



## Component 3: Quality Assurance and Qualifications

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## **Review of the legislation and documents related to the Jordanian NQF**

### **Component 3: Quality Assurance and Qualifications**

**Assist in the development of an operationalisation plan of the established Jordanian  
National Qualification Framework in relation to TVET qualifications and in  
relationship with the Social Partners, as well as conduct a diagnostic analysis to review  
the Education sector pathways to improve the attractiveness of the E-TVET sector**

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## 1. Introduction

This review has been compiled on the basis of the study of available materials for the Jordanian NQF including the bylaw on NQF. The documents related to accreditation of TVET programs and other documents developed earlier by the Jordanian authorities or jointly with donors and international experts in previous projects have been considered. The notes are informed by the discussions held with project representatives, the NQF Steering Committee as well as AQACHEI, ETVET Directorate and CAQA representatives and officials from the ministries of education and labour. In addition, the documents produced by other international donors have been acknowledged, in particular the ones released by the British Council.

It is important to acknowledge that most of the reviewed documents were translated into English from Arabic. The translations were not officially confirmed, therefore potentially challenging in terms of quality and accuracy. The authors found particularly challenging the translation of the bylaw on NQF. Namely there are several English translations in circulation which show discrepancies between each other.

The purpose of this review is to guide the further development of the NQF, in particular in practical terms of its operationalisation and implementation. It gives a short overview. It is not meant to give concrete solutions to the identified challenges, however, in some parts the recommendations are presented as a general view on the direction of possible solutions. The review is also a deliverable generated in view of developing an operationalisation plan for the implementation of the NQF.

## 2. The bylaw of the NQF

The *Bylaw of the National Qualifications Framework* was issued in 2019 pursuant to paragraph C of article 7 of the Higher Education Institutions' Accreditation and Quality Assurance Law no. 20 of the year 2007. The document can be analysed as divided in five parts.



In the first part it is defining the basic terms and concepts related to the NQF system. The terms are sufficiently explained, even though sometimes is not clear the use and distinction between basic terms and concepts. For example, *qualification* is defined as a certificate:

***Qualification:*** *The Certificate granted to a graduate from specific educational or training program that has a minimum educational or training hours*

This leaves to assume that the program stands for the full concept that stands at the base of the NQF as a policy and system mechanism. However, when defining academic qualification and vocational qualification, the bylaw seems to acknowledge the broader meaning of the term qualification. For example, in the definition of *Vocational and Academic qualifications* it encompasses elements such as knowledge and learning outcomes:

***Academic qualifications:*** *Qualifications including theoretical learning outcomes that are focused on acquiring knowledge and can be refined through training after graduation in addition to a specific applied skills and self-learning skills*

***Vocational qualifications:*** *Qualifications depending on applied outcomes concentrating on acquiring competence and applied skills in different vocational fields that include applied learning outcomes in addition to specific theoretical knowledge and self-learning skills*

Also in the following definitions, the term qualification figures as standing for a complex concept, closer to what in some systems call an education or study program. This apparent inconsistency indicates a potential discrepancy in the definition of terms, or it is simply appearing in the translation as a consequence of language differences between Arabic and English.

It is also important to note the use of term listing in the context of accepting qualifications and education institutions (providers and awarding bodies) into the NQF system. The definitions give only vague frame of how deep the NQF should reach when it comes to verify and review the education providing institutions and their programmes.



**Institutional listing:** *The process of ensuring that the provider institutions and awarding bodies maintain their classification regarding qualifications issued by them and by establishing proper official / formal mechanisms to assure the quality of its outcomes*

**Qualification listing:** *The process of checking the national qualifications granted by awarding bodies with regards to compatibility with the levels' descriptors, qualification type and class*

Both definitions are crucial for the implementation of the NQF, especially in terms of developing standards and criteria for registration (or listing) and to set the review and re-registration (extension of listing) procedures. These two definitions also indicate the distinction of roles and purposes between NQF and quality assurance systems across sectors.

The second part is dedicated to the tasks attributed to the AQACHEI Board in relation to the design and implementation of the NQFJ. The board is given the authority to implement and manage the NQF and related procedures. It foremost attributes to the board the role to "design the Framework along with its levels and descriptors, reviewing, evaluating and upgrading it according to international changes and practices".

Among other tasks, the second part attributes to the AQACHEI board the authority to *Audit, verify, and evaluate learning outcomes of the national qualifications in order to be listed in the Framework* which is a strong indicator that the NQF is designed also with the purpose to make sure the education is outcome oriented and that the key element of outcome based education – the learning outcomes – are properly implemented and used in the learning programs. In other words, NQF is also designed to incentivise the shift towards outcome based education.

The bylaw attributes to the board also the responsibility for international comparability and recognition of qualifications, including the cooperation with the regional and international activities and framework. In addition, the board is responsible for a range of technical support for the programme development and implementation of several elements of the NQFJ, including the quality assurance.



