

**DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION
EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

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MOVING MOUNTAINS

SHAPING QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEMS TO PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING

29 and 30 March 2006

Part 3 of a document comprising 3 Parts. Please refer also to Parts 1 and 2.

This document comprises the five Appendixes for the final draft of the International Synthesis Report from the OECD activity on the Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning. The full draft is being circulated for comment to the Education Committee and the national co-ordinators of the countries which participated in the activity. Remaining chapters will be provided in separate instalments. The full Report also provides the background for the Committee's discussion of the policy implications emerging from the Qualifications activity [EDU/EC(2006)4].

Written comments on the full draft report are invited to be sent to the Secretariat by 28 April 2006. The draft report has been sent to translation and the French version will be circulated for comment in due course, with an extended deadline of four weeks from the time of circulation.

The Education Committee is invited to:

- COMMENT on the overall structure of the Report as well as on the content of individual chapters; and*
- AGREE to recommend to the Secretary General that the Report be published, after taking account of country comments.*

Patrick WERQUIN, Education and Training Policy Division, Education Directorate
Tel: + 33 1 45 24 97 58; Email: Patrick.Werquin@oecd.org

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APPENDIX A: SUMMARY REPORTS OF THE THREE THEMATIC GROUPS

These are summaries¹ of three larger reports contributed to the OECD study on “The Role of National Qualifications Systems in Promoting Lifelong Learning”. The study is designed to investigate how different national qualifications systems influence the patterns and quality of lifelong learning within countries, and what actions within qualifications systems countries can take to promote lifelong learning. It examines countries’ experiences in designing and managing systems, and attempts to identify the impact of different approaches and innovations.

While the study is being implemented primarily through the preparation and synthesis of country background reports, it also includes a thematically focused inquiry into certain key aspects of the agenda. Three Thematic Groups were established to explore and develop key themes that have emerged within the study:

1. The development and use of “Qualifications frameworks” as a means of reforming and managing qualifications systems.
2. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
3. Involvement of stakeholders in qualifications systems.

¹ The full reports can be found on www.oecd.org/edu/lifelonglearning/nqs.

THEMATIC GROUP 1: THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF “QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS” AS A MEANS OF REFORMING AND MANAGING QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEMS

Co-ordination: Ms. Anna Murphy, Ms. Tina Simota and Mr. Edwin Mernagh

The TG1 report assembles the products and outcomes of the work of Thematic Group 1 on the development and use of qualifications frameworks as a means of reforming and managing qualifications systems. It does not set out to synthesise the detailed work of the group; rather, it provides a compendium of main outputs, which separately and together can contribute to the wider OECD study as a whole.

The Group formed after the November 2002 plenary meeting of national representatives in Paris. Ireland, with Greece, took the lead role in establishing the Group, beginning a process of document exchange by email that was continued throughout its work. This process was further enhanced by the initiation of a Smartgroups.com website. In this way, a small initial core group of participants gradually expanded (to 11 countries in all) and a group agenda began to form. Group participants represented countries with extensive, well-established frameworks as well as countries that have recently introduced them or are actively considering them. It also included participants from CEDEFOP (the European Union’s agency for the promotion of vocational education and training) and from the International Labour Organisation. This agenda provided the basis for a first meeting of the Group in Dublin in May 2003. A second meeting took place in Athens in September 2003.

Products

The Group developed a range of products that might assist any country in developing a general concept of qualifications frameworks, in gaining an overview of current practices in various countries, and in reaching an understanding of how frameworks can benefit qualifications systems’ further development. These products comprise the following.

1. Definitions of qualifications frameworks and qualifications systems

These definitions were developed in order to clarify the distinction between qualifications frameworks and qualifications systems, and to contribute to a common understanding on the meaning of the terms below.

Qualifications system

Qualifications systems include all aspects of a country’s activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operating national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent. One feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications.

Qualifications framework

A qualifications framework is an instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved. This set of criteria may be implicit in the qualifications descriptors themselves, or made explicit in the form of a set of level descriptors. The scope of frameworks may take in all learning achievement and pathways or may be confined to a particular sector, for example initial education, adult education and training or an occupational area. Some frameworks may have more design elements and a tighter structure than others; some may have a legal basis whereas others represent a consensus of views of social partners. All qualifications frameworks, however, establish a basis for improving the quality, accessibility, linkages and public or labour market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally.

