

NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK – MOROCCO

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

1.1 NQF snapshot

A 2019 education law encompasses references to Morocco's national qualifications framework (NQF).

Morocco's NQF is comprehensive, covering all types of education and training qualifications, and structured in eight levels. Authorities experimented with levelling in 2015-2016.

The Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research (MENFPESRS) leads development of the NQF. Two further bodies, the NQF Steering Commission and the NQF Permanent Commission, are entrusted with strategic guidance and coordination of NQF implementation, respectively.

The NQF is included in wider education and training legislation. Elements of a modern qualification system, including outcomes approaches and systematic quality assurance measures are established. Governance arrangements are agreed and operating. But other elements including validation of nonformal and informal learning and a credit system, are yet to be implemented. Morocco's NQF is thus at the adoption stage.

1.2 Policy context

The European Union - Morocco relationship tackles common challenges such as economic development, innovation, climate change, justice, security, mobility, migration and good governance. The partnership is based on the Association Agreement¹, which entered into force in 2000. In 2008 the EU and Morocco signed a Joint Declaration establishing an "Advanced Partnership" (Statut Avancé)², explicitly mentioning cooperation with the EQF. Under the European Neighbourhood Policy Morocco has gradually become a privileged EU partner in political and economic cooperation as well as in trade, technical and development cooperation.

The Association Council, bringing together the Ministers of the EU and Morocco, frames the EU-Morocco relationship, including the political dialogue and cooperation priorities. The last Association Council³ on 27 June 2019 gave new impetus to the strategic, multidimensional and privileged EU-Morocco relationship. A Joint Declaration⁴ was issued which defines the "Euro-Moroccan partnership for shared prosperity", based on four structural areas 1) convergence of values, 2) economic convergence and social cohesion, 3) shared knowledge, and 4) political consultation and enhanced security cooperation and two key horizontal fields: 1) environmental cooperation and the fight against climate change, and 2) cooperation in the field of mobility and migration. These actions will reinforce each other.

The Moroccan NQF is underpinned by a range of policy and legislative documents, such as the Framework Law 51-17 on Education Training and Scientific Research, adopted on 19 August 2019;

¹ [EUR-Lex - 22000A0318\(01\) - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

² Statut avance page 12 'Renforcer le processus de certification dans le domaine de l'enseignement, en vue d'assurer la qualité et la transparence de la certification. Ceci contribuera à la modernisation du système d'éducation et de formation et à l'évolution des qualifications acquises. A terme, cela permettra d'envisager un rapprochement avec le Cadre européen des Certifications.'

³ [EU-Morocco Association Council, 27/06/2019 - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#)

⁴ [Joint declaration by the European Union and Morocco for the fourteenth meeting of the Association Council - Consilium \(europa.eu\)](#)

the Strategic Vision 2030 for a School of Equity, Quality and Promotion⁵ and the Professional Training Strategy 2021⁶.

The government of Morocco is currently working to develop a new model of economic development for the country, which will have a special focus on competences and human development, enhanced education and vocational training programmes, and bolder policies to boost job creation in order to promote inclusive growth through a modernised social protection system. The Special Commission for the Development Model (CSMD) coordinates and facilitates an open citizens' consultation to gather proposals and views and has set up a dedicated website to this end.⁷

The <https://www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/publications/african-economic-outlook> African Economic Outlook 2020 report⁸ by the African Development Bank Group (AFDB, 2020) considers that the country's location can serve as a strategic hub for foreign companies looking to operate or set-up business in Africa. The bank mentions three main structural challenges for the country, namely, a) developing human capital through education and training that meet the needs of the economy, b) rationalising the social protection system, and c) removing rigidities in the labour market and reducing youth unemployment.

The World Bank⁹ reports that growth has slowed beneath its potential, constrained by a volatile, agricultural sector overly reliant on rainfall (water reserves are insufficient) and slow growth in the tertiary sector. Real GDP slowed to 2.7 per cent in 2019, while non-agricultural growth improved by 3.4 per cent (compared to 3 per cent in 2018), driven by the better performance of phosphates, chemicals and textiles. The unemployment rate declined slightly to 9.3 per cent in quarter 1 of 2019 (from 9.8 per cent in quarter 1 of 2018), underlined by a protracted fall in labour force participation, which dropped to 46.1 per cent.

Over the medium term, growth is projected to pick up gradually, mainly driven by more dynamic secondary and tertiary activities, bolstered by foreign investment. In particular, significant foreign direct investment continue to flow into automotive industries, as well as into logistics and trade services following the expansion of the Tangiers port.

Morocco has a population of approximately 36 million, according to a report by the Haut Commissariat du Plan (HCP)¹⁰, of whom 27 per cent are 14 years and younger.

The HCP reports that the labour market situation in the first quarter of 2021 continues to be affected by the crisis of the national economy aggravated in 2020, by the COVID-19 pandemic. The employment crisis that began in 2020 has been mainly marked by rising unemployment and inactivity, particularly among women and young people.

Unemployment rose from 10.5% to 12.5% nationally, from 15.1% to 17.1% in urban areas and from 3.9% to 5.3% in rural areas. It recorded a sharp increase among women, from 14.3% to 17.5%, among young people aged 15 to 24, from 26.8% to 32.5%, and among graduates, from 17.8% to 19.8%.

