

Report on the results of a comparative analysis of the National Qualifications System of Uzbekistan and foreign countries

Prepared by GIZ TexVET project.

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Introduction

The prerequisite for the development of this analytical report was a request sent by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation and the Project Office “Center for Educational Projects” to the GIZ TexVET project to prepare feedback for the draft Law on Professional Qualifications.

It is well known that the creation of the National Qualifications System (NQS) of Uzbekistan began in 2020 through the adoption of the following documents:

- *Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers «About the measures to organize the activities of the National System of Professional Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills in the Republic of Uzbekistan» (№287 dated May 15th, 2020);*
- *The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On employment of the population” (No. ZRU-642 dated October 20, 2020);*
- *The Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On measures for fundamental improvement of qualifications assessment system and providing the labor market with qualified human resources” (No. 4939 dated December 31, 2020);*
- *The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers «On additional measures for further improvement of the professional skills and knowledge development system» (No. 606 dated 30.09.2021);*

The dynamics of the adoption of these documents signifies the government's strong commitment to the creation/improvement of the NQF.

According to the assumptions of the GIZ TexVET project experts, the draft Law on Professional Qualifications should outline at the legislative level the main elements / players, governance mechanisms, and financing of the National Qualifications System to make it more flexible, clear and understandable for all interested parties (including issues of improving the recognition and comparability of the NQS at the international level).

If this law is truly intended to replace/change existing legal documents, then it must be comprehensive and consider the positive aspects of all existing documents governing the National Qualifications Framework from 2020. In this process, it is also important to find an answer to the question of why the current National Qualifications System has not yet demonstrated the desired results.

This prompted the GIZ TexVET project to conduct a comparative analysis of the entire NQS of Uzbekistan through the prism of the main functions, elements/characteristics of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)¹ of developed countries. The following criteria were used in the analysis: *main objectives, levels of learning, competency-based approach, types of qualifications, learning outcomes, quality assurance, credit systems, pathways and progress, transparency and portability, recognition of previous learning / recognition, validation, accreditation, and stakeholder engagement.*

The authors of this document do not claim the report to be complete, as the analysis was carried out within limited time and resources.

¹ In this publication, NQF and NQS are used synonymously.

Main objectives of the NQF / NQS

For countries seeking to create a NQF, it is first important to understand what benefits an effective NQF system can provide. In this regard, it is useful to look at the vision of countries that have successfully implemented/are implementing the NQF:

- Qualifications frameworks **promote transparency and comparability of qualifications**, as well as **mobility among European education and training systems**. They can also impact broader education and **lifelong learning** policies, such as those on **recognition and validation of prior learning**. By offering information on qualifications through databases and on **certificates, diplomas and supplements**, countries are extending the frameworks' outreach to stakeholders and the wider public at national and **international levels**².
- The New Zealand Qualifications Framework conveys the skills, knowledge and attributes a graduate has gained through completing a qualification; requires the development of **integrated and coherent qualifications** that meet the needs of individuals, groups, industry and the community; **enables and supports the provision of high-quality education pathways**; enhances confidence in the **quality and international comparability** of New Zealand qualifications³.
- The objectives of the South African NQF are as follows: to create a single integrated national framework for **learning achievements**; **facilitate access** to, and **mobility** and progression within, **education, training and career paths**; enhance the **quality of education and training**; accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities⁴

Examining the 93 reports, UNESCO, ETF and CEDEFOP experts counted ten main objectives for NQFs (percentages reflect frequency of mention): 1. *Improve transparency, comparability, and recognition of qualifications* (93%); 2. *Support lifelong learning, access to qualifications, and permeability of education and training systems* (87.2%); 3. *Support recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning* (73.3%); 4. *Support reforms and raise the quality of education and training* (68.6%); 5. *Strengthen links between education and the labour market* (59.3%); 6. *Improve quality assurance systems* (51.2%); 7. *Ensure closer integration of education and training system* (48.8%); 8. *Use as an instrument for international alignment* (32.6%); 9. *Support socio-economic development* (19.8%); 10. *Strengthen cooperation among different stakeholders* (17.4%)⁵.

During the preparation of this report, a comparative analysis of the main goals and objectives of the NQS of Uzbekistan, reflected in the draft law, as well as in the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers «About the measures to organize the activities of the National System of Professional Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills in the Republic of Uzbekistan», was carried out.

