

Comparative Study on National Qualification Framework in Asia

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Abstract: National Qualification Framework (NQF) is a modern measuring instrument for the Employer to measure the quality and performance of the Employee. In most of the countries the NQF is represented by different numbers of qualification levels. For instance, Bangladesh represents the NQF in 6 different levels, Sri Lanka in 12, Malaysia and Vietnam in 8, Thailand in 9, India in 10 and so on this brings difficulty to the local and international Employer to measure both the quality and qualification depending on their NQF qualification due to difference in the number of NQF levels in different countries. In this analysis, six Asian countries are taken as samples to represent the dissimilarities of NQF levels in Asia. Other than Asia, AQF (Australian Qualification Framework) is a well-known brand of NQF in the world which has 10 NQF levels. Another popular NQF standard which is in Europe is called EQF (European Qualification Framework) having 8 NQF levels and which are followed by all most all countries of Europe. But in Asian countries, the NQF levels differ from one country to another. Asian countries have a large quantity of job market both locally and internationally. As a consequence, the Employers all over the world are unable to detect or select the proper employee judging their NQF qualification levels which ranges from 6 to 12 in Asia. To bring about a solution to this problem, in my opinion, it is necessary to create a common standard of NQF for Asian people. But who will take the responsibility to propose the idea or a model to create a common standard. It may be initiated by any international body of Asia, TVET research body of Asia, any TVET research University, regional national agencies or bodies, or educational and training bodies of Asian countries.

Key words: National Qualification Framework, NQF Level, range of NQF levels.

1. INTRODUCTION

A Qualification Framework is a formalized structure in which learning level descriptors and qualifications are used in order to understand learning outcomes [1]. This allows for the ability to develop, assess and improve the quality education in a number of contexts. Qualifications Frameworks are typically found at the National, Regional, and International level. Therefore, a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is one type of Qualifications framework which fulfills the national and international demand of Job market that is also related to the Academic education system [2].

However, there are considerable dissimilarities between the fields of NQF levels, particular in Asian countries. There are no common standard levels of NQF in Asia or a sub-continent / region of Asia. In Asia, the number of NQF levels in individual countries has been determined according to their own necessity.

In this study, a number of differences between NQF standards of the mentioned countries will be demonstrated. These NQF levels range from 6 to 12. On the other hand, the same educational qualification has been shown by different countries at different levels of NQF, which makes it hard for everyone to understand. According to my observation, this results in the inability of the Asian people to enter Sub-continental, continental or international job market. Therefore, this study paper has tried to show its way to a solution.

2. METHODOLOGY

Author has analysis the NQF of Asian countries by selected 6 countries from Asia like Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, who has already implemented the NQF certification in their own countries. This study was based on the literature review of National Qualification Framework (NQF) of

mentioned countries and some others NQF papers. Author emphasis the dissimilarities of total levels of there NQF, maximum TVET levels in NQF, academic qualification at starting level of NQF etc. which confused the employer to understand there qualification and skill from the NQF certification. This paper also compares the EQF^[3] and AQF^[4] with the Asian countries.

3. ANALYSIS NQF ON ASIAN COUNTRIES

In this comparative study, six Asian countries (such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand and India) have been used as samples for comparison of the NQF level incompatibility.

3.1 NQF in Bangladesh: In Bangladesh, there is no NQF at all. Instead it has created NTVQF which

represents the National Technical & Vocational Qualification Framework only for technically and vocationally qualified people. Bangladesh has not yet addressed the Higher Secondary, Bachelor, Masters and PhD holder graduate people under NQF^[5]. NTVQF has 6 levels and two other Pre-Voc levels which have no similarity with the NQF levels of other Asian countries. The NTVQF also includes five vocational levels as well as one for diploma level qualification, which is shown below in Table-1. Currently, Bangladesh is going through by ILO project to build a NQF for Bangladesh where they are trying to address from primary to tertiary education level. The Target of this project is to build a Bangladesh Qualification Framework (BQF) within 2020.

Table-1: Levels of National Technical & Vocational Qualification Framework of Bangladesh.