Between the first quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021, and with the creation of 56,000 urban jobs and the loss of 258,000 jobs in rural areas, the national economy lost 202,000 jobs, of which 185,00 were unpaid jobs. A year earlier, between the first quarters of 2019 and 2020, it had created 77,000 jobs. Unemployment reached 1,534,000 people nationally, increasing by 242,000.

⁵ https://www.men.gov.ma/Fr/Documents/Vision_strateg_CSEF16004fr.pdf

⁶ <http://www.dfp.gov.ma/images/pdfdocs/2016/Strate%CC%81gie%20Formation%20FR.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.csmd.ma/>

⁸ <https://www.afdb.org/en/knowledge/publications/african-economic-outlook>

⁹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/overview>

¹⁰ <https://www.hcp.ma/>

In 2020-2021 the government reacted to Covid-19, by closing business operations and schools, causing a sharp shock to the economy, employment, and the income of the population. Covid-19 exacerbated inequality and poverty has risen. The country is now implementing an efficient Covid-19 vaccination campaign.

Morocco took measures to assure continuity of education and training through the period of Covid-19 confinement. As an illustration, in vocational education, from mid-March 2020, the *Office de la Formation Professionnelle et de la Promotion du Travail* (OFPPT, the national VET agency) prepared and made available online courses¹¹, including videos for practical classes on YouTube¹². All levels and types of training of OFPPT are accessible for online learning through an app and pedagogic materials will be gathered in a common platform. During the pandemic in 2020 the Ministry of Education created 6,000 pieces of digital teaching content, from a baseline of only 600.

1.3 NQF legal basis

Articles 2 and 35 of the new framework Law number 51-17¹³ (*Loi Cadre n°51-17*) on the system of education, training and scientific research, adopted on 9 August 2019, define the objectives of the NQF.

Article 2 defines the NQF as a mechanism “to define and classify diplomas at national level, according to a reference scale of parameters applied to levels of learning outcomes and reflecting the needs of the labour market and societal development.”

Article 35 stipulates the “Establishment of a NQF for certification and homologation of diplomas, and comprising, in particular, the modalities and classification criteria of diplomas, validation of learning outcomes of professional and crafts activities. This framework is conceived by an autonomous national commission created for this purpose, representing the various sectors of education and training, as well as professional organisations and sanctioned by a regulatory Act”.

Other legal acts and policies related to the NQF include:

- Law 01.00 on higher education
- Law 12.00 on apprenticeship
- Law 13.00 on the statute of private professional training
- Law 60-17 on the organisation of continuing training of private sector employees, of certain categories of staff of public establishments and enterprises and other non-wage workers engaged in private activities (published on 6 October 2018).

The Law on professional training is currently under development. It is expected to play an important role in enhancing coherence and permeability in the eco-system of vocational qualifications.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

2.1 Education and training reforms

The government policy is contextualised in the Strategic Vision for Education Reform¹⁴ (*Vision stratégique de la réforme de l’enseignement à l’horizon 2030*), addressing four major purposes:

- equity and equality of opportunities

¹¹ <https://www.ofppt.ma/fr/actualites/lofppt-lance-la-formation-a-distance>

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b3TmeZhCug>

¹³ http://www.sgg.gov.ma/Portals/0/BO/2020/BO_6944_Fr.pdf?ver=2020-12-24-133647-943

¹⁴ https://www.men.gov.ma/Fr/Documents/Vision_strateg_CSEF16004fr.pdf

- quality for all
- promotion of the individual and society
- efficient leadership and renewed conduction of change.

The Strategic Vision 2015-2030 is linked with other elements of the policy framework:

- the Framework Law 51-17, adopted in 2019
- the Government Executive Plan 2017-2021
- Performance Projects (three years) of the different ministerial departments
- in VET, the Strategic Vision 2015-2030 has integrated the strategic strands of the National Professional Training Strategy 2021.

The main orientations of the Strategic Vision 2015-2030 have been translated into the Framework Law 51-17. This law safeguards the integrity of the Strategic Vision from political and institutional risks, represents a national pact binding for all parties, and provides a legal basis for further development and implementation. On the NQF, the Strategic Vision specifies the following measures:

- **Lever 12, point 80: NQF**

“Establish a national qualification system able to organise and classify certificates and diplomas, on the base of a reference grid defined by the departments in charge of education, training and scientific research. Such a framework will enable transparency and clarity, but also comparability of diplomas on the basis of a national guide of certification; will improve the instruments of assessment of learning outcomes from schooling and training and enhance their credibility and effectiveness. The framework will also assure national and international mobility of diplomas. “

- **Lever 12, point 81: Validation of learning from professional experience**

“Establish a system of accreditation of competences from professional experience to the benefit of persons with experience allowing them to access lifelong learning opportunities”.

- **Lever 19, point 102: Validation of cognitive and professional outcomes**

“Adopt a unified system of validation of cognitive and professional learning outcomes of individuals, supervised by an independent national instance, in which are represented the different departments of education, training and professional sectors”.

Further, a Royal Directive, in its youth employment section, stipulates measures to implement the NQF and establish an integrated system for validation of competences acquired through professional experience.

The Vocational Training Strategy 2021 (*Stratégie Nationale de la Formation Professionnelle 2021*) consists of a number of strategic “axes”. Its fifth strategic axis “Valorisation of professional pathways through better articulation of the components of the education and training system”, addresses the NQF:

“The NQF is an instrument for classification of certificates and diplomas awarded in the country, with reference to coherent levels of mastery of knowledge, skills and competences, according to a set of pertinent criteria defined on the basis of learning outcomes.

