



Recognition of Bahrain's National Qualifications Framework in the Wider World

March 2019

INQAAHE 15th Biennial Conference 2019
Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH)
25th to 28th March 2019, Colombo - Sri Lanka

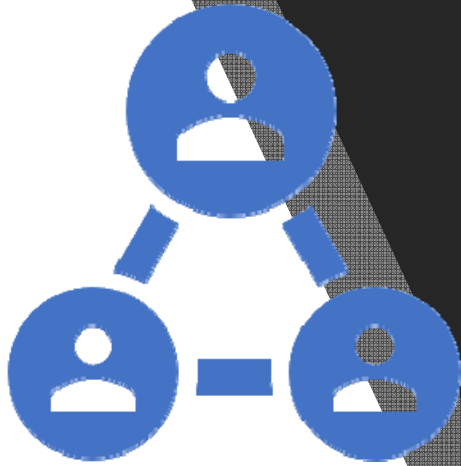
Dave Hornblow, Jameel Hasan & Ian Morris

The questions underpinning this research paper are:



- How can the application of Bahrain's National Qualifications Framework (NQF) best facilitate recognition internationally and locally of the graduates of the kingdom's universities and training institutions?
- What are the key principles, standards and processes that enable such recognition?
- How can the recognition be sustained over the coming years?

Research Methodology



- A qualitative interpretivist case study method was adopted.
- The qualitative data was extracted from documents, observations, interviews, discussion groups, and dialogue with experts. Surveys and group and individual interviews were undertaken to gather the views of university lecturers and other facilitators of learning as well as the perceptions of graduates.

Background to Education and Training in Bahrain



- The kingdom has the oldest public education system in the Gulf region.
- The first modern school was established in Bahrain in 1919 – exactly 100 years ago – and the first girls’ school in 1928 (Oxford Business Group, 2017).
- Higher education in Bahrain aims, through the National Higher Education Strategy and National Research Strategy, to “strengthen the links between higher education and business and industrial sectors to drive innovation, foster collaboration, create and identify research needs and to close the gap between employment and higher education regarding curriculum and skills” (Higher Education Council, 2018).



Evolution of Bahrain's NQF

Principles

- The roles and responsibilities of the relevant bodies and authorities are clear and transparent.
- Comparison of the NQF and the SCQF demonstrates matching between the levels of the two frameworks.
- The NQF and SCQF are based on learning outcomes and, where these exist, credit systems and the recognition of credit.
- The policies and processes for the inclusion of qualifications on the NQF and the SCQF are clear and transparent.
- Both qualifications frameworks are underpinned by quality assurance and are consistent with international quality assurance principles.

Standards

- Standards of Bahrain's framework relate to:
 - (1) Access, transfer and progression;
 - (2) Qualification development, approval and review;
 - (3) Assessment design and moderation;
 - (4) Certification and authentication;
 - (5) Continuous quality improvement.

Processes

- The key processes are:
 - (1) Institutional listing;
 - (2) Programme mapping, confirmation and placement;
 - (3) Reviews – self and external;
 - (4) Ongoing consultation.

Existing International and Regional Relationships

Existing International and Regional Relationships

- Within two or three years, it is intended to have alignment with the Malaysian Qualifications Framework, the New Zealand Qualifications Framework, and the Irish Qualifications Framework
- Currently, Bahrain is “heavily involved” in a meta-framework for the Gulf region, and also in the Arab Qualifications Framework.

Impacts on Facilitators and Learners

- As part of this research, a focus group of higher education lecturers and tutors addressed the questions:
 - In relation to your facilitation and assessment of learning, what do you understand to be the key requirements of Bahrain's NQF?
 - In what ways has your application of the requirements helped you?
 - In what ways has your application of the requirements created challenges for you?
 - What improvements should be made?

Impacts on Facilitation and Assessment

- It provides clarity to the learner of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are to be developed and assessed.
- It provides a focus for the teacher to design and facilitate teaching and learning strategies that will effectively and efficiently develop the required knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- It encourages dialogue, collegiality and consistency as educators are required to work together during the design, mapping and moderation processes.

Impacts on Teaching:

- A need for the provision of and a clear focus on intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of courses and programmes;
- A need to align assessments with ILOs as well as alignment with content, resources, and teaching and learning styles;
- An emphasis on learner-centred education and training;
- Meeting the challenges of having courses and programmes that are contextually appropriate;
- An essential requirement to comply with standards;
- The need for acceptance of education and training as iterative, cyclical processes.