Conclusion:

- The main objectives and functions of the National Qualifications System are formulated very broadly, overly detailed and do not consider the following main features of the effective NQF: support cross-border mobility and lifelong learning as well as transparency, comparability, and alignment of the NQF with international qualifications frameworks.

² [National Qualifications frameworks \(NQFs\) online tool | About | CEDEFOP \(europa.eu\)](#)

³ [The New Zealand Qualifications Framework \(nzqa.govt.nz\)](#)

⁴ <https://www.saga.org.za/about-saga/a-brief-history/>

⁵ Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks, UNESCO, ETF and CEDEFOP (2023): https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2237_en.pdf

Recommendation:

- Taking into account the best practices of foreign countries and the NQFs main features, formulate the goals and objectives of the National Qualifications System of Uzbekistan, which will be clear and understandable to all stakeholders both at the national and international levels.

Main elements / characteristics of the NQF / NQS

Levels of Learning, Descriptors and Learning Outcomes

The national qualifications system of Uzbekistan was created by Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 287 of May 15, 2020. Its qualification levels are largely identical to the EQF and have eight reference levels defined in terms of i.e., knowledge, skills and autonomy-responsibility. Learning outcomes express what individuals know, understand and are able to do at the end of a learning process.

As is known, NOFs focus on learning outcomes rather than the duration or type of education. Learning outcomes specify what learners should know, understand, and be able to do after completing a qualification (reflecting the NQF Level Descriptors of Knowledge, Skills, and Competence).

By making a political decision to introduce the NQF / NQS, the government of Uzbekistan demonstrated its desire to build a flexible, outcome-based education system.

Conclusions:

- Unfortunately, the results of this decision at the macro level have not yet been visible at the meso-micro level. In other words, in the country, this policy decision at the macro level has not yet had an impact on changes at the meso (TVET/HE/local business) and micro (teachers - industrial trainers - students) levels.
- In general, it can be stated that in the practice of local experience there is still no visible connection between the main stages of VET/HE: needs assessment > professional standard > educational program > curriculum > skills assessment/certification.

Recommendations:

- Prepare a training program “Features of outcome-based education” and “Fundamentals of National Qualifications Systems” and make them mandatory for all employees of the education sector and the National Qualifications System. These programs should be designed to change the mindset and principles of work of specialists in the education sector and the National Qualifications System at all levels (macro, meso and micro);
- Develop quality assurance mechanisms for the following stages of VET / HE: labor market analysis, development of professional standards, competency-based educational programs and validation and certification of learning outcomes. This work also includes the development of methodological guidelines and training of specialists.

Qualifications types, Pathways, Progression and Credit Systems

Modern National Qualifications Systems have the following clearly defined and described elements / mechanisms:

- qualifications types, such as certificates, diplomas, and degrees.
- clear pathways and progression routes for learners, allowing for seamless movement between different levels and types of qualifications. This supports lifelong learning and career development and ensures the permeability between different types of education (e.g. vocational and academic)
- credit systems, which quantify learning volume based on notional learning hours. Credits facilitate the transfer and accumulation of learning across different contexts.

This categorization of qualification types is essential for differentiating between the various forms of education and training available to learners. Each type should correspond to different levels of learning and represent varying depths of knowledge, skills, and competence.

As an example, this section examines the experience of Australia. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework.

AQF Australia has 10 levels and the following qualifications types linked to each level:

AQF level	Qualification Type	Qualification Title
	Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Titles will vary across jurisdictions; the use of the titles will be accompanied by the statement: '(Certificate Title) is a Senior Secondary Certificate of Education within the Australian Qualifications Framework.'
1	Certificate I	Certificate I (Field of study/discipline)
2	Certificate II	Certificate II (Field of study/discipline)
3	Certificate III	Certificate III (Field of study/discipline)
4	Certificate IV	Certificate IV (Field of study/discipline)
5	Diploma	Diploma (Field of study/discipline)
6	Advanced Diploma	Advanced Diploma (Field of study/discipline)
6	Associate Degree	Associate Degree (Field of study/discipline)
7	Bachelor Degree	Bachelor (Field of study/discipline)
8	Bachelor Honours Degree	Bachelor (Field of study/discipline) (Honours)
8	Graduate Certificate	Graduate Certificate (Field of study/discipline)
8	Graduate Diploma	Graduate Diploma (Field of study/discipline)
9	Masters Degree (Research)	Master (Field of study/discipline)
9	Masters Degree (Coursework)	Master (Field of study/discipline)
9	Masters Degree (Extended)	Master (Field of study/discipline) For exceptions that may be used, see below*
10	Doctoral Degree	Doctor (Field of study/discipline)
10	Higher Doctoral Degree	Doctor (Field of study/discipline)