Structured in a grid of eight levels by six descriptors, the NQF is a reference system for the quality of certificates and professional diplomas delivered in Morocco and recognised by the labour market.

Certificates and diplomas classified in the NQF are registered in a national register (repertoire) of qualifications, which will comprise all public and private qualifications at all levels of education and training.”

In higher education, the Action Plan for higher education (*Plan d’Action de l’Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, 2017-2021*) addresses the NQF via its Action 11 on pedagogic reform: “Assure, in partnership with all stakeholders, the establishment and operationalisation of the NQF and the implications in terms of review and renewal of programmes, and courses.”

Since 2020 the government has been pursuing actions to implement a wide range of reforms in education and training, triggered by the Framework Law number 51-17. According to available information, nineteen reform programmes are in preparation or have started implementation, of which a number apply to all sub-sectors of education and training. One of the reform programmes – Evaluation and certification - directly concerns the NQF.

2.2 Aims of NQF

Articles 2 and 35 of the Framework Law on Education 51-17, and the 2013 reference document set aims for the NQF, which include:

- classification of qualifications;
- promotion of learning outcomes approaches;
- supporting the relevance of the education and training system to labour market and societal needs.

3. LEVELS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

3.1 NQF scope and structure

The Moroccan NQF is comprehensive of all types of education and training and comprises eight levels, each defined by six domains of level descriptors: knowledge, skills, complexity, autonomy/responsibility, adaptability, and communication.

The level descriptors in the Moroccan NQF are formulated with a degree of detail and can serve as a reference for stakeholders and practitioners involved in designing competence standards, learning programmes and assessment standards. When opting for the eventual domains, stakeholders took account of key needs such as communication skills and adaptability.

Analysis and placement of qualifications in the NQF levels was conducted on an experimental basis in 2015-2016, for middle and higher level qualifications in the construction and automotive sectors.

By recommendation of the Department of Professional Training (DFP, within the Ministry of Education), in a measure aimed at supporting practical application of the principles of the NQF, vocational training operators are required to consider the NQF level descriptors in the development of standards (*referential*) and programmes. This recommendation is in its initial stage of implementation.

3.2 Types of qualifications

The NQF Reference Document (2013) defines the types of qualifications allocated by levels.

The Moroccan NQF is structured in eight levels. Table 2, in Section 10 below, shows the correspondence between the NQF levels and education levels/respective diplomas, according to the NQF Reference Document.

3.3 Quality assurance of qualifications

Higher education

The country's National Agency for Assessment and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Scientific Research (ANEAQ) was established¹⁵ in 2014 by Law 80-12 on 21 August 2014¹⁶. The agency is mandated to quality assure programmes and institutions in higher education, and in scientific research. Indicating its aspiration to support excellence, the website of ANEAQ opens with the keyword: "Evaluate to evolve".

In higher education¹⁷, the introduction of the principle of quality assurance was based on the three main measures stipulated by Law 01-00 on higher education. The principle of evaluation of institutions is a lever for reform and is characterised by:

- its global nature, regularity, and ex-post approach
- mandatory self-evaluation for all higher education institutions (public and private)
- the obligation to disclose the results of evaluation to the bodies at national and regional levels
- the obligation to inform the public of the evaluation results
- audits and evaluations by specialised and independent institutions.

ANEAQ started operations in 2016, and in 2017-2018 conducted two rounds of external evaluation of programmes. During this period, over 1,600 programmes provided by public and private higher education institutions were evaluated. These were, in 2017, 771 programmes in public institutions and 255 in private institutions. In 2018, the numbers were 293 public and 323 private. In addition, ANEAQ conducted an evaluation of progress and a monitoring of a sample of programmes that had been accredited in 2017 (157 programmes in the 12 public universities). For details on the evaluation, see ANEAQ (2018), *Rapport d'évaluation et de suivi d'un échantillon de filières à accès régulé accréditées au titre de la session 2017*¹⁸. The pilot round of the evaluation¹⁹ of higher education institutions in 2020-2021, which focused on 17 establishments, was successfully completed and the conclusions discussed at a high-level webinar in April 2021.

ANEAQ presented a first self-evaluation report - a starting point for the first pilot *external* evaluation of ANEAQ conducted in November 2018 - under the auspices of the project of the Africa-EU Partnership's project HAQAA. The report of the external evaluation²⁰ examined ANEAQ's compliance against specified African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA)²¹.

A fundamental development is the adoption by decree, on 11 July 2019, of the National Referential (Standard) of Evaluation and Quality Assurance²², which defines the fields, references and criteria applied to all institutions of higher education and scientific research. The *referential* defines the processes of quality assurance :

- Quality assurance: processes and mechanisms for assessing the degree of achievement of objectives and agreeing on methods of continuous improvement of the institution's activities.
- Evaluation: a systematic audit process to measure the institution's ability to meet specific requirements and achieve specific objectives by comparing the level of performance to the

¹⁵ https://www.aneaq.ma/en/aneaq_en/

¹⁶ https://www.aneaq.ma/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/loi_aneaq.pdf

¹⁷ Principal legal acts in higher education can be found here: <https://www.aneaq.ma/textes-juridiques-2/>

¹⁸ https://www.aneaq.ma/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Rapport_Visites_Evaluation_ANEAQ_Fr.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.aneaq.ma/bilan-de-la-vague-pilote-devaluation-des-etablissements-de-lenseignement-superieur-2020-2021/>

²⁰ https://www.aneaq.ma/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ANEAQ-RAPPORT_HAQAA_VF.pdf

²¹ <https://haqaa.aau.org/activities/african-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-asg-qa/>

²² <https://www.aneaq.ma/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/referentiel-national-ANEAQ.pdf>

institution's criteria or expectations. Its objective is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the institution given the public nature of the response and of the reports.

