NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – GEORGIA

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 NQF snapshot

The first Georgian national qualifications framework (NQF) was adopted by ministerial decree in 2010. Following revisions, in 2019 an 8-level, comprehensive, lifelong learning framework, was approved.

National authorities intend that the ongoing reform of the NQF contribute to reform of the education and training system, enhance transparency and evidence-based decision-making on the NQF's implementation, and support inclusion of quality-assured qualifications for lifelong learning awarded outside of the formal education sector.

The National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) steers NQF implementation, reviewing and updating its legal basis and monitoring its impact. The NQF and the quality assurance framework for the national education and training system are closely linked.

Georgia has been participating in the Bologna process since 2005, but has not yet presented a self-certification report.

Implementation structures such as governance arrangements are established, instruments including databases are used and a quality assurance system is functioning. Georgia has therefore reached the activation stage of NQF development.

1.2 Policy context

Georgia aspires to closer integration with the EU. Pursuing implementation of the Association Agreement signed in 2014, Georgia conducts and develops policy consistent with the framework of relevant EU policies and practices. Cooperation in the field of education and training aims to promote lifelong learning and encourage coordination and transparency at all levels of education and training. This cooperation focuses, inter alia, on enhancing quality, relevance and access at all levels of education, promoting progress towards recognition of qualifications and competences and ensuring transparency of qualifications.

The Socioeconomic Development Strategy of Georgia (2014) – "Georgia 2020" – sets inclusive economic development as the main objective of the government. The strategy identifies human resources development, including development of a workforce that meets labour market requirements, as one of the main factors contributing to economic growth.

The Government Programme 2018–2020 – "Freedom, rapid development and welfare" – reiterates the Strategy's priorities and recognizes the need to improve the match between skills supplied and market demand and the importance of involvement of the private sector actors in implementing VET policies and lifelong learning principles.

The Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021, which succeeded the VET Development Strategy 2013-2020, sets the strategic objectives for all levels of education. The strategic objectives for VET include: (1) compliance of the vocational education with the requirements of the labour market and internationalisation of the system, (2) ensuring access to vocational education based on the principle of lifelong learning, (3) popularisation of professional education and increased attractiveness.

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One of the specific goals of the Unified Strategy is to increase the number of VET students to support the socio-economic development of the country. Currently, the VET sector is small and unpopular with young people - ETF found that, in 2017, only 4.5% of the cohort aged 15 to 24 were registered in formal VET programmes. The Government plans to raise this proportion to 8%.

Unfortunately, as the VET offer is limited in range, young people are not attracted to apply, and thus VET enrolment remains low. This dilemma is recognised by the Government, whose education strategy seeks to counter VET's negative image. By contrast, Higher Education is popular in Georgia, enjoying high enrolment rates.

The National Strategy 2019-2023 for Labour and Employment Policy of Georgia[1] identifies two priority areas: promotion of employment and promotion of effective functioning of the labour market. The strategy foresees addressing the mismatch between demand and supply in the labour market by promoting job creation, including in high productivity sectors, promoting qualified human resource development oriented towards labour market demands, and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.

Between 2010 and 2017, Georgia's annual GDP growth rate was over 5%, while the average annual employment growth rate was 1.4%. Although unemployment has been decreasing over time e.g. from 16.3% in 2010 to 12.7% in 2018, it is still high by international standards. We can anticipate that COVID will have reversed the progress made in reducing unemployment levels.

During 2020, as in other countries, the education and training system was hit by COVID. Schools were closed and learning switched to online teaching methods, supported by "TV School", aired on national TV. For a period, training was suspended in all public vocational schools to allow the Ministry to conduct a mapping of staff needs in distance and online teaching.

1.3 NQF legal basis

Two legal acts provide the basis for the regulation and implementation of the revised NQF:

The Law of Georgia "On development of Quality of Education". A new section dedicated to the NQF (an amendment to the law of 20 September 2018) defines:

- the NQF structure and its goals;
- roles in the development and approval of NQF legislation, including on management, development, approval and monitoring of the framework, the creation of the electronic registry of qualifications, the procedures and rules for recognition of non-formal education;
- role of the classifier of fields of study.

The Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia 69/n of 10 April 2019 "On the approval of the National Qualifications Framework and the Classifier of Fields of Study", repealing the first Georgian NQF adopted in 2010. It determines:

- the NQF level descriptors and the list of types of qualifications;
- the purpose and structure of the classifier of fields of study, principles of classification, list of fields of study, formulation of higher education qualifications titles, and the development of higher education programmes in accordance with the classifier.

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[1] National Strategy 2019-2023 for Labour and Employment Policy of Georgia, Government of Georgia, Ordinance 662 as of 30.12.2019 https://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/2020/Failebi/strategy-13.12.19_final-translation.pdf

The new Law of Georgia on Vocational Education, adopted by Parliament in 2018, was a milestone in VET reform in the country. It provides the legal basis for many innovations within the system which the NQF will contribute to achieving. Further, the Laws "On Higher Education" and "On General Education" have been amended to ensure harmonisation with the new NQF level structure and concepts.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

2.1 Education and training reforms

The main policy documents for VET – the Unified Strategy for Education and Science 2017–2021 and the new VET law of 2018 – include three strategic objectives in VET reform:

1. "Relevant VET" - relevant to labour market demands;
2. "Accessible VET" - accessible to everyone via lifelong learning;
3. "Attractive VET" - attractive or promoted to all groups in society.

The overall objective of the Unified Strategy is to develop an accessible system of quality education based on the principle of lifelong learning that provides opportunities to all citizens to achieve high quality outcomes. The Strategy and the respective action plan for 2019 have three strategic priorities for VET:

1. A VET system that meets labour market needs; internationalization of the system, which includes promoting involvement of the private sector; NQF implementation in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as one of the main tools for internationalisation; development of qualifications relevant to labour market needs; improvement of quality assurance mechanisms in vocational education; supporting entrepreneurial education and VET teachers' continuous professional development; development of eVET (information management system for VET);
2. Ensuring access to vocational education based on the principle of lifelong learning, which focuses on integrating VET and upper secondary education; recognition of VET credits within higher education; introduction of short-term, state-recognised training programmes for adults; recognition of non-formal learning; increasing and diversifying VET provision;
3. Promoting vocational education and increasing its attractiveness by improving the vocational/ career guidance service and the image of VET.

The new VET law of 2018 should improve access and raise participation in VET and broaden the scope of VET policy. It aims to improve the quality assurance mechanisms and flexibility of the VET system; create flexible pathways between VET and general and higher education; integrate general education into the VET system; better link VET to the needs of the economy to ensure that graduates are employable, and to facilitate their transition into work; ensure systematic application of work-based learning; develop mechanisms for credit accumulation and transfer; facilitate social partnership in VET; create mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning; and support the development of adult education.

2.2 Aims of NQF

The Law of Georgia "On development of Quality of Education" sets the following goals for the National Qualifications Framework (NQF):

- classification of qualifications in accordance with the basic principles of the National Qualifications Framework (compliance with learning outcomes, quality assurance, access to information related to qualifications);
- interconnection, management and development of general, vocational and higher education;
- promoting lifelong learning;
- supporting a quality assurance system for qualifications;
- ensuring compatibility, comparability and transparency of qualifications at the international level;
- facilitating mobility;
- promoting the recognition of formal education received during study;
- promoting the recognition of non-formal education;
- informing the public about existing qualifications;
- catering to the ever-changing demands of society in the education system and stimulating the description of relevant qualifications.

Compared with the NQF adopted in 2010, this set of goals reflects a renewed vision of the NQF, seeking to better link general education, VET and higher education; promote non-formal/informal education; increase transparency in understanding the professional profiles for all types of users; and achieve responsiveness to changing requirements and renewal of qualifications. The new NQF is increasingly seen as a bridge between the sub-sectors of formal education, as well as between formal and non-formal learning.

3. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

3.1 NQF scope and structure

Georgia first adopted three distinct frameworks in 2010, respectively catering for general, vocational and higher education. In 2017-2018, national authorities conducted a major revision of the NQF to achieve better linkages among the sub-systems of general education, VET and higher education, and greater international comparability of the framework. As a result, in 2018 the NQF-related amendments to the Law of Georgia on Development of Quality of Education were adopted, setting the main objectives and principles of the new NQF. In 2019, the new revised lifelong learning NQF was adopted.