Level	Knowledge	Skill	Education Sectors
6	Comprehensive actual and theoretical knowledge	Specialized and restricted range of cognitive and practical skills	Diploma in Engg. or equiv. (Polytech Edu)
5	Very broad knowledge in a specific study area.	Very broad range of cognitive and practical skills	NSCL-5 (Vocational Edu.)
4	Broad knowledge in a specific study area.	Range of cognitive and practical skills	NSCL-4 (Vocational Edu)
3	Moderately broad knowledge in a specific study area.	Basic cognitive and practical skills	NSCL-3 (Vocational Edu)
2	Basic underpinning knowledge in a specific study area.	Basic skills required to carry out simple tasks.	NSCL-2 (Vocational Edu)
1	Elementary understanding in a specific study area.	Limited range of skills required to carry out simple tasks.	NSCL-1 (Vocational Edu)
Pre-Voc-2	Limited general knowledge.	Very limited range of skills.	NSCL (Pre-Voc)-2 (Pre-Voc Edu)
Pre-Voc-1	Extremely limited general knowledge.	Minimal range of skills.	NSCL (Pre-Voc)-1 (Pre-Voc Edu)

3.2 NQF in India: In India, there are 10 NQF levels along with two RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) levels named National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF)^[6]. In Indian NQF, there are two RPL, two NCWP (National

Certificate for Work Preparation) and 8 NCC (National Competency Certificate) levels which is completely different from any other Asian country as shown below in Table-2.

Table-2: Indian National Vocational Education Qualification Framework.

Level	Certificate	Equivalence	Certifying Body
10	NCC 8	Doctorate	University and SSC
9	NCC 7	Master's Degree	University and SSC
8	NCC 6		University and SSC
7	NCC 5	Bachelor's Degree	Board of Technical Education (BTE) and SSC
6	NCC 4		University and SSC
5	NCC 3		Board of Technical Education and SSC,
4	NCC 2	Grade XII	School Board and SSC
3	NCC 1	Grade XI	School Board and SSC
2	NCWP 2	Grade X	
1	NCWP 1	Grade IX	

RPL	RPL 2	Grade VIII	NIOS /State Open Schools and SSC^
	RPL 1	Grade V	

3.3 NQF in Malaysia: In Malaysia, the Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF) is established and updated in March 2017 as draft which is designated as MQF version 2.0. This version consists of 8 levels which can be taken by the Secondary level to PhD level holder. In the MQF, first 5 levels are for the TVET people where level 1 to 3 represents the certificate level

and 4 & 5 are for Diploma and Advance Diploma holders. MQF level 6 to 8 represent those who are qualified above the advance Diploma level to PhD level^[7]. This MQF is not same as the other Asian countries. The MQF Version 2.0 draft copy of March 2017 is shown below in Table-3:

Table-3: Structure of Malaysian Qualification Framework.

Level	Credit	Academic Level	TVET
8	80	PhD by Research	
		Doctoral Degree by Mixed Mode or Doctoral Degree by Coursework	
7	40 30 20	Specialist Masters or Masters by Research	
		Masters Mixed Mode or Masters by Coursework	
		Post Graduate Diploma	
		Post Graduate Certificate	
6	130 120 66 36	Bachelor for professional type Bachelor with Honors (4 years)	
		Bachelor nonprofessional	
		Graduate Diploma	
		Graduate Certificate	
5	40	Advanced Diploma	Level-5
4	90	Diploma	Level-4
3	60	Certificate	Level-3
2	30	Certificate	Level-2
1	15	Certificate	Level-1

3.4 NQF in Sri Lanka: In Sri Lanka, the Sri Lanka Qualification Framework (SLQF) represents the NQF by 12 different levels where the vocational education sector and the higher education sector have also been identified according to updated version of Sep 2015^[8]. However, this is different from the NQF levels of other

Asian countries. SLQF levels starts from GCE/O-Level (or other equivalent courses) to PhD which is shown in the Table-4 of this paper. Sri Lanka does not address those who are below the GCE/O level under NQF but they have the scope of RPL mode.

Table 4: Structure of Sri Lanka Qualification Framework.

Level	Qualification Awarded	Minimum Volume of Learning for the Award
12	Doctor of Philosophy	Minimum 3 years of fulltime or equivalent time of original research after SLQL 6 or above
11	Master of Philosophy	Minimum 2 years of fulltime or equivalent time of original research after SLQL 6 or above
10	Masters with course work and a research component	60 credits after SLQL 5 or SLQL 6 including a research component of minimum 15 credits
9	Masters by course work	30 credits after SLQL 5 or SLQL 6
8	Postgraduate Diploma	25 credits after SLQL 5 or SLQL 6
7	Postgraduate Certificate	20 credits after SLQL 5 or SLQL 6
6	Bachelors Honours	120 credits after SLQL 2 of which 90 credits after SLQL 3, of which 60 credits after SLQL 4, of which 30 credits after SLQL 5
5	Bachelors	90 credits after SLQL 2 of which 60 credits after SLQL 3, of which 30 credits after SLQL 4
4	Higher Diploma	60 after SLQL2 of which 30 credits after SLQL3
3	Diploma	30 credits after SLQL 2
2	Advanced Certificate (GCE A-Level or equivalent)	
1	Certificate (GCE O-Level or equivalent)	