2. Features of qualifications framework models

A range of common features of qualifications frameworks was identified from case studies developed by Group members to examine and compare frameworks in different countries. As a model of how a framework has been introduced into a qualifications system, the example of Ireland is presented.

Common features of frameworks are set out as follows.

Purpose

The studies indicate that countries introduce qualifications frameworks in order to:

- Better match qualifications with knowledge, skills and competencies and to better relate qualifications to occupational (and broader labour market) needs, present and future. It is clear that in some countries there is a tension between the objectives of facilitating lifelong learning and the labour market needs, at least in the short term.
- Bring coherence to subsystems of qualifications, *e.g.* higher education, adult learning, school awards, and in particular vocational education and training qualifications, by creating an overarching framework for them.
- Support lifelong learning (by opening up access, targeting investments and recognising non-formal and informal learning).
- Facilitate the involvement of political actors and stakeholders, especially in vocational education and training.

Drivers of change

In general, government ministries with responsibility for education and labour appear to be the main drivers of change. In many cases, significant reforms of vocational education and training are under way and qualifications frameworks are being considered or introduced in this context. In addition, particular groups play key roles, depending on the national situation. In some countries, autonomous communities (for example Spain) and partners in social dialogue (for example Germany, Spain, and Greece) are significant. The involvement of social partners in developing the framework and qualifications is highlighted in the Czech Republic case study as being important to making qualifications more relevant. In Ireland's case, the engagement of statutory agencies is considered to be very important.

The need for underpinning legislation is underlined in most of the case studies. This allows certainty about the framework and may be used to allocate clear responsibility for the framework to a particular body or bodies.

A number of cases refer to the need to take account of and link with social partnership agreements, and to national employment strategies (for example Germany, Greece, Spain). This may also be an important consideration in many other countries, the EU countries in particular.

Members of the Group felt that the case studies may not have identified certain underlying key drivers of change that steer developments in many countries – for example, the internationalisation and globalisation of learning and the development of wider regional (European or transnational) labour markets.

Quick Overview of the Benefits of qualifications frameworks

From the case studies, a list of main benefits, expected by countries from the introduction of frameworks, was identified. Frameworks can:

- Contribute to a coherent, transparent and more integrated qualifications system.
- Increase and target access to qualifications for certain disadvantaged groups.
- Open up progression routes (to both higher and broader skills).
- Introduce flexibility for learners, providers and users.
- Promote recognition and validation of all qualifications (including non-formal/informal learning).
- Promote vocational education and training and adult learning (in its own right and through opening access to higher education).
- Make qualifications more relevant to societal and labour market needs.
- Promote investment and participation in skill development in the workplace.

Among them, two main benefits were highlighted. First, they can be a tool for communications about qualifications systems, acting as a common reference point for all kinds of qualifications and promoting a culture of lifelong learning. Second, they can be used as a regulatory tool, in which case they create certainty about the value of qualifications, set out key requirements of qualifications (*e.g.* standards) and provide quality assurance mechanisms for qualifications.

The international dimension of frameworks was highlighted in a number of case studies. They have the potential to support mutual recognition and the transparency of qualifications across different jurisdictions.

Conditions for the introduction of frameworks

The Group identified a number of general conditions deemed to be significant in the successful development and implementation of frameworks:

- The importance of a legislative basis for a qualifications framework is underlined in a number of case studies. However, it was also noted that a voluntary “buy-in” and the commitment of stakeholders are important to successful framework implementation.
- The case studies point to the general need for all those engaged in education and training and in labour market policy to work together.
- National frameworks of qualifications need to be communicated to the population in general if they are to be successful.

- It seems from the case studies that it takes some considerable time to develop, maintain and successfully introduce frameworks of qualifications.

3. The Benefits of Qualifications Frameworks in Detail

A paper was developed setting out the benefits of qualifications frameworks. Benefits are identified on two levels: general, and more specifically relevant to the development of lifelong learning.

General benefits of qualifications frameworks

Qualifications frameworks can bring benefits in four areas:

- **Benefits for qualifications systems and provision**

- To reduce complexity and enable coherence, transparency and integration despite increasing regionalisation, decentralisation and individualisation of provision (notably in relation to post-compulsory and continuing provision of education and training).
- To open access and enable progression to further qualifications, independent of whether they are initial, higher or VET/LLL qualifications.
- To enable learners and trainers/trainers to be guided and to facilitate them in identifying appropriate learning pathways.
- To set targets, taking into account societal, labour market, companies and citizens' or learners' needs, attitudes and preferences.
- To provide support for quality assurance and the development of standards, for systems of credit accumulation and transfer, and to enhance transferability, comparability and compatibility of qualifications.