The new framework comprises a unified eight-level structure whose level descriptor categories are "Knowledge and Understanding", "Skills", "Responsibility and autonomy", compatible with those of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

3.2 Types of qualifications

The NQF defines the types of qualifications allocated by levels: qualifications available in education subsystems: general education, initial VET, and higher education qualifications; and qualifications awarded as the result of completion of short-term vocational training/retraining programmes - CVET qualifications.

General education qualifications are placed at NQF levels 2 and 4, VET qualifications at NQF levels 3-5, while higher education qualifications are allocated to levels 6-8. CVET qualifications are placed at NQF levels 2-5. They are regarded as part of formal education, so can be levelled in the NQF, and can be awarded by any legal entity, including those outside the formal education system such as private companies, a training centres, associations, etc., authorised to provide short-term training/retraining programme independently or in collaboration with education institution.

3.3   Quality assurance of qualifications

The quality assurance framework includes mechanisms for the development and approval of qualifications - occupational and educational standards and procedures; and measures to ensure quality of provision - authorisation of providers and accreditation of education programmes. Authorisation refers to the initial licensing and aims at acquiring the status of an education institution that can deliver and award qualifications.

General education qualifications are based on the National Curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia (MESCS). It is obligatory for a general education institution and for a VET institution implementing the integrated VET and general secondary programme to follow the National Curriculum.

VET and short-cycle (Level 5) qualifications and programmes are developed using vocational education standards. The VET standards themselves are formulated based on occupational standards following NCEQE rules, procedures and methodologies[2]. A VET standard may be used to define one or more qualifications and must be developed with the involvement of representatives of employers and educational institutions, then validated by the relevant Sector Council and approved by the NCEQE.

VET qualifications may be awarded by education institutions authorised by the NCEQE. General education institutions can obtain the right to deliver programmes and award VET qualifications at NQF Levels 3 and 4 VET and higher education institutions can obtain the right to deliver and award VET qualifications at any level.

CVET qualifications can be developed based either on occupational or VET standards, or modules of the authorised VET programme, legal requirements, or documents containing information on occupations (e.g. ISCO-08), or any other relevant documents. To obtain the right to deliver the state-recognised vocational training/retraining programmes and award CVET qualifications, a legal entity must meet the requirements of the relevant authorisation standard[3]. Education institutions authorised to deliver VET programmes may deliver vocational training/retraining programmes within the VET programme without additional authorisation.

3.4   Use of learning outcomes and standards

The application of the learning outcomes approach is stipulated as mandatory in the legislation on quality assurance of education. Authorisation and accreditation standards require clearly defined learning outcomes aligned with the NQF level descriptors.

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[2] Rules for developing, amending and revoking the occupational standard, the framework document for educational program and module (NCEQE order no. 652o as of 26.07.2019)
https://eqe.ge/res/docs/652%E1%83%98.pdf
[3] Rules and conditions on obtaining the right to implement the vocational training and retraining program recognized by the state (Resolution of the Government of Georgia N131 of 15.03.2019)
https://www.mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=9133&lang=eng

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In general education, the National Curriculum comprises subject standards of primary, basic and upper general secondary education which define the list of subject-specific learning outcomes in skills and knowledge, to be achieved by the student at each grade.

To eliminate the dead ends that have traditionally prevented VET students from accessing higher VET and higher education, general secondary education learning outcomes defined in the National Curriculum have been integrated into VET programmes, so that VET students can now access higher VET colleges and higher education institutions.

Georgia has gradually replaced vocational courses based on subjects with modular, competency-based vocational programmes, so that, since 2019, any new student entering vocational education follows a modular programme. Modular programmes focus not only on the development of vocational/professional skills but also on basic skills e.g. literacy, mathematical skills, etc. and key skills, such as entrepreneurship, communication in foreign languages, digital competencies, etc. The VET programmes integrated with general secondary education reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum in the integrated general modules.