3.5 NQF in Thailand: In Thailand, the Thai NQF has nine levels. Each level is described by a level descriptor based on learning outcomes. The level descriptors were arrived at by linking educational qualification levels (secondary, vocational and higher) with the competence levels required by various industry clusters ^[9]. According to the Thai level descriptor of NQF in Table-

5, level 1 to 4 are for Lower Secondary to higher Vocational certificate and level 5 to 9 for Bachelor, Graduate Certificate, Master’s, Advanced Graduate certificate and Doctoral degree holders. The Thai NQF builds on the existing Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF) and Thai Qualifications Framework for Vocational Education (TVQF).

Table-5: Level descriptor of Thai National Qualification Framework.

NQF Levels	Connecting/Filling-up Mechanisms	Work Experiences	Educational Qualification Levels
9	Testing, measuring and evaluating transferred experiences from work; Accumulating learning units for raising EQL (Credit Bank)	Acquisition of additional Knowledge from formal, Non-formal and Informal education; Promoting practical training and actual work performance for improving craftsmanship and level of occupational skills	Doctoral Degree
8			Advanced Graduate
7			Master’s Degree
6			Graduate Certificate
5			Bachelor Degree
4			Higher Voc Certificate
3			Vocational Certificate
2			Upper Secondary
1			Lower Secondary

3.6 NQF in Vietnam: In Vietnam, the Vietnam National Qualification Framework (VNQF) represents the Elementary level to Tertiary level by 8 VNQF levels^[10]. In the VNQF, level 1 to 5 are for primary to higher secondary level and also for Technical and Vocational educated people and level 6 to 8 are for Bachelor, Masters and PhD degree holders only which is displayed

in Table-6. Each level of VNQF has a specific number of academic credits and a well-defined training program which must be achieved by the certificate holders. The VNQF is established in 2016. Although slight similarities are observed in the levels and other terms & conditions of MQF and VNQF but they are not the same. The VNQF as shown below:

Table-6: The Vietnam National Qualification Framework.

Level	Min. Academic Credits	Knowledge/Skill Level	Certificate Level
8	90/120 (Master’s/ Bachelor’s degree) credits for university graduates + required training of level-8	Advanced and intensive practical and theoretical knowledge.	PhD
7	60 credits for university graduates + required training of level-7	intensive theoretical knowledge which is higher than level 6	Masters
6	120 credits + required training of level-6	intensive theoretical knowledge in a profession of training;	Bachelor
5	60 credits + required training of level-5	extensive practical and theoretical knowledge in a profession of training;	College
4	35/50 credits + required training of level-4	Common and fundamental knowledge which is higher than level 3.	Intermediacy
3	15 credits + required training of level-3	common and fundamental knowledge,	Elementary 3
2	15 credits + required training of level-2	common and fundamental knowledge of a certain profession.	Elementary 2
1	5 credits + required training of level-1	common and fundamental knowledge in an unchanged working area.	Elementary 1

4. OUTCOME OF THIS COMPARETIVE STUDY

In this study paper as a sample of Asia, there are six Asian countries are discussed in section-4 and a comparison in section-5. There is a lot of variety founded in the level of NQF in the Asian countries. As per comparison there are a lot of dissimilarities founded

in the NQF of sample countries such as the total numbers of level in NQF, total TVET levels in NQF, academic educational levels of NQF and the starting qualification level of NQF as shown below:

4.1 Inequality of Total numbers of levels in NQF: The total levels of NQF in Asian countries are not same like

EQF where all European countries are follows the same level of standard under this EQF system. For instance in Asia, Bangladesh represents the NQF in 6 different levels, Sri Lanka in 12, India in 10, Malaysia and Vietnam in 8 different levels which confuses the local and international Employer. Due to this reason a common standard of NQF is essential for Asia. The total numbers of NQF levels has been shown in Table-7 and Fig-1.

Table-7: Country wise total NQF levels in Asia.

Sl.	Name of the Country	Levels of NQF
1.	Bangladesh	6
2.	India	10
3.	Malaysia	8
4.	Sri Lanka	12
5.	Thailand	9
6.	Vietnam	8

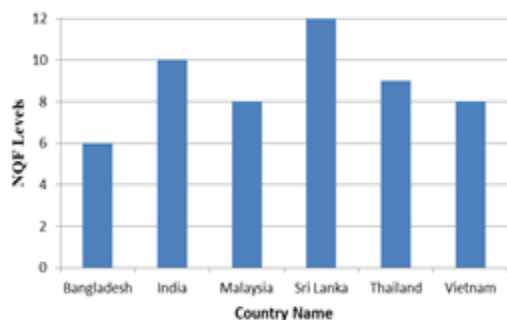


Fig-1: Country wise total NQF levels in Asia.