In the third part, the bylaw presents the levels of Jordanian qualification system including the description of each level. It however does not fix the relations between education sectors (general, TVET and higher education). Thus the so called permeability is left to programs/qualifications themselves and the NQFJ.

The fourth part addresses the operational modalities. In this part is important the provision that introduces Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) as the body that additionally overlooks the qualifications and institutions in TVET sector. TVET qualifications are dealt with by CAQA. It is however the Commission (AQACHEI) that sets the overall standards and procedures for all qualifications.

The fifth part lists the provisions, that the AQACHEI board should develop. This is the crucial part, since it indicates the range of competences and functions inherent to the NQFJ. These are:

- A. Listing awarding bodies in the Framework, qualifications listing, recognition of prior learning, related policies and procedures
- B. Standards of Entry, progression, progression routes
- C. Policies and procedures of Mapping of foreign qualification to the Framework levels
- D. Align the Framework with the regional and international Frameworks

Thus it is up to the board to take initiative and become representative in terms of implementation of the key policy elements of the NQFJ.

## Recommendations:

- In order to achieve the desired policy goal, the learning outcomes must be properly implemented before listed and periodically verified and evaluated. The board should therefore take care of methods and approaches to introduce the concept of learning outcomes and the related procedures to all relevant stakeholders.
- In order to finalise the implementation, it is necessary to clarify the responsibilities of each of three sectors in relation to the central NQF





managing structures. Therefore, the Bylaw should be read in conjunction with the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Law.

### 3. The NQF Committee policy document

In 2017 the NQF Steering Committee developed a policy paper named *National Qualification Framework's Proposal in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*. The paper served as a sort of prelude to the legislation that followed in 2019 in the form of the bylaw on NQF (above). It starts with the idea of NQF for Jordanian context and the tentative implementation strategy for an NQF. There is little focus on the actual purpose and need for an instrument as NQF in Jordanian context.

It however continues with a good overview and the current status of education and qualifications in Jordan. This is welcome especially for the experts that are not originating in Jordanian national education arena. The overview of the state of education also reflects the comprehensiveness of the approach of the Committee to the policy development in education.

The paper is also as such a comprehensive document and inclusive of a wide array of aspects of the NQF. It divides qualifications by classes and types and outlines the level descriptors. It provides a statistical overview of education programs in Jordan. It addresses each educational sectors, education levels. It includes the recognition of qualifications from outside Jordan by academic/professional field, type and level.

The document tackles some detailed elements as recognition of prior learning, entry standards, transfer of learning. It also includes the quality assurance dimension to education and related institutions in Jordan. Eventually it dedicates attention to various stakeholders in education and their views.

This policy document is a soft and not legally binding provision. It served well as a basis for future phases of the development of the NQFJ. In light of the adoption of the bylaw on NQF it however became somehow obsolete. The system needs a more concrete operationalisation plan for implementing NQFJ that is now grounded in the hard legislation.



## Recommendation:

- The process of developing the NQFJ should recurrently include the acknowledgement of the basic needs and purposes for a policy instrument such as NQF in Jordanian education system.

## 4. Purpose and scope of the NQF

There is no clear agreement on the purpose of the NQF. NQFs are introduced in different countries for a variety of reasons. These should then guide how exactly the NQF is being operationalised.

The NQF is designed to embrace the entire education and learning spectrum, starting from Kindergarten qualifications. Most NQFs only start with school qualifications. Whilst this in itself is not problematic, but rather consistent to integrate all qualifications, it poses questions in relation to the mandatory or voluntary nature of the NQF. The NQF is supposed to list qualifications. But it has not been sufficiently discussed whether there should also be an institutional component, i.e. who can/has to register qualifications? And what would be the process for becoming eligible for registering qualifications? Should there be a set of institutional standards that would allow education providers to register their qualifications on the NQF? Would for example all kindergartens and schools in the country be treated as education providers that need to be assessed institutionally and would they have to register their qualifications (see also under relation to QA)?

## 5. The levels and level descriptors

The levels and level descriptors represent the fundamentals of NQFJ and that an appropriate design of these should be part of the priority scheme. It is possible to upgrade and further refine the level descriptors that were proposed by the NQF Committee in 2017. These level descriptors are in fact a good basis for





consultation with stakeholders and can be subject to amendments in accordance with the outcomes of this consultation in addition to expert input.

The adjustment to the level descriptors is expected to incentivize the educational providers and the awarding bodies to engage with the reforms, especially the introduction of the outcome based principle in the program/qualification design. However, the teaching staff and institutional management would need training support in order to absorb the essence and the techniques of implementation of learning outcomes, as a relatively new concept in education. For this purpose, it would be of high relevance to organize several cycles of training for trainers, i.e. to train the stakeholders, including the representatives of education and training providers and their associations with the purpose of developing a pool of trainers and promoters of the concept of learning outcomes and the techniques of its implementation.