AQF is also supported by documents such as: AQF Qualifications Issuance Policy, AQF Qualifications Pathways Policy, AQF Qualifications Register Policy, AQF Qualification Type

Addition and Removal Policy, AQF Glossary of Terminology, Principles and Processes for the Alignment of the AQF with International Qualifications Frameworks.⁶

It was impossible to find information about the types of qualifications and documents issued in the current documents regulating the NQS of Uzbekistan. Issuance procedures and requirements for state-issued documents are described in the following documents:

- *Decision of The Cabinet of Ministers of The Republic of Uzbekistan on the organization of vocational training centers for unemployed citizens in the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan (April 10, 2017, No. 199).*
- *Decision of The Cabinet of Ministers of The Republic of Uzbekistan on the Approval of the State Sample of bachelor's and master's diplomas of higher education (July 19, 2019, No. 607)*
- *Decision of The Cabinet of Ministers of The Republic of Uzbekistan on the Approval of the State Sample of Documents on Primary, Secondary and Secondary Special Professional Education (November 19, 2020, No. 734)*
- *Law on employment (2020): Article 80 on Final qualification exams and the procedure for awarding qualifications (belongs to the vocational training centers of the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction)*

As can be seen from the publication dates of these documents, two of them were published before the implementation of the NQS (May 15th, 2020), and an analysis of their content shows that there is not a single mention of the NQS in them. In the documents regulating the NQS there is also no mention or link to the above documents.

This inconsistency leads to another problem - that in the issued state documents and their annexes, there is no description of learning outcomes (competencies) and credit volume, which complicates the processes of comparability and recognition of these documents by the NQS of foreign countries.

Conclusions:

- The NQS of Uzbekistan does not have a unified description of the qualification types and documents. Also, certificates / diplomas do not show their connection to the levels of the NQF, and their applications do not contain information about the competencies of their holders and credit volumes.
- The NQS of Uzbekistan does not have a credit system, nor clear development paths and routes that ensure smooth movement between different levels and types of qualifications. This will not promote lifelong learning and career development.

Recommendations:

- Using the experience of developed countries as an example, introduce a unified classification of types of qualifications linked to the NQF. Prepare a unified document describing the types of qualifications and documents confirming qualifications.
- Develop and implement a credit system for all levels of NQS.

⁶ The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF): <https://www.aqf.edu.au/>

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) / Recognition Accreditation and Validation (RVA)

NQFs often include provisions for the RPL / RVA. This allows individuals to gain formal recognition for skills and knowledge acquired through informal or non-formal learning. RPL / RVA acknowledges that learning doesn't just happen in classrooms. People acquire valuable skills and knowledge through work experience, volunteering, self-study, and other informal or non-formal activities.

The adopted Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers «About the measures to organize the activities of the National System of Professional Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills in the Republic of Uzbekistan» (№287 dated May 15th, 2020)⁷ was the first document describing not only the functions and tasks of the agencies (Qualifications Assessment Centers), but also the validation procedures/rules.

The Law “On Employment of the Population” also includes articles related to the Qualification Assessment Centers (Article 81), the procedure for accreditation of Qualifications Assessment Centers (Article 82), the procedure for assessing qualifications, competencies and skills (Article 83), and the results of assessment of qualifications, competencies and skills (Article 84).

The Law “On Employment of the Population” also regulates the accreditation procedures for the Qualification Assessment Center (Article 82), where the key authority is the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction. According to the Law it is allowed the accreditation of one Qualifications Assessment Center for several types of professional activity (professions).