- Internal assessment: self-assessment conducted by the institution, formalised in a report called the “self-assessment report”, which is addressed to a committee of external experts.
- External assessment: assessment conducted by independent experts external to the institution, who have no interest that could affect their judgement.
- Quality audit: a periodic process of quality analysis of the higher education institution or its affiliated units, by independent pairs, to verify compliance with quality requirements and to propose necessary changes.

Vocational education

The Department of Vocational Training (DFP) is tasked with the authorisation of programmes, and the accreditation and control of private professional training (providers, training programmes, quality).

In addition, DFP coordinates the policy of the subsector and in this role undertakes initiatives enabling better quality processes and the overall performance of the subsystem. Since 2014, a system of performance monitoring has been in development, of which the quality assurance framework is a component. Practical implementation is underway, currently focusing on self-evaluation of public and private providers of professional education.

Other elements of quality assurance in vocational education comprise a) the methodology of the Competence-Based Approach (*Approche par Compétences*, APC) and b) the regular surveys of employment outcomes and further education of graduates (graduate tracer studies), whose methodology and coverage is currently undergoing substantial upgrading.

The scope of quality assurance of private professional training encompasses authorisation of programmes and accreditation of establishments, and is regulated as follows:

- Authorisation of private establishments of professional training²³: Feasibility study, pedagogic project, training project, administrative file.
- Qualification of programmes of private establishments of professional training²⁴: To assure compliance with standards and pedagogic and training conditions.
- Accreditation of private establishments of professional training²⁵: Gives authorisation to carry out examinations and deliver diplomas officially recognised by the state.
- Control of private establishments of professional training²⁶: the Department of Vocational Education (DFP) exercises the functions of pedagogic and administrative control.

3.4 Use of learning outcomes and standards

Use of learning outcomes in Vocational education and training

Learning outcomes as the basis for qualifications is a well-rooted approach in VET. In Morocco, the *Approche par Compétences* (APC) has been continuously promoted by the government and has gathered substantial experience through more than a decade of methodological developments, programme design and implementation, and training of APC specialists.

The notion of *competence* in the APC has distinct nuances:

- specific competence

²³ <http://www.dfp.gov.ma/formation-professionnelle-privee/autorisation-des-efpp.html#le-projet-de-formation>

²⁴ <http://www.dfp.gov.ma/formation-professionnelle-privee/qualification-des-filieres-de-fpp.html>

²⁵ <http://www.dfp.gov.ma/formation-professionnelle-privee/accreditation-des-efpp.html>

²⁶ <http://www.dfp.gov.ma/formation-professionnelle-privee/controle-des-efpp.html>

- transversal competence
- output competence to be achieved at the end of a programme – described in the training project (matrix of competences, or training objects): listed in the transcript of competences
- specific descriptors – described in the APC component “Analysis of the work situation” (AST): cognitive and motor skills, complexity, communication.

The successive APC / REAPC projects conducted between 2003 and 2016 resulted in the design and review of 159 programmes of all qualification levels of the professional training system. There were 130 APC programmes that were effectively implanted and launched in 213 public and private institutions. The APC methodological framework is detailed in a package of 17 guides and support materials.

- The website of the project REAPC²⁷ published a large library of technical-methodological documentation and provides access to detailed information on all components of the approach.
- The Moroccan APC is an ecosystem to govern professional training. More than a methodological package for design of competence standards, programmes and assessment, the APC includes instruments to identify and analyse skills needs by sectors, and to evaluate the performance of professional training as a system.
- The APC methodological framework of the last generation (2015) is online²⁸ and is structured and includes 11 guides.

Use of learning outcomes in Higher education

In higher education, the regulatory framework defines the rules for design of programmes (for accreditation) at all cycles and levels. The detailed structure for programmes leading to qualifications is provided in the National Pedagogic Standards (CNPN). These standards are specific for each qualification level and type. Programmes for accreditation include, among the essential components, objectives of training, competences to be acquired, employment opportunities of the qualification, admission conditions, pathways, and links with other programmes. All programmes are structured in modules of learning.

Level descriptors of NQF compared to learning outcomes of qualifications

Testing of the “Guide on analysis and positioning of qualifications in the NQF”, carried out in 2016 on two existing qualifications in higher education and two in vocational education shed light on the extent to which the learning outcomes formulated in the programmes documentation meet/match the descriptors of the assigned NQF levels.

The comparison with each of the six categories of descriptors shows that some categories are more explicitly represented in the programmes’ learning outcomes than others, for example, knowledge and skills are better represented than communication and adaptability.

Use of Professional and qualifications standards

Répertoire Emplois-Métiers (REM) / Référentiel Emplois-Compétences (REC)

The REM and the REC list and classify competences by occupations within a sector. As an example, the collection REM/REC for the construction sector²⁹ shows how the definition and hierarchisation of competences becomes more fine-grained in the REC, whereas the REM has a more explicit orientation to the features of the professional profile. There are 716 REM and 815 REC developed for a total of 18 sectors.