## 6. Nature of NQF and the relation to QA

The stakeholders seem to be reconciled with the idea that NQF should become mandatory. However, there has been no discussion about the potential timeframe for this. This has strong repercussions on the operationalisation, as it would raise both questions about the institutional capacities to prepare for the registration of their qualifications and about the capacity requirements for the entity managing the NQF (also see below).

There is no clear decision as to how the NQF should relate to existing quality assurance schemes and procedures, in particular to the ones existing in TVET and higher education and managed by CAQA/AQACHEI. Should the QA processes and outcomes be used as a proxy for the eligibility (institutional) and registration (qualifications)? Would all accredited institutions be automatically eligible to register their qualifications? Would accredited programmes be automatically registered on the NQF? Should the standards and criteria for accreditation then be changed to include all aspects relevant to the NQF? What would then be the process for eligibility and registration in those sectors that do not have external quality assurance / accreditation processes? Or would the NQF registration process replace the existing quality assurance and accreditation processes?



## Recommendation

- A thorough discussion and a policy and structural decision has to be taken about the respective roles and purposes of the quality assurance and the NQF. This has to be resolved before the implementation takes place.

## 7. Capacity / resource requirements

The difficult questions at this stage are related to the capacity needs for the ongoing implementation and running of the NQF. This is in large parts dependant on the question whether the NQF becomes mandatory and if so, by when. It also depends on the relation to current accreditation schemes and the questions whether there would be institutional processes for all education and training providers. Furthermore, it depends on whether each school and Kindergarten is going to be treated as an individual entity and all their qualifications are treated individually. Whilst some stakeholders seem to favour such an approach, it appears that there is a misunderstanding about the role of an NQF. Stakeholders have said that even though the Ministry of Education is in charge of designing qualifications delivered by primary and secondary sector, all schools should be assessed in terms of their delivery. However, the delivery of qualifications is not normally within the scope of an NQF, but this is to be addressed through a quality assurance process and agency. Yet, even if public schools and their qualifications are not going to comprise part of the NQF, private schools as well as Kindergartens are offering different qualifications that would need to be registered on the NQF, as they are all different to some extent. Hence, the number of institutions and their qualifications would be several thousands. Generally, there is no clear and precise overview of the number of educational providers that exist in Jordan and would become addressees of the NQF. These numbers only seem to be clear for higher education and to some extent for TVET. However, without having a clarity on the number of institutions and qualifications, it will be difficult to determine capacity and resource needs for the NQF operationalisation.



There is no document that addresses a comprehensive financial structure of developing and managing the NQF. The NQF will not be able to perform the desired policy functions without a solid financial input and a proper distribution of funds within the NQF management and administration structures.

## Recommendation

- There is an enormous amount of qualifications and education providers within the system that will need to undergo a review as part of the registration procedure. It is crucial to develop a team of well trained staff in order to cater for the correct implementation of NQF from the very outset.
- More emphasis should be put on financial aspects of the NQF

## 8. Preliminary conclusions and some general recommendations:

The NQF documentation focuses mainly on aspects related to levels and their descriptors. These seem adequately defined from a technical perspective even though this is not an assessment of whether the defined qualifications levels are realistic or too ambitious. However, many fundamental questions have not been addressed and few answers have been provided to implementation modalities.

Thus, prior to further developing the NQFJ the following should be resolved:

- Development of a mission statement for the NQF and long-term strategic goals to be addressed by the NQF.
- The terminology is in need of review in terms of consistency. In some cases, it is only about the translation, but for example in the case of the definition of *qualification* as a concept, there is a need for further elaboration.
- Introduction of a systematic and clear distinction between the purpose of the NQF and the purpose of the QA (and accreditation) system. Based on this division of roles the emerging NQF should have a clear role in relation



to other processes, transparency tools and regulatory mechanisms within the Jordanian education system.

- Resolution of the dilemma between a centralised overarching NQFJ and differentiated approach by sectors (general education, TVET, higher education)
- The implementation of NQF requires sufficient staff. The authority in charge of the NQF implementation should urgently deploy sufficient staff to work on starting the implementation activities for the NQF. This should at this stage at least comprise one project manager who would be in charge of overall coordination, one full-time staff in charge of institutional related questions, one full-time staff in charge of programme related questions and one full-time staff in charge of IT requirements. In continuation, the staff should be added in accordance with the staff development plan.
- Based on the fundamental questions in other areas, an overview needs to be established that clearly indicates how many institutions and qualifications are expected to be assessed for their inclusion in the NQF within which timeframe. On that basis, further plans for the implementation and operationalisation of the NQF could be made.

It will be difficult to proceed with technical assistance on the implementation and operationalisation of the NQF if the above fundamental questions are not discussed and decided upon by the appropriate stakeholders and authorities. The Technical Assistance should not take these decisions for the beneficiary but offer its support in moderating the discussions and highlighting the practical consequences or the different options during the discussions.