Conclusions:

- From the above information, it can be concluded that Uzbekistan has taken effective steps to create RVA system. The country has established legislative and regulatory frameworks for RVA, as well as RVA providers.
- However, the RVA system is still in its infancy and has both strengths and weaknesses. This is clearly demonstrated by the SWOT analysis table.:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Favorable legislative framework- Availability of national qualification frameworks;- Institutions responsible for validation have been established.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- National validation principles (including guidelines) that take into account the best practices have not been developed;- Lack of validation experts;- There are no cases of practical application of validation in the QACs;- Weak validation funding mechanisms;- Weak information support for validation;- Lack of consultations for the public on validation issues.
Opportunities	Threats

⁷ Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers «About the measures to organize the activities of the National System of Professional Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills in the Republic of Uzbekistan» (№287 dated May 15th, 2020): <https://lex.uz/docs/4814154>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High demand (strong migration flows, developed informal sector of the economy); - Availability of large projects in VET sector (funded by GIZ, UNESCO, HELVETAS, ADB); - There are sectors with highest need and favourable conditions for validation; - Strong political support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Loss of trust in validation mechanisms by the public, decision-makers and private sector; - Government abandoning the idea and further development of the QACs. |
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- Professional standards (including structure and content) development mechanism requires improvement and needs appropriate arrangements to ensure their quality and regular updating. Professional standards themselves are difficult to consider as a basis for validation and certification since they describe the process and do not have evaluation indicators.
 - The current rules for qualification assessment are general and superficial and do not focus on the validation and assessment of competencies. In order to conduct high-quality and transparent validation/certification, the QACs need technical and methodological support, as well as trained evaluators (examiners).
 - Effective RVA processes can be implemented only if certain "inputs" are provided for, for example, provisions on certification and/or validation, technical and human resource infrastructure, trained evaluators/examiners, guidelines and materials, evaluation standards, accessible advisory services for potential applicants as well as financing mechanisms.

Recommendations:

The following are recommended as priority areas of the validation and certification development⁸:

- Providing clear benchmarks for assessing professional competencies;
- Providing information on validation and certification procedures to the stakeholders;
- Creating requirements for evaluators, selection and training mechanisms;
- Improving the quality of assessment methods and procedures;
- Improving the practice of documenting, evaluating and monitoring the results of validation and certification;
- Creation of formal mechanisms for quality assurance of validation and certification.

⁸ For more see the Draft of the Concept of validation and certification of professional competencies in Uzbekistan prepared by GIZ TexVET project (2022)

Quality Assurance, Governance and Stakeholder Involvement

To support the implementation of the NQF, it is important to ensure that capacities are available to meet the ambitions of the NQF objectives. Many countries opt to establish specialized bodies. These can deal with coordination between stakeholders, regulating and quality-assuring qualifications and awarding bodies, and the development of qualifications. Functions and tasks of qualifications agencies and authorities are given in the following table:⁹

Functions	Tasks
Further NQF development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintain NQF structures. - Prepare policy decisions. - Link NQF to occupations in the labour market.
Facilitate cooperation and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formulate agreed positions. - Facilitate debate. - Address transversal competences. - Work with regional and sectoral bodies.
Identify needs and set priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify new occupations. - Organize development/review of occupational standards. - Identify qualifications on offer that could enter the NQF. - Address proliferation/overlaps of qualifications. - Invite stakeholders to develop specific standards/qualifications.
International positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NQF information dissemination at home and abroad, and via a website. - Use of common language. - Navigation tools.
Manage registers and databases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage NQF register of qualifications, units, occupational standards, awarding bodies, assessment centres, experts, graduates, educational programmes, training providers, training companies, teachers and trainers, students, issue certificates in order to authenticate.
Assistance, capacity building and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support SSCs/professional bodies/awarding bodies with standards and qualifications development. - Guidance for qualification types, for validation of non-formal and informal learning and for training programmes.
Ensure and enhance quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accredit awarding bodies, standards, qualifications, learners. - Enhance coherence and relevance of qualifications. - Widen access and alternative pathways. - Enhance the quality of assessment /assessors/verifiers. - Enhance the quality of providers. - Monitor and evaluate different actors.
Research the system functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess the impact and effectiveness. - Gather systematic feedback.
Support training providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support internal quality-assurance processes. - Development of curricula. - Support education and training provision. - training of teachers and trainers.

There seems to be a correlation between the stage reached and the governing system used. Early-stage NQFs are usually ministry-led, while among those NQFs which have reached the

⁹ Global Inventory of Regional and National Qualifications Frameworks, UNESCO, ETF and CEDEFOP (2015): [Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks, volume I: thematic chapters - UNESCO Digital Library](#)

activation and operational stages, a higher number is run by dedicated agencies, authorities, or inter-sectoral bodies. Another finding is that the more advanced the NQF, the more frequent the incidence of fusing both coordination and day-to-day running or implementation roles. Currently, about a third of NQFs are run in this way¹⁰.