- **Benefits to career development, guidance and employment placement, and information and orientation, including occupational mobility**

- To enable coping with accelerated change of needs and adaptation of learners, providers and enterprises within a sustainable framework.
- To communicate reference points for qualifications and increase their social acceptance and recognition on the labour market and in education and training.
- To enable mapping of provision and qualifications in relation to skills supply, demand and occupational challenges.

- **Benefits to the international and transnational dimension of qualifications**

- To contribute to increasing mobility, co-operation and exchange as well as intercultural understanding and mutual recognition.
- To enable a more in-depth co-operation and the development of mutual trust between providers, teachers and trainers from different countries and world regions.
- To promote recognition, transparency and (credit) transfer of outcomes of (modules) of training, delivered by different countries.
- To enable the development of a common language in the discourse on qualifications (*e.g.* the concept of “meta-frameworks”).

- **Benefits to regulation, legislation and institutional arrangements**

- A regulatory framework would allow for the building of mutual trust, reliability and sustainability of quality of provision within national qualifications systems.
- Frameworks can establish reference points for standards for and between sectors.
- Frameworks can include regulatory elements for, and facilitate, quality assurance.
- Frameworks can provide for stability of qualifications while at the same time allowing for flexibility and adaptation.
- Frameworks can allow for decentralising, and for increasing the autonomy of providers of education/training.
- Frameworks can provide the basis for establishing minimum requirements for standards of qualifications and skills as well as their accreditation.

Benefits of qualifications frameworks to lifelong learning

- To promote a culture of lifelong learning to a wider set of learners in the context of demographic developments and trends in most OECD countries, *e.g.* ageing of the working population and skill supply / mismatch problems.
- To ease the transferability and transportability of skills and competencies from one area to another.
- To enable non-standard forms of access, including accreditation of prior learning and recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
- To enable a further improvement of basic skills, *e.g.* language and social-communicative skills and basic ICT skills for different target groups of adult learners with different backgrounds of education attainment level and work experience.
- To support the development and improvement of guidance materials, which could be more easily developed, produced and disseminated if they referred to largely accepted frameworks.
- In the context of qualifications frameworks, establishing equivalences between qualifications provided by different segments of education, learning can be more easily focused on both individual and company learning needs.
- Frameworks can reduce amounts of time spent by learners relearning to reach outcomes already achieved in other contexts.
- Frameworks provide clarity and simplicity – to policy makers, stakeholders and companies preparing new measures and reforms – about skills and qualifications needed.

4. Scenarios for future development

This was a scoping exercise, in which members of the Group have sketched out scenarios for the future development of qualifications frameworks in their countries.

5. The international dimension of the debate on qualification frameworks

In the work of Thematic Group 1, a number of increasingly important elements and points were identified about the international dimension of framework development. This section summarises contributions from papers and meetings. Sources referred to in this debate include studies implemented and published by CEDEFOP and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland on European developments linked to qualifications frameworks and their comparison, and also a more recent study undertaken by Jack Keating (an Australian consultant).

The section concludes by noting that the increasing use of international (worldwide or regional) frameworks could assist:

- In facilitating the increasing international mobility of labour, students and trainees.
- In finding co-operating partners for training providers, not only at bilateral but also at multilateral and international levels.
- In identifying more effectively issues for sustainable co-operation and exchange.
- In promoting understanding of the context in which education and training is delivered and to enable comparison and discussion despite geographic and linguistic distance or difficulties.
- In contributing to mutual recognition or transparency of qualifications and skills.

THEMATIC GROUP 2: STANDARDS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN QUALIFICATIONS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Co-ordination: Ms. Jo Doyle

In exploring its topic, Thematic Group 2 quickly identified that the focus should be on:

- The recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
- Reference to standards and quality assurance systems, but be only in the context of how they support or hinder the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

Development of the report

The work of Thematic Group 2 took place between April 2003 and October 2004. Two meetings were held in July and November 2003. Further work was carried out through electronic exchange of information.