²⁷ http://www.reapcmaroc.com/pages/publications_alpha.php

²⁸ <http://www.reapcmaroc.com/pages/pub/l.php?l=3>

²⁹ <http://dfp.gov.ma/images/pdfdocs/2016/REM-REC/Classeur%20des%20REM-REC%20du%20secteur%20BTP.pdf>

REM and REC are important references for the process of developing units of competence, programmes, and qualifications in professional education. REM/REC are sectoral classifications of occupational standards and competence profiles. Morocco has invested in developing REM/REC for 18 sectors. REM and REC are developed by professional branches and sector ministries (Tourism, Industry and others), with methodological support from DFP and involvement of the public employment institution (ANAPEC). REM and REC are based on the principle of learning outcomes. REM describes key functions and activities by occupation, as well as key required competences. REC provides a fine and detailed description of tasks, skills and competences.

Together, REM and REC are management tools of the occupations (by sector) to reinforce coherence between learning outcomes (expressing enterprises' needs) and VET programmes. In this perspective, REM and REC contribute to the transparency and quality of training and qualification outcomes. Finally, REM and REC are sound foundations to establish mechanisms for validation of non-formal and informal learning, and elements of career information and guidance.

In higher education

The main reference for development of programmes for accreditation in higher education are the *Cahiers des Normes Pédagogiques Nationales* (CNPN ³⁰). The regulatory framework defines the rules for design of programmes (for accreditation) at all cycles and levels, and the structure of programmes. These standards are specific for each qualification level and type.

3.5 Credit systems

The core strategic and legislative base of education and training, such as the Law 01-00 on higher education and the Law 51-17 on education recognise the importance of better organised pathways between subsystems and education institutions and the introduction of *passerelles* to foster re-integration of learners, continuation of studies and reskilling in a lifelong perspective.

The higher education subsystem undertook pilot initiatives to develop a credit accumulation and training system, in cooperation with EU-supported projects. But a credit system has not yet been set in legislation and mainstreamed. In the subsystem of vocational education and national education, the adoption of a credit system is not considered a priority now.

4. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

By a delegation of the Government Presidency, of June 2019, the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education, and Scientific Research (MENFPESRS) currently coordinates and leads development of the NQF. However, the Ministry and the NQF Permanent Commission have begun consulting on the set-up of a new independent body which will manage the NQF. This new agency is planned to be established in 2021 to operationalise and implement the NQF.

The Ministry (MENFPESRS) currently exercises overall lead of the NQF. It is responsible, in particular, for the approval of educational standards, for the coordination and quality assurance of development of APC programmes for VET qualifications and occupational standards (REM/REC), and for management of the database of VET APC programmes and standards.

³⁰ <https://www.aneaq.ma/document-de-referance/cnprn/>

Further, two other bodies are involved in the governance of the NQF, as follows:

- the National NQF Steering Commission, which is composed of ministers and the President of the Employers' Confederation (CGEM). It was created in June 2019, by letter 10/2019 of the Government Presidency, on 28 June 2019. It provides strategic guidance for the NQF's development and implementation.
- the NQF Permanent Commission, which was created by Decision 489 of the Minister of Education, on 26 July 2019. It is a multi-stakeholder commission, including the employers' confederation (CGEM), and is entrusted with the mission to consolidate and operationalise the NQF.

4.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The Permanent Commission is composed of twenty members and is mandated to lay the ground for the NQF and to prepare for the establishment of the future independent institutions, as defined by the Framework Law 51-17 on Education and by the Strategic Vision of Reform 2015-2030. The operational core of the commission is composed of seven permanent members with complementary profiles and representing the three subsystems – national education (which includes vocational education and training), professional training and higher education.

Decision 489 of 26 July 2019 defines the mission and the functions of the Permanent Commission as follows:

Mission: Consolidation and launch of operations of the NQF

- Lay a coherent groundwork between the components of the NQF system
- Contribute to preparation of the specifications of the future national instance of the NQF to be created
- Participate in the implementation of validation of competences from experience (VAE)

Functions:

A. Consolidation and launch of the NQF operations

- Ensure coordination among the various stakeholders
- Put in place a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the NQF
- Build capacity of the stakeholders

B. operationalisation of the NQF

- Define the approach and procedures for processing of applications for levelling and registration of qualifications on:
 - eligibility conditions of the application and components of the application file
 - submission of the application
 - Register certifications in the register (*repertoire*)
 - Define quality standards, as references for analysis of qualifications in view of their registration
 - Define the configuration and components of the register (*repertoire*) of qualifications
 - Set a standardised description of certifications
 - Define templates and forms
 - Define the terms of reference for the NQF information system, including the register, the NQF portal and interactions between stakeholders and NQF staff.
- Ensure the institutionalisation of the various components of the NQF.

C. reflection and advice:

- Submit proposals concerning the elaboration of the governance and organisation of the qualification system
- Define the quality process of the NQF, notably the register
- Analyse projects of international cooperation and institutional twinning projects
- Examine the referencing/reconciliation possibilities of the Moroccan NQF to national/international, multinational meta-frameworks including the meta-framework of the European Union (EQF)
- Contribute to defining the national NQF agency/institution (Framework Law 51-17)
- Contribute to the proposal on a VAE system (procedures, tools, information system, system of assessment and validation of skills / competences).

The composition of the new NQF Permanent Commission includes key players from labour market institutions, professional branches and the employers' confederation.