Short cycle programmes leading to an associate degree at NQF level 5 are developed by the VET or higher education institutions based on the VET standard. Some of these programmes are stand-alone courses, while others are designed to lead to first or second-cycle higher education programmes. For those learners graduating from Level 5 short cycle programmes and advancing to first or second cycle programmes, the receiving higher education institution can recognise their credits acquired.

In higher education, the programme accreditation has among its main functions the assessment of feasibility of the programme's learning outcomes, their relevance and correspondence to the NQF.

In the new modular VET programmes, a competence-based assessment is used. Each module is based on learning outcomes and includes performance/assessment criteria and evidence requirements[4]. Assessment should meet the requirements of the assessment standard, based on the respective occupational standard.

3.5   Credit systems

In higher education, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is used[5]. One ECTS credit equals 25-30 hours of student workload. One academic year is 60 ECTS credits, with a maximum of 75 ECTS for individual programmes. Higher education programmes of the first cycle shall have at least 240 ECTS; those of the second cycle, should have not less than 120 ECTS. However, it is possible for higher education institutions to develop the first cycle programme of 180 ECTS or the second cycle programme of 60 ECTS to promote students' international mobility and develop joint programmes at international level. The taught component of the third cycle cannot be less than 60 ECTS.

Credits awarded within one higher education programme (qualification) can be recognised for another higher education qualification at the same level, based on the comparison of learning outcomes[6].

The use of credits for VET is also foreseen. As in higher education, one credit equals 25-30 hours of student workload. Credits are allocated to modules and VET programmes in accordance with the VET educational standards.

4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

The National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) manages the NQF. It was established by the MESCS order as a legal entity of public law[7] to support the improvement of quality assurance of education. NCEQE has independent management of its functional organisation, staffing and human resource development, and budget.

NQCEQE[8]:

- authorizes educational institutions and accredits educational programmes, and controls provider compliance with authorization and accreditation standards through monitoring;
- develops authorization and accreditation standards and ensures their continuous improvement;
- ensures the management and development of the National Qualifications Framework and the Classifier of Fields of Study;
- develops higher education and vocational educational standards. To this end, it can establish sectoral councils or working groups;
- proposes, to promote a quality culture in educational institutions, recommendations, conducts developmental assessments, and conducts training sessions, seminars, and conferences;
- provides consulting services to educational institutions and other interested parties regarding quality assurance mechanisms, plans and implements measures aimed at developing the internal quality of educational institutions;
- recognizes and confirms the authenticity of educational documents issued in Georgia;
- verifies the linguistic correctness of state documents certifying education;
- carries out ancillary economic activities;
- accredits professional development programmes for professional public servants;
- oversees requests to develop and offer vocational training programmes in accordance with the rules established by legislation;
- issues and publishes information;
- ensures the protection of personal data;
- ensures the information security of the Centre in accordance with legislation;
- implements related regulations.

NCEQE approves the occupational and VET educational standards, and sector benchmarks for higher education programmes. Its activities are supervised by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MESCS), which is the main policy-making body for education. The national

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[7] Order of the Minister of Science and Education of Georgia "On establishment of Legal Entity of Public Law - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement and Approval of its Provision through Reorganization of Legal Entity of Public Law - National Center for Education Accreditation" No. 89 as of 14.09.2010 https://eqe.ge/res/docs/89ENG.pdf

[8] Order of the Minister of Education and Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia No. 215/n as of 28.10.2019 https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4688172?publication=0

policies and strategies are developed following consultation with other ministries and governmental agencies, and social partners.

4.2   Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

NCEQE is managed by a Director, appointed by the Minister of Education, and overseen and guided by the Coordinating Council9. This body acts as a governing board and is a collegial body established to ensure involvement of stakeholders in the management and development of the NCEQE's activities.

The Coordinating Council may comprise no more than 13 members and may include representatives of MESCS, heads of public and private educational institutions, representatives of employers and civil sectors, representatives of international education organizations, plus foreign specialists and other experts who can contribute to the NCEQE's activities.