Definitions

The group immediately came to the issue of commonly accepted definitions. The range of definitions used by participant countries² to capture the concept of recognising learning that takes place outside formal educational settings and is not normally recognised was the first item to be agreed. There was some commonality of definitions used, particularly among European Union countries. Credit here needs to be given to the work on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning carried out by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). The descriptions that were arrived at by Thematic Group 2 encompassed elements of existing definitions and are also broad enough to allow countries not familiar with the CEDEFOP definitions to locate their own practices within them.³

Policy opportunities and challenges

Opportunities

The recognition and certification of competencies obtained outside formal education provide numerous opportunities on a policy level. These opportunities may relate to a country's objectives in areas such as skilled employment, education, equity and immigration. The countries that participated in Thematic Group 2 viewed these opportunities within the context of lifelong and life-wide learning.

The key opportunities afforded by having a system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning are outlined below.

² TG2 included two countries that do not belong to the European Union. The participation of Mexico and New Zealand in this thematic group added to the diversity of input.

³ For a summary of the definitions arrived at by TG2, refer to the full report of the Thematic Group on www.oecd.org/edu/lifelonglearning/nqs.

The ability to contribute to the quality, quantity and distribution of lifelong learning by:

- Facilitating a tailored approach to learning where the learner, not the system, is the focus.
- Optimising existing training paths and more efficient training expenditure as a positive outcome for recognition of non-formal learning.
- Promoting individuals' self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-concept, thus increasing the likelihood that they will engage in learning.
- Reducing the study time required to gain a recognised formal qualification.
- Increasing participation (especially for members of disadvantaged groups within societies) in formal education and qualifications.

Harnessing the human resource potential of citizens: improving access to and mobility within the labour market by:

- Enhancing the appreciation of skills gained in the workplace.
- Providing opportunities to have personal capital formally recognised and thus improving employment and career prospects and access to further learning opportunities.
- Assisting employers in overcoming skill shortages, meeting industry standards and gaining competitive advantages.

Overcoming social, cultural and economic inequity by:

- Improving the access of members of disadvantaged groups to further education and employment.

Challenges

While recognition of non-formal and informal learning provides a number of policy opportunities linked to high-level goals such as building a country's skill base and achieving equity, challenges also arise from the systems employed. Thematic Group 2 identified a number of policy challenges, summarised below.

Achieving acceptance in the labour market

If qualifications gained partly, or fully through the recognition of non-formal and informal learning are not accepted in the labour market, the value of a recognition system to the individual and to society is diminished.

Maintaining consistency across the system

This is a risk particularly in decentralised systems, where there are many local or industry-specific variations in the way recognition of non-formal and informal learning is implemented. It is therefore important that recognition systems are built on commonly agreed principles and those measures and methods are structured and integrated as much as possible into existing quality assurance and assessment systems, in order to avoid the system losing legitimacy.

Managing expectations

Recognition systems could be set up to fail if the expectations of individuals and society in relation to better job prospects and entry or credit towards formal education are not met.

Ensuring recognition is not ghettoised

If validation is available only to specific groups, such as immigrants, indigenous populations or those with no formal education, that may result in segregation rather than integration if these groups are forced to use the system to have their informal knowledge confirmed.

Maintaining engagement with formal learning

Recognition systems, if widely used, could lead to a changing pay structure, which could in turn result in a lowering of value placed on formal education. In this situation, a lower participation rate in formal education would be an unintended negative consequence of the recognition system.

Current Practices

Many countries in the world are investigating or developing ways to raise awareness of the fact that people learn always and everywhere, and formal education is only one of many learning pathways available. While formal education has formed the backbone of what are becoming known as knowledge societies, the importance of harnessing the full range of available skills and knowledge is increasingly appreciated. Evidence suggests that countries see advantages for individuals, communities, enterprises and the economy in recognising this informal and non-formal learning.

Each country implements its practices depending on the context, the system, and its own barriers. Therefore each country has its own challenges to deal with. Some countries overtly encourage or require processes for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Others have systems that allow or facilitate the recognition of that learning, but do not regulate it. In some cases a legislative base exists; in others, change has been influenced through high-level strategic policies linked to skilled employment or equity, or through initiatives developed by local communities.

The range of practices that take place in the countries that contributed to the work of Thematic Group 2 are summarised below. In many ways this summary does not do justice to the innovation, pragmatism or boldness of the various initiatives. Group members hope, however, that it gives readers a “taste” of the activities being undertaken.

Legislation and policy

Participant countries use a variety of legislative or policy levers to influence the provision of recognition systems. In some countries individuals have a legal right to be examined without having completed formal courses. In others, qualifications frameworks have an embedded principle of recognising all forms of learning so that it is part of everyday practice rather than an exception.