- ANAPEC: The National Agency for Promotion of Employment and Competences is the public employment agency, implements and coordinates active labour market policies, including training. ANAPEC has a key role in overseeing the *Repertoires Emploi-Metier* (REM).
- The Labour Market Observatory³¹: Monitors and anticipates labour market and skills dynamics, evaluates employment policies, analyses job vacancies and employers' demand for skills and qualifications.
- The General Confederation of the Enterprises of Morocco (CGEM³²): A committed participant of the NQF development process for more than a decade, CGEM's Training Commission participated in actions of NQF methodology experimentation and qualifications transparency projects.
- The Branch Observatory (OdB³³): established in 2014 under the auspices of CGEM to support the sectors in coping with rapid economic and technological change and in particular to analyse occupational change and produce the competence standards for continuing training.

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

5.1 VNFIL (VAE) arrangements

The Strategic Vision 2015-2013 foresees the development of a system of validation of learning outcomes from experience (VAE): "Adopt a unified system of validation of individuals' cognitive and professional achievements, overseen by an independent national body, where the various departments of education and training and professional sectors will be represented" (Lever 19, pg. 70).

³¹ <https://www.travail.gov.ma/mtip-espace-observatoire-nationale-du-marche-du-travail/?lang=fr>

³² <https://www.cgem.ma/>

³³ <https://observatoire.ma/>

DFP, in partnership with sector federations and sector ministries, carried out several VAE projects³⁴ in sectors with high demand for qualified workers:

- 2008-2010: in construction, 138 candidates were awarded qualifications for 13 sector occupations, at three NQF levels: *qualification* (NQF Level 3), *technicien* (NQF Level 4) and *technicien spécialisé* (NQF Level 5). 320 candidates and 62 enterprises participated.
- 2011-2012: in the textile/garments sector, 19 candidates were awarded certificates.
- In the follow-up of these successful projects, between 2012-2016, the ministry promoted additional VAE projects in different regions, in construction (100 candidates), hotels (200 candidates) and meat processing (400 candidates).

The VAE process is structured in four phases, according to DFP's VAE Handbook:

1. Information and counselling of the candidates: On the VAE process and its requirements, preliminary screening of the professional experience in view of the envisaged certification.
2. Admissibility: Instruct the application file and decide on the eligibility.
3. Follow-up: Support the candidate in the preparation of the Dossier of Description of Professional Experience and prepare for the process of certification.
4. Certification: The jury decides on the validation of the competences from professional experience – on the base of the certification standard.

The qualifications awarded as the outcome of a VAE process do not have the same value and standing as qualifications from formal VET, because the required legislation is not in place yet.

The NQF Permanent Commission is mandated to prepare the premises and legal-regulatory basis for establishment a functioning VAE system. This line of work will be fostered within the EU institutional twinning supporting the NQF, planned to start in Autumn 2020.

The *Agence Nationale de Lutte contre l'Analphabétisme* (ANLCA, or Alphabetisation Agency) offers validation of prior learning to beneficiaries in six specialised centres.

6. NQF IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACT

6.1 Key achievements and main findings

The NQF (*CNC*) is part of the national education and training system, although not yet regulated by a legal text. It comprises a set of principles, a concept of qualification levels and a vision for its implementation. But it is also an already-established foundation that needs to be built further upon. For its development, actors can draw on its reference history, achievements and experience gained.

The NQF's technical and methodological foundations include the REM-REC system, the competence-based approach (APC), the quality assurance framework (in particular in higher education), the basic elements for a future VNFIL / VAE system, and soon also a digitalised database of vocational training programmes and standards.

These foundations also include an essential element of any NQF: active socio-economic partners committed to a more explicit and above all functional NQF - the CGEM, the Sectoral Observatory and other professional organisations.

³⁴ <http://www.dfp.gov.ma/vaep.html>

Two components of the qualifications system are not yet in place: a credit accumulation and transfer system and VNFIL /VAE. On the bright side, it is worth noting that the conceptual and technical basis of the credit system in higher education have been studied with European partners. It is also expected that VNFIL / VAE can build on lessons from pilot projects and will be able to move towards a better articulation with the NQF, allowing the granting of certifications fully integrated into the NQF. Both components – the credit system and VAE – should be further considered from the angle of their contribution to progression and mobility of individuals throughout life, and the NQF is a major enabler of that strategy.

The certificates awarded through the national functional literacy programme are real opportunities for thousands of Moroccans to access education and training and qualifications placed in the NQF. Here, the framework can demonstrate its added value to social inclusion aims and its capacity to contribute to change.

6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

The number of programmes leading to qualifications offered in the subsystems of educations and training can be summarised as follows:

- *Brevet de technicien supérieur*: 22 programmes
- Vocational education (public and private): 347 programmes, distributed over four levels (2018-2019)
- Public higher education institutions: 2,345 (2018-2019).

The definition of the components and configuration of the *repertoire* of all qualifications, aligned with NQF levels and principles, is one of the tasks assigned to the NQF Permanent Commission.

In 2021 the Department of Vocational Education, working in cooperation with the EU project FORCAP, will launch a comprehensive register of VET programmes and standards.

Approved education programmes and related qualifications from the key subsystems – general education, VET and higher education – are organised in different and separate instruments: a) databases for internal use of the relevant ministerial departments, not open for public users; b) information on courses, programmes and qualifications published on the websites of different subsystems of MENFPESRS, and of education and training institutions, such as OFPPT, training centres and higher education institutions. This information on programmes and qualification is concise. The exception is the OFPPT website, which offers details on the content of each professional qualification.