In Uzbekistan, structures responsible for the NQS have also been created, the names and main functions of which are given in the following table:

Name	Functions
Council for the Development of Professional Qualifications and Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluation of the activities of the participants of the National Qualifications System - coordination of the development of professional competences
Labour Market Research Institute under the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is the working body of the Council for the Development of Professional Qualifications and Competencies - conducting studies in the NQS and organizing work to improve the system - studies the skills and knowledge needs and trends of industries - develops and improves Sectoral Qualification Frameworks - coordinates activities on the development and implementation of occupational standards; - participates in forming a system of recognition, validation and accreditation (certification) of the results of non-formal and informal learning, including the organization of Qualifications Assessment Centers
Sector Skills Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying industry skills and knowledge needs and trends based on labor market monitoring; - development, implementation and improvement of the Sector Qualifications Framework; - formation of the system of recognition, validation and accreditation of the results of non-formal and informal learning, including the organization of the Qualification Assessment Centers activities; - organization of work on vocational guidance and development of informational materials;
Qualification assessment centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment of applicants' professional competencies required in the labor market, regardless of the method of acquisition; - confirmation of compliance of applicants with the requirements of professional competences and professional standards during recruitment, growth in the professional structure.

Based on a comparison of functions and tasks of qualifications agencies and authorities of Uzbekistan and foreign countries, the following conclusions can be drawn.

¹⁰ Global Inventory of National and Regional Qualifications Frameworks, UNESCO, ETF and CEDEFOP (2023): https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/2237_en.pdf

Conclusions

- The current regulatory documents of Uzbekistan identified the structures responsible for: research and further NQF development; facilitation cooperation and coordination; identification of the needs and set priorities; registers and databases management; assistance, capacity building and guidance; support training providers. It should be noted here that the structures responsible for international positioning and ensuring quality improvement are not yet visible.
- The NQS did not receive necessary inputs (new approaches, guidelines for the development of professional standards, educational programs and the organization of validation and certification, as well as programs for improving the qualifications of NQS employees) to organize high-quality processes to perform its functions.
- The NQS and its players (especially the newly created ones – Republican Council, Institute of Labor Market Research, SSCs and QACs) did not receive the required level of funding and technical support to perform their functions. It is for this reason that they were unable to show the expected results.
- The Republican Council for the Development of Qualifications is still not perceived as the highest inter-sectoral body for the development of qualifications. One of the reasons may be the opening of the Republican Council under the Ministry of Employment and Poverty Reduction (ministry-led governance model), as well as the lack of a structure (Qualifications Agency/ Authority) responsible for the coordination, and day-to-day implementation.
- Institutional changes that took place in the structures of government bodies (the closure of individual bodies and the merger of ministries) had a negative impact on the activities of the NQS. For example, the closure of the State Inspectorate for Supervision of the Quality of Education deprived the NQF of an important body that monitored the quality of education. The distribution of its functions between two ministries made it impossible to conduct external (independent) control over the quality of the education system.

Recommendation:

- Increase the authority and role of the Council by subordinating it to the Cabinet of Ministers of Uzbekistan. This will help transform the Council into an intersectoral structure.
- Create a qualification authority (or regulator) that will: (i) establish regulatory arrangements that specify clear requirements and rigorous and appropriate quality standards for awarding organizations and for providers recognized to submit units (partial qualifications) to the framework; (ii) accredit training providers eligible to award qualifications; (iii) accredit qualifications within the Uzbek National Qualification Framework; and (iv) keep users informed about modules and qualifications available in the UZNQF, and report publicly on the UZNQF and on the organizations that operate within it. Create a QA Authority which will develop quality TVET standards at all levels of the system. The QA Authority and the qualification authority could be the same body¹¹.

¹¹ For more information see the Draft of the TVET strategy for Uzbekistan, prepared by UNESCO / EU TVET project.

- Strengthen funding for NQS actors, especially the Institute of Labor Market Research, SSCs and QACs¹².

¹² For more information see the Report on SSCs in Uzbekistan prepared by GIZ TexVET project (2022):
<https://tvet.edu.uz/upload/iblock/010/m8rdc15f3h5kx4yqcrnqwklq7v3dq2tx.pdf>

LIST OF SOURCES USED

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3. Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers «About the measures to organize the activities of the National System of Professional Qualifications, Knowledge and Skills in the Republic of Uzbekistan» (№287 dated May 15th, 2020);
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