4.2 Dissimilarity of Total TVET Levels in NQF: In Asian countries there are significant dissimilarity of TVET levels in NQF. The TVET levels are not the same, it is varies from level 4 to 6 six. India, Sri Lanka and Thailand are represented there TVET levels within level 4 in NQF but Malaysia and Vietnam in 5 and Bangladesh in 6, which has been shown in Table-8 and Fig-2.

Table-8: Dissimilarities of total TVET levels in NQF.

S l	Name of the Country	TVET Levels in NQF
1	Bangladesh	6
2	India	4
3	Malaysia	5
4	Sri Lanka	4
5	Thailand	4
6	Vietnam	5

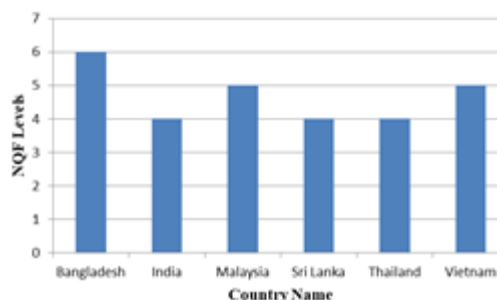


Fig-2: Dissimilarities of total TVET levels in NQF.

4.3 Dissimilarity of Academic educational level in NQF: The academic qualification level in NQF of Asian countries are not in same level. For instance, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand feed there bachelor academic degree in level 5 of NQF, but Malaysia and Vietnam in level 6. Same dissimilarities are in Masters and PhD also where Masters varies from 6 to 9 and PhD from 8 to 12 level of NQF which has been shown in Table-9 and Fig-3.

Table-9: Dissimilarities of Academic educational level in NQF

Country	Bachelor	Masters	PhD
Bangladesh	-	-	-
India	5	8	10
Malaysia	6	7	8
Sri Lanka	5	9	12
Thailand	5	6	9
Vietnam	6	7	8

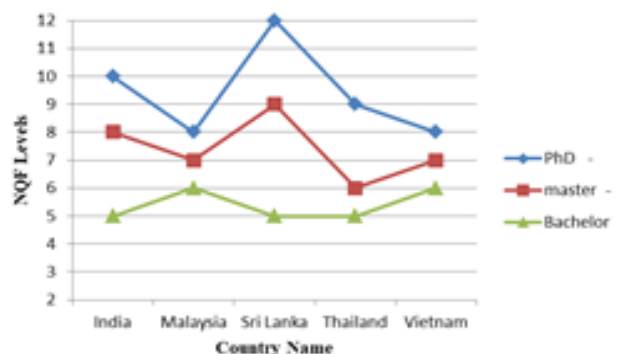


Fig-3: Dissimilarities of Academic educational level in NQF

4.4 Inequality of academic qualification in level 1: There are several discrepancies between the academic qualifications of the NQF Level 1. As example, India started the academic qualification from grade-5 for level 1, where Thailand from lower secondary, Vietnam from Elementary 1 and Sri Link from GCE / O-level which has been shown in Table-10.

Table10: Dissimilarities of starting academic qualification.

Sl.	Country	Starting Academic Level
1.	Bangladesh	Pre-Vocational Education
2.	India	Grade-V
3.	Malaysia	RPL education
4.	Sri Lanka	GCE / O-Level
5.	Thailand	Lower Secondary
6.	Vietnam	Elementary 1

5. CONCLUSIONS:

According to above analysis and outcome of the study, there are a lot of dissimilarities of NQF levels in Asian countries such as the *Inequality of Total numbers of levels in NQF*, *Dissimilarity of Total TVET Levels in NQF*, *Dissimilarity of Academic educational level in NQF* and *Inequality of academic qualification in level 1* which is confused the local and international Employers. For reducing the Employers difficulties to detect or select the proper Employee from the Asian countries, it is required to create a common standard level of NQF in Asia, which can be named as the Qualification Framework of Asia (QFA). It will be easier to branding and access the QFA certificate holders in the international and Asian Job market.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Extensive research is required to create a common NQF standard for Asian people. Any international body of Asia, TVET research body of Asia, TVET research University or any Educational bodies of Asian countries, any regional agencies or bodies, or any other educational and training bodies of Asian countries may initiate to create a model of QFA for Asian countries.

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