Linking to the formal system

For most countries that participated in Thematic Group 2, the links between the recognition of non-formal / informal learning and the formal qualifications systems are access, entry and credit towards the formal qualification. There were a number of examples of specific initiatives to recognise non-formal and informal learning for the purpose of meeting entry requirements for formal education programmes.

Local initiatives

Some countries have systems for recognition of non-formal and informal learning that developed from local communities, organisations or industries rather than from a nationwide or government-led approach. These initiatives occur when groups with specific interests identify a need and develop a process to address that need – local solutions to local problems. Within the participant countries there were examples of specific industries establishing processes for recognising learning that occurred in the workplace in order to raise the overall skill level of their workforce. Other examples included community organisations establishing learning centres for disadvantaged groups, where a range of flexible packages is developed according to the individual’s needs. These packages might include formal, non-formal or informal learning and the opportunity to gain qualifications.

Social partnerships

Many countries have recognised the importance of having strong social partnership models that facilitate recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Examples from within the participant countries included engaging with professional advisory groups that set standards, devolved systems where social partners such as employers' organisations and trade unions are included in decision making and in implementation of policy, and systems based on networks recognition centres located in and accountable to local communities.

Target groups

While the participants in Thematic Group 2 considered that access to systems for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is important for all sectors of society, they noted that some groups, due to their needs, interests and relative level of disadvantage, may gain more from having their non-formal and informal learning recognised than the less disadvantaged. Participant countries provided a number of examples of how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning may be targeted for disadvantaged groups.

Demand for recognition systems

Thematic Group 2 found that there was a limited amount of data on the uptake of recognition systems. In some cases this was because the system does not require the method of learning to be recorded. In other cases, relatively new recognition systems have not been in operation long enough to produce such data. It is anticipated that as systems develop, rich sources of data will become available.

Barriers to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning

All participating countries were able to identify barriers to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Given the diversity of systems involved, the commonalities among the barriers are perhaps surprising. The issues raised can be categorised according to whether they relate to the supply of learning and assessment opportunities (the system), or the demand for such opportunities (the individual).

Barriers relating to the system included:

- Inconsistency in the development and implementation of standards.
- Costs in terms of time and money in relation to benefits.
- Restricted access resulting from inadequate or badly targeted promotional activities.
- Lack of parity of esteem with the formal education system.
- Funding systems often do not provide incentives, particularly for educational institutions, to implement systems for recognising non-formal and informal learning.

Barriers relating to the individual were:

- Inability to recognise the potential value of knowledge and skills gained through non-formal and informal learning.
- Fear of failure due to negative formal educational experiences.
- Low perception of potential benefits.
- Difficulty in accessing recognition systems due to financial cost or the time involved.

Addressing the barriers – developing principles for recognition systems

A number of suggestions can be made about improvements to policy or practice that go some way toward breaking down the barriers discussed in this summary. The following general principles were accepted by Thematic Group 2 as a way of guiding the development of recognition systems.

- Recognition systems are a mechanism for individuals to have all of their skills, knowledge and competencies identified and valued (some countries express this as a “right” of the individual).
- Participation in recognition systems must be voluntary.
- Recognition systems must be flexible enough to meet the needs of diverse individuals and contexts.
- Standards and procedures must be transparent, reliable, objective, relevant and impartial.
- High-quality guidance and counselling should be part of the system.
- The system should ensure equity of access to recognition procedures.
- Parity of esteem with the formal system is desirable.
- Mechanisms to enhance awareness and access should be part of the system.
- Recognition systems should be part of a holistic approach to lifelong learning and therefore be linked to other services such as quality assurance and career guidance.
- Mechanisms for measuring the effectiveness of the system in reaching its stated objectives should be included in the design.

Recommendations

Through sharing information about the practices of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, the participants of Thematic Group 2 identified some common themes and issues that a country wishing to establish or enhance systems may need to consider. It is recommended that while developing or reviewing such systems, countries give consideration to the following factors.

Purpose of the system

It is important that the purposes of a system are clearly identified. It is difficult to design a system if the desired end-result is unknown.

Context

The educational, political and social context in which the system will operate must be considered. This context may affect what is possible and will dictate the areas that resources must be directed to. For that reason, this report does not suggest one model. Each country must develop its own model, learning from the practice of other countries and considering the benefits and constraints of their own context.

Establishing national standards

In implementing a recognition system, countries often face the dilemma of balancing the need for consistency with the desire of local communities to develop their own solutions. The development of national goals, principles and standards within which local communities and/or individual providers of recognition services is recommended in addressing this issue.