The Coordination Council considers / reviews:

- the NCEQE Strategy and Action Plans; main activities;
- authorization and accreditation standards and procedures, and makes proposals for their improvement;
- NCEQE reports, results of external evaluation of its activities;
- NCEQE draft budgets;
- international cooperation in the field of education quality assurance; and develops relevant recommendations.

NCEQE establishes and coordinates the Sector Councils representing social partners and education providers, which are responsible for the validation of occupational and educational standards developed by the NCEQE working groups or other interested parties.

Social partners are also represented in the Council that authorizes the implementation of vocational training and retraining programmes. The members of this council are appointed by MESCS, its activities are supported by NCEQE.

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9 Order of the Minister of Science and Education of Georgia "On establishment of Legal Entity of Public Law - National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement and Approval of its Provision through Reorganization of Legal Entity of Public Law - National Center for Education Accreditation" No. 89 as of 14.09.2010
https://eqe.ge/res/docs/89ENG.pdf

5. RECOGNISING AND VALIDATING NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING AND LEARNING PATHWAYS

5.1 VNFIL arrangements

The VET law and framework documents for the recognition of informal education[10] have created a legal basis for the implementation of VNIFL in Georgia. Procedures and rules for VNIFL were renewed in 2019 to align with the EU Recommendation on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (2012) and to allow the recognition of non-formal and informal learning for VET qualifications at all NQF levels.

The VNIFL process includes four stages, corresponding to those of the 2012 European recommendation, namely identification, documentation, assessment and certification.

For the purposes of VNIFL, the VET educational standards are used. The assessment process should meet the requirements for the assessment of learning outcomes of the relevant VET standard or module. Following the VNIFL process, the candidate may be awarded the VET qualification or part of it.

VNIFL may be conducted by the VET institution or legal entity authorised to deliver the state-recognised vocational training/retraining programmes and only within its authorised programmes. To obtain the right to offer validation, which is granted by NCEQE, applicants must meet the rules and conditions established by the government[11].

In order to conduct the VNIFL process, the institution must establish a commission of at least 3 members: the representative of the relevant professional field (an employers' representative), a VET teacher in the relevant field and a representative of the institution. This commission decides on the admission to and organisation of the assessment, the establishment of the examination commission and its personal composition, validation of the results of the assessment (learning outcomes), and recognition (award of a qualification or part of one).

In general education, extra-mural study is allowed, and it is possible to obtain the document certifying completion of general education, based only on the assessment of achieved learning outcomes[12].

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[10] The Rule of recognition of learning outcomes achieved within non-formal education (order of MESCE as of 6.09.2019) and the Rules and conditions for obtaining the right to non-formal education recognition (Resolution of the Government of Georgia No. 459 as of 20.09.2019) https://eqe.ge/geo/static/873/

[11] Resolution of the Government of Georgia No. 459 as of 20.09.2019 on approval the rules and conditions for obtaining the right to non-formal education recognition https://eqe.ge/geo/static/873/

[12] Article 9 of the Law on General Education. https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/29248?publication=84

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6. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

6.1 Key achievements and main findings

In 2019 - 2020 significant progress was made in the NQF's development. New, modularized programmes integrated with general secondary education have been developed in VET, thus allowing VET students to access higher VET and higher education. The delivery of the "integrated" VET programmes began in 2019. Short cycle programmes, allowing for integration with higher education programmes, are being developed.

New quality assurance mechanisms have been developed to align the Georgian quality assurance framework with the European quality assurance principles for qualifications. Georgia has aligned the relevant reforms with the Bologna process and European Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA (ESG). Since 2019, the NCEQE has been a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

A system-wide implementation of the revised quality assurance standards and procedures at Georgian higher education institutions has begun. In VET, the authorization standards and procedures have been revised together with the development of relevant methodologies, tools, and capacity development activities to achieve compliance with EQAVET principles. This revised system will take account of modular, competence-based teaching and assessment approaches.

In order to provide a role for industry representatives in qualifications development at the sectoral level, NCEQE establishes Sector Councils, of which there are 12 VET and 8 higher education councils. However, they suffer from an under-representation of enterprises and professional associations, and a predominance of educational institutions and experts among their members[13].

Companies can now, under approved legislation, develop short-term vocational training programmes, leading to CVET qualifications, and seek authorisation to issue state-recognised certificates and receive funding.