The website of the Department of Higher Education³⁵ publishes information on diplomas from all types of higher education institutions, public and private, and establishments classified as Schools, Academies, and Institutes. These latter providers are distinct from the universities and offer a range of subject domains e.g. health, textiles, architecture, fine arts. The same website publishes the updated list of the accredited programmes of private higher education institutions³⁶. However, a similar detailed list for public higher education institutions is not available on the website.

The Department of National Education created a separate Portal of BTS³⁷ (*Brevet de Technicien Supérieur* – BTS). The portal contains information on the organisation of this qualification and its

³⁵ <https://www.enssup.gov.ma/fr/Page/165-dipl%C3%B4mes-et-formations>

³⁶ <https://www.enssup.gov.ma/fr/Page/165-dipl%C3%B4mes-et-formations>

³⁷ <https://e-bts.men.gov.ma/fr/Pages/Accueil.aspx>

programmes. The list of BTS programmes³⁸ indicates, without details on learning outcomes and organisation, the 22 programmes in two sectors leading to BTS diplomas.

The DFP website page on Youth publishes information on available courses and qualifications, namely, a) a detailed list of programmes of public providers³⁹, distributed by qualification levels and by region and b) a list of programmes of accredited private providers⁴⁰. Information on content and learning outcomes of these programmes and qualifications is not published on the website.

The Space REM/REC⁴¹ of the DFP website contains a (partial) list of Repertoires *Emploi-Metier* (REM) and the *Referentials Emploi-Compétences* (REC), which represent a reference base for programmes of the subsystem. All published REM/REC contain the full content (tasks, competences) and can be used as reference by any stakeholder. Until January 2020, a total of 716 REM and 815 REC had been developed for 18 sectors. In 2021 the new online register of all REM-REC, managed by ANAPEC, will be launched.

The Website of the major public VET provider, OFPPT⁴² offers easy access to complete and detailed information on the existing programmes and qualifications VET for both types of credentials, namely, a) diplomas and b) certificates of qualification. The page “Find a training programme” (“*Trouvez une formation*”) displays the full repertoire of all programmes and qualification level – with concise information in standardised format on the occupational profile, learning outcomes, course organisation, occupations, and training providers. For more details: example of qualification “Technician in Office Secretariat”⁴³, of level *Technicien Spécialisé*.

6.3 Qualification documents

The format of diplomas and certificates awarded on the basis of accredited and quality assured formal education and training is defined by the legislation.

6.4 Recognition of foreign qualifications

Information about recognition of foreign qualifications in Morocco⁴⁴ is available for users on the website of the MENESFPFRS. E-equivalence⁴⁵ is the new online recognition platform, enabling application of remote procedures.

The National Agency for the Evaluation and Assurance of the Quality of Higher Education and Scientific Research (ANEAQ) is responsible for the recognition of diplomas and degrees. Law 67-1646 of 22 September 2016, amending the provisions of Law 80-12 relating to the ANEAQ, allows the Agency to “conduct expert work on applications for equivalency applications for graduate degrees”.

Most applicants are Moroccan students returning home and seeking either recognition of study periods abroad for continuation of studies in Morocco or seeking public sector employment, which requires officially recognised diplomas. It is expected that the future introduction of ECTS will allow more efficient recognition processes and practices.

³⁸ <https://e-bts.men.gov.ma/Fr/BTS/Pages/Filieres.aspx>

³⁹ <http://dfp.gov.ma/offre-de-formation.html>

⁴⁰ <http://dfp.gov.ma/offre-de-formation/privee-accreditee.html>

⁴¹ <http://dfp.gov.ma/offre-de-formation/privee-accreditee/307.html>

⁴² <https://www.ofppt.ma/index.php/fr/organigramme>

⁴³ <https://www.ofppt.ma/fr/filieres-de-formations/technicien-en-secretariat-et-bureautique>

⁴⁴ <https://www.enssup.gov.ma/en#>

⁴⁵ <https://equivalence.enssup.gov.ma/login>

⁴⁶ http://www.sgg.gov.ma/BO/FR/2019/BO_6774_fr.pdf?ver=2019-05-11-150701-157

Morocco is one of the four participating Southern Mediterranean countries of the Meric-Network project⁴⁷.

Morocco's internationalisation strategy builds on improving links and cooperation with higher education institutions in the EU and Africa and supporting common efforts to strengthen vocational education and training with countries in Africa.

Morocco has cooperated with the EU and with sub-Saharan Africa on international students' mobility. A growing number of foreign students are registered in Moroccan higher education institutions, which is the first French-speaking African country to welcome African students (more than 75 per cent from sub-Saharan Africa) and the second overall after South Africa.

7. REFERENCING TO REGIONAL FRAMEWORK/ OTHER FRAMEWORKS

7.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

Morocco aspires to compare its NQF to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). At the same time, the Government has expressed its commitment to join the ACQF development process and work for common objectives for qualifications in the continent.

The conceptual-technical design of the Moroccan NQF reveals the openness of the country to international developments, notably to the European Qualifications Framework and the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA-QF, in the Bologna Process).

7.2 International cooperation

Morocco participates in several regional and cross-country initiatives and projects in QFs, notably the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) project.

ANEAQ is a member of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE)⁴⁸ and participates in the Africa-EU Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation initiative⁴⁹, including the piloting of ASG-QA.