Impacts on Learning:

- A need to focus on the ILOs that have been provided or negotiated for the course or programme;
- The need for acceptance of meaningful learned experience as being deep rather than shallow;
- Acceptance by the learner of devolved responsibility to be central to the learning;
- Critical questioning of the quality of facilitation of learning and assessment;
- Demands for contextual appropriateness of course and programmes content and facilitation;
- Evolving opportunities for learners to have a genuine 'voice' in education and training.

Suggested Improvements:

- Share good practices in relation to the NQF within universities.
- Encourage dialogue within and between higher education institutions of NQF requirements.
- Get constructive feedback from NQF [i.e. from the NQF department of BQA].
- Use effective IT solutions to manage NQF requirements.
- Have genuine emphases on both quality compliance and improvement. Review the judgement categories that are being used by BQA – i.e. outstanding, good, satisfactory, inadequate – to give a more positive impression. Currently, it is skewed to the negative end of the scale. A rectification would be to place an additional category – ‘very good’ – between outstanding and good.



Case Study: The
Arabic-English
Translator

Case Study: The
Aspiring Female
Astronaut

Concluding Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts

Encourage rather than police framework-related participation. Seek out what is being done well by institutions and promote and publicise it; indicate how improvements can be made to aspects that as yet are not being done well.

Develop a genuine emphasis on both quality compliance and improvement.

Ensure that significant training and support enables education institutions to adjust and comply with the major reform requirements is offered widely and has continuing provision.

Concluding Thoughts

Be

Be reminded of and take pride in appreciating the relatively long history of formal education and training in Bahrain for both genders.

Encourage

Encourage an ongoing quest for 'pockets of enthusiasm' within the education and training communities so that they can be widened and deepened (Hasan, 2015).

Sustain

To help sustain the effectiveness of the framework, it should be a matter of finding the pockets of enthusiasm, fostering them as pockets of excellence, and then having them seen and copied as pockets of exemplarism.

Concluding Thoughts

01

Importantly, in sustaining the initiative in dynamic local and global environments, Bahrain's National Qualifications Framework should not be accepted chiselled in stone. It should be revisited frequently to evolve its appropriateness and to consider how it might be further refined or improved.

02

Complex educational change takes considerable time and effort. However, with strong leadership and commitment the rewards can be a highly valued and respected qualifications system that is recognised internationally, and that enables increased student recruitment and greater global mobility for qualification holders. Such is the prospect for the graduates of Bahrain.



References

- Aldhaen, E., Stone, M. and Aravopoulou, E. (2018), "The role of qualification frameworks in assuring appropriate selection of assessment methods for quality learning", *International Journal of Higher Education Management*, Vol. 4 No 2.
- Bateman, A and Liang, X. (2016), *National Qualification Framework and Competency Standards: Skills Promotion and Job Creation in East Asia and Pacific*, Korea-World Bank Partnership Facility.
- Chowdhury Z. A. (2017), "Comparative Study on National Qualification Framework in Asia", *Advanced Journal of Technical and Vocational Education*, Vol. 1 No 2, pp. 67-72.
- Education and Training Quality Authority (2017), *General Directorate of National Qualifications Framework Handbook for Institutions*.
- Education and Training Quality Authority (2019), available at www.bqa.gov.bh (accessed 28 January 2019).
- Hasan, J. (2015), *In Search of a Programme Review Framework for a Polytechnic in Bahrain: The Experience of a Bahraini Quality Coordinator*, University of Southern Queensland.
- Hasan, J. and Alhayki, F. (2018), *Preparing for external quality review: critical success factors for vocational institutions*. In: ANQAHE 3rd Regional Conference: Quality Higher Education in the 21st Century: Achieving Effectiveness and Adding Value, 29 March 2018, State of Kuwait.
- Herzberg F. (1959), *The Motivation to Work*, Wiley, New York.
- Higher Education Council (2018), *Institutional Accreditation Handbook*, Kingdom of Bahrain.
- Ministry of Education (1999), "Technical & Vocational Education in Bahrain", paper presented at the International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education, Republic of Korea.
- Oxford Business Group (2017), "New initiatives in Bahrain's education sector target higher standards, appropriate skills" available at <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/>
- Royal University for Women (2019), available at www.ruw.edu.bh (accessed 28 January 2019).
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and the Education and Training Quality Authority (Bahrain) (2018), "Referencing Report of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the National Qualifications Framework of Bahrain (NQF)".
- Stake, R.E. (2010), *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work*, Guilford Publications, New York.
- UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (October 2015). *World TVET Database Bahrain*.