include:

- A single report that is approved by major stakeholders and made public;
- International experts. It is proposed that each country's referencing panel include at least one international representative²¹, plus an additional observer from one of the other EAS countries; and
- Use of a self assessment tool to inform and support the referencing process.

Governance

Once the EAS TVET QAF is agreed the main issue for the EAS countries is the maintenance, use, evaluation and update of the quality assurance framework.

In addition, there will need to be capacity for guidance and support provided to participating countries if the EAS TVET QAF is to be effective. There will need to be capacity for the maintenance of the quality assurance framework, as well for monitoring its effectiveness and its implementation across member countries. The management of the framework would also involve some mechanism of assessing whether it is providing the quality assurance and capacity building function for member economies, and whether it is fostering a community of practice of quality assurance within the region. Operational considerations also include management of a website for the promotion of the framework, for the sharing of information and for lodging referencing reports.

Consideration needs to be given to the resource implications involved in such functions, and the need for an agency with a strong knowledge base and expert personnel. One option would be to set up a standalone agency to carry out the functions. Another option may be to locate these functions within a Secretariat that supports the EAS countries. Another option may be to have one EAS country take the responsibility for the ongoing oversight of the EAS TVET QAF. Regardless, these options have resource and capacity implications.

Wherever the monitoring and evaluation functions are finally located, the responsible agency needs to have full acceptance of its remit amongst participating EAS countries, and, more importantly, a willingness of those countries to cooperate and provide the necessary data and information to fully evaluate the effective or success of the framework.

Findings from the written feedback and discussions at the Workshop in Canberra (2012) indicated that participating countries preferred an independent agency or secretariat (not associated with any one country) and it to be completely autonomous. SEAMEO or the ASEAN Secretariat were suggested as potential organisations to manage the EAS TVET QAF beyond the project. It was also suggested that the ongoing management of the EAS TVET QAF could involve the set up of a board or managing committee made up of national representatives (from a national agency in each country) and an independent expert.

²¹ It is suggested that the international expert could be external to the EAS member countries or internal to the EAS countries but the international expert should not be a representative of the referencing country or the observer's country.