7.3 International donor support

The EU is one of the major donors supporting VET modernisation, in the country. The EU assists Morocco's labour migration policy through THAMM, a regional project implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. Support to employment policy and labour market intelligence forms part of cooperation projects with the Ministry of Labour.

Other important bilateral partners are France, Germany and the United States.

⁴⁷ <http://www.meric-net.eu/en/index.aspx>

⁴⁸ anqahe.org

⁴⁹ <https://haqaa.aau.org/>

8. IMPORTANT LESSONS AND FUTURE PLANS

The key building blocks enabling the operationalisation of the NQF are in place, namely: a) a supportive policy and legal basis, and a reform strategy that recognises the role of the NQF for formal education and validation of competences acquired via experience and non-formal learning; b) dynamic actions to establish the NQF governing institution in 2021, working in cooperation with the stakeholder group, the NQF Permanent Commission, and a budget to support NQF operations; c) a regulatory and technical-methodological framework underpinning the development, adoption and renewal of qualifications in all subsystems of education and training; d) a functioning quality assurance system in higher education, but still developing in VET; and e) professional branches and an employers' confederation committed to good qualifications and a transparent qualifications framework.

Knowledge gained during the decade-long dialogue and construction of the technical-institutional set-up of the NQF are valuable to guide the Permanent Commission and the NQF Operational Institution in the new phase starting in 2021. These include the importance of flexibility, a common vision, transparent partnerships with professional organisations and the employers' confederation, evidence and experimentation and action for both quick wins and for medium-term results. The inertia that set in during long periods of disruption to the NQF dialogue and activities has had high costs for the process, seen in loss of know-how and a diminishing of trust among actors. The slowdown of NQF activities in the period 2017-2019 has also adversely affected progress, but in 2021 the country may benefit from a range of enablers of the NQF, provided that there is leadership and political will.

Establishment of the new NQF governing institution with sufficient resources, management capacity and budget, is likely to prove a challenging undertaking at a moment of political transition after the September 2021 elections. The draft decree on the establishment of this new NQF agency is in consultation and is likely to be approved by mid-2021. This national NQF institution is an essential condition for the design and launch of the planned EU Twinning project.

Moreover, a new opportunity for cooperation with NQFs in the EU emerged in 2021, thanks to the start-up of the pilot phase of the comparison of NQFs and RQFs of third regions and continents with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Morocco may be a pilot country for this comparison, conditional on meeting the criteria and procedures which guide the process. One of the principal criteria set by the EU to initiate the comparison process is the operational capacity to support NQF implementation.

Technical cooperation to support implementation of the NQF is provided via the partnership with the EU. Ongoing projects with the DFP and ANAPEC supported the launch in 2020 of the national online Repertoire of all professional training at all levels and of all types and of the online register of REM-REC.

9. MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

ANAPEC: <http://anapec.org/sigec-app-rv/>

ANEAQ: <https://www.aneaq.ma/>

General Confederation of Enterprises of Morocco: <https://www.cgem.ma/>

Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research: <https://www.men.gov.ma/Fr/Pages/Accueil.aspx>

10. NQF OVERVIEW TABLE

Table 2: NQF level and correspondence with levels and diplomas of the subsectors of education and training

NQF level	National education	Vocational training	Higher education
1	Mid-primary	Certificat de Formation Professionnelle (CFP)	
2	Primary	Spécialisation	
3	CE9	Qualification	
4	Baccalauréat (Bac), Bac Professionnel (Bac Pro)	Technicien	
5 (Bac+2)	Brevet de technicien supérieur (BTS)	Technicien spécialisé	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diplôme Études Universitaires Générales (DEUG) • Diplôme des Études Universitaires Professionnelles (DEUP) • Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie (DUT)
6 (Bac+3)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licence Études Fondamentales (LF) • Licence Professionnelle
7 (Bac+5)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master (M) • Master spécialisé (MS) • Master Sciences et Techniques (MST) • Diplôme d'ingénieur (DI) • Diplôme de l'ENCG et diplôme de traduction
8 (Bac+8)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctorat (D)

Note: "Bac" stands for Baccalauréat (diploma awarded at the conclusion of secondary education)

ABBREVIATIONS

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
AFDB	African Development Bank
ANAPEC	National Agency of Promotion of Employment and Competences
ANEAQ	National Agency for Evaluation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Scientific Research
ANLCA	National Agency for the Fight Against Illiteracy/Alphabetisation Agency
ANQAHE	Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ASG-QA	African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
Bac	Baccalauréat
BTS	Brevet de Technicien Supérieur
CFP	Certificate of Professional Training
CGEM	Confédération Générale des Entreprises du Maroc
CNPN	Cahiers des Normes Pédagogiques Nationales
CSEFRS	Higher Council of Education, Training and Scientific Research
CSMD	Commission Spéciale sur le Modèle de Développement
BTS	Brevet de Technicien Supérieur
DFP	Department of Professional Training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
HCP	Haut-Commissariat au Plan
LMD	Licence Master Doctorat
MENFPESRS	ministère de l'Éducation Nationale Formation Professionnelle Enseignement Supérieur et Recherche Scientifique
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OdB	Observatory of Professions and Competences of Professional Branches (Observatoire des Branches)
OFPPT	Office de la Formation Professionnelle et de la Promotion du Travail
QF-EHEA	Qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area
REM	Répertoire Emplois-Métiers
REC	Référentiel Emplois-Compétences
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
VAE	Validation of outcomes of experience
VET	Vocational education and training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning

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