Recognition of prior learning is progressing – Georgia has revised its regulations, procedures and tools to align with the EU's 2012 Recommendation on VNFIL and developed and disseminated implementation materials and training for actors. NCEQE has started to authorise VNFIL providers.

6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

All VET qualifications together with occupational standards and VET educational standards are placed on www.vet.ge and www.eqe.ge. The www.vet.emis.ge portal includes the list of VET programmes, training and retraining programmes together with the authorised providers. The register of higher education programmes is not open for public use.

All occupational standards are linked with the national classification of occupations, based on ISCO-08. VET qualifications are linked with the classifier of fields of study structured in accordance with ISCED-F 2013. Only the standards approved by NCEQE are entered into the register.

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[13] ETF (2019) Georgia: Education, Training and Employment Developments [ETF report 2019], p. 7. www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Georgia%202018.pdf

The concept for the new digital qualifications register has been developed. It defines a common structure for qualifications to be included in the register, which is in line with the Annex 6 of the 2017 EQF Recommendation.

6.3   Qualification documents

The title of the higher education qualification includes the name of the level of higher education and the name of the field of study according to the national classifier of fields of study. The supplement to the higher education diploma follows the European Diploma Supplement format. For the supplement to the diploma certifying VET qualifications, the Europass format is used.

6.4   Career information and guidance

The Labour Market Information System (LMIS) portal (www.lmis.gov.ge) is a one-stop-shop public web portal with up-to-date information on labour market trends, career guidance and occupational profiles. It is linked to the www.vet.ge portal focused on VET.

The portal www.vet.ge is designed to guide and inform different groups of users. It contains information on occupations linking them with VET programmes.

6.5   Recognition of foreign qualifications

The recognition of foreign higher education and vocational education qualifications, or periods of study (credits), is based on a comparison of qualifications taking into account the learning outcomes. The foreign higher education qualifications can be recognised regardless of the difference in the period of study[14].

7.   REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORK/ OTHER FRAMEWORKS

7.1   Referencing to regional frameworks

Georgia has been a member of the Bologna Process since 2005 but has not yet presented a self-certification report.

The structure and level descriptors of the new NQF are compatible with the EQF and Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA). Georgia seeks comparison of its NQF with the EQF in accordance with the new EQF Council Recommendation (2017)[15].

7.2   International cooperation

Georgia conducts and develops policy consistent with the framework of relevant EU policies and practices in line with the Association Agreement signed in 2014.

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[14] Article 50 of the Law on Higher Education. https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/32830?publication=80

[15] In accordance with the criteria and procedures to be defined by the Advisory Group EQF and in accordance with the EQF Council Recommendation of 22/05/2017: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0615%2801%29

NCEQE is a member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (CEENQA). It is also registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education. NCEQE also hosts the Georgian ENIC Centre, which is a member of the ENIC-NARIC Network. NCEQE cooperates as a full or affiliate partner in EU-funded projects aiming at enhancing the quality of higher education in the EHEA.

Georgia ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention in 1999.

7.3   International donor support

To support the implementation of the framework, the EU Twinning project "Strengthening Capacities for Quality Assurance of Education and Governance of Qualifications" was launched in 2019. Its objective is to support NCEQE in further developing the key elements of the quality assurance framework for education and training and the new NQF. The project will review legal and regulatory bases of quality assurance and the NQF, develop methodology packages, reinforce institutional capacity and develop technical specifications for the new NQF online register and portal.

8.   IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

The revised NQF allows for inclusion of qualifications of different types beyond those from formal education, stronger links between education and the labour market, and more open access to and use by all stakeholders groups. To exploit this greater scope, NCEQE and the concerned ministries will need to extend participative governance and decision-making, and target dissemination and information at stakeholders.

Successful implementation of the NQF cannot be the sole responsibility of a single ministry and/or the NCEQE. Currently, however, the NQF governance structure is very much oriented towards the formal education system and dominated by actors from the educational institutions.

There is a need for active involvement of other stakeholders - private sector organisations, professional bodies, non-governmental organisations - in the NQF reform, which requires the development of effective coordination mechanisms and effective planning. It is therefore crucial for implementing the new or strengthened NQF functions - renewal of qualifications, competence-based assessment, VNFIL, recognition of qualifications awarded outside the formal education sector – that private sector stakeholders participate more intensively in decision-making and NQF management.

A more strategic approach to skills anticipation and qualifications development at the sectoral level is needed. MESCS and NCEQE have now agreed in principle that the Sector Councils should have a broader remit and that independent Sector Skills Councils should be established, possibly by transferring ownership to sectoral associations[16]. Sector Skills Councils should be empowered and resourced to play a key role in skills development, especially for strategically important economic sectors.

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[16] Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MESCS, 2019), National Torino Process report 2018–2020: Georgia, MESCS, Tbilisi, 2019, p. 7

Further, a new consultative body, the NQF Advisory Board, is proposed to be established, which will review the strategic directions and action plans of the NQF development and implementation, and the results of NQF monitoring[17].

NQF implementation will require coordination with the quality assurance reforms. The same body (NCEQE) is responsible both for the development and approval of qualifications, and for the authorisation of qualification providers and accreditation of educational programmes. Different scenarios for the optimization of the existing NCEQE functions may need to be considered to avoid gaps and conflicts of interest in the qualifications system[18].

VNFIL is intended to lead towards the award of mainstream VET qualifications. This may require review of the authorisation standards to ensure that all VET providers meet specific requirements related to VNFIL[19].

At this stage of the NQF reform process, following the recent legislation, the focus should be on implementation issues. It is important to improve and implement effective communication mechanisms and tools to make NQF operational and more visible for end-users. Priorities include producing clear and user-friendly guidelines in the form of handbooks, and manuals and other methodological support, for all stakeholders and beneficiaries; implementation of the qualifications register and its use for career information, guidance and recognition purposes.

These needs require improved institutional capacity of the NCEQE, in human resources, instruments, and information. Some of these needs will be addressed in the frame of the current EU Twinning project.

9.   MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia: www.mes.gov.ge

National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement: www.eqe.ge

VET Portal: www.vet.ge

EMIS: www.vet.emis.ge

LMIS: www.lmis.gov.ge

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[17] Castel-Branco E. (2019). The Georgian National Qualifications Framework. Technical Note. Working document for the Workshop of 28-29th March 2019 "Rethinking the Georgian NQF: achievements, priorities and way forward. Strengthening exchanges with international partners". www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2019-03/Note%20for%20workshop_0.pdf

[18] Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport (MESCS, 2019), National Torino Process report 2018–2020: Georgia, MESCS, Tbilisi, 2019., p. 53

[19] MCA 2019. Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development Project. Technical Assistance to Strengthening National TVET Policy: Development Brief. January 2019, p. 30. http://iswd.ge/uploads//Development%20Brief%20final.pdf

10. INFOGRAPHIC OF THE NQF / NQF OVERVIEW TABLE

Qualifications According to Levels

NQF level	Education system	Training and Re-Training
1	Georgian – Language course certificate	
2	State document, verifying elementary education Georgian – Language course certificate	2th level VET training certificate 2th level VET re- training certificate
3	Basic VET diploma Georgian – Language course certificate	3th level VET training certificate 3th level VET re- training certificate
4	State document, verifying complete general education Secondary VET education diploma Georgian – Language course certificate	4th level VET training certificate 4th level VET re- training certificate
5	Associate Degree Higher VET education diploma	5th level VET training certificate 5th level VET re- training certificate
6	Bachelor Teaching training certificate	
7	Master Doctor of Medicine (MD) Doctor of Dental Medicine (DDM) Master of Education (M.Ed) Master of Veterinary Science (MVSC) Veterinary training course certificate	
8	PHD	

Descriptors: https://eqe.ge/res/20191007105945NQFofGeorgia.pdf
Source: National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement

ABBREVIATIONS

EMIS	Education Management Information System
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ISCED	International standard classification of education
ISCO	International standard classification of occupations
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia
NCEQE	National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QF-EHEA	Qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area
SSCs	Sector Skills Councils
VET	Vocational education and training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning

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