Assuring quality

It is essential that quality assurance be built into any system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. This can be achieved in many ways, including the setting of national standards and guidelines, self-assessment by providers of recognition services, and monitoring for consistency and transparency. The goals of quality assurance may vary from maintaining a minimum benchmark to promotion of continual improvement.

Targeting user groups

Countries need to consider carefully the issue of targeting services to certain disadvantaged groups. While this can be the most effective use of resources, it runs the risk of encouraging people to view the

recognition of non-formal and informal learning as only relevant for disadvantaged groups. This, in turn, can lead to the devaluing of non-formal and informal learning.

Enhancing awareness and access

Recognition systems will only be successful if individuals are aware of them, consider them to be of value, and are able to access them without unnecessary restriction. This means that consideration needs to be given to appropriate mechanisms for raising awareness of recognition systems and their potential value to individuals and to society. Consideration also needs to be given to the minimisation of barriers to participation, such as cost and time.

Removing disincentives in the system

The Group recommends examining current systems to identify disincentives that may exist. Funding systems for formal education are often the source of such disincentives, particularly where funding hinges on the number of enrolments rather than the credits or qualifications gained. This can mean that there is little incentive for formal education institutions to recognise non-formal or informal learning.

THEMATIC GROUP 3: CO-OPERATION OF DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS OF THE QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEMS

Coordination: Mr. Georg Hanf and Mr. Jochen Reuling

Acceptance and credibility of qualifications and qualifications frameworks greatly depend on the involvement of social institutions and stakeholders. Therefore Thematic Group 3 – Belgium (Flanders), the Czech Republic, England, Germany (co-ordinator), the Netherlands, and Switzerland – was looking at the various roles of partners in the development of occupational standards and vocational qualifications, and at new forms of co-operation between them.

1. Describing the content of work – an essential but problematic aspect of vocational qualifications

Thematic Group 3 has elaborated a framework for analysing the role of partners in the processes that is used to move from analysis of the content of work through to the production of a final qualifications specification. It is understood that the scope of the final qualifications specification varies in different national settings. The development of qualifications is not a simple reductionist process dependent on, and explained purely in terms of, simple empirical analysis of occupational competence. While that analysis remains at the heart of vocational qualifications, the final form of qualifications can only be explained as being a product of complex social processes of mediation by participating partners.

The working group suggests that an adequate theoretical basis for analysis has to include 1) recognition of the value-laden and theory-laden nature of processes generally used for analysis and thus the existence of explicit or implicit bias; 2) recognition of social processes of mediation in the production of qualifications, which introduces further specific orientations/bias in the final content.

The significance of bias deriving from the choice of observational/analytic method is highlighted by the differing descriptions of the content of similar work, which can be derived from different methodologies: work flow analysis; Delphi; critical incident analysis; analytic work; functional analysis.

Observation of work for the purpose of qualifications design is thus not a simple matter. Nor is observation the sole process involved in the development of the qualification's final version that will operate in learning settings and selection processes. There are four mediating processes associated with the content of qualifications:

- Direct observation of work, or analysis of practitioners' descriptions of work (indirect observation).
- Development of agreed/consensus descriptions that will be included in the final qualification.
- Interpretation by the training providers, assessors, etc. implementing the qualification.
- Interpretation by those using the qualification in selection.

2. Development of qualifications – a complex socio-political process

Even in processes where consensus is readily obtained over the function and content of a specific vocational qualification, the participation of different groups with different perspectives and aims entails

processes of mediation. Understanding this complex mediation is essential to understanding why a qualification takes a particular form in a particular (national) setting. This is illuminated by the following questions:

- Who decides who should be involved?
- What is their relative power?
- What are their aims/aspirations/intentions in participating in the development of the qualification?
- How well equipped are they to participate in the development process?
- What access do they have to the content of work in order to make judgements/assertions?
- What forms of support are available to specific groups with respect to participation (funding, etc.)?
- How tight are the structural arrangements – what are the rules within which the discussion takes place?

From the questions given above it can be seen that the development of qualifications is not merely a practical process but political (the relative power of different groups) and value-laden. Proceeding through arrangements that are more strongly structured (formalised) in some national contexts than others, the development process can readily manifest difficult tensions.

The description of processes outlined above (observations/empirical information/ consensus descriptions) requires far more sophisticated critique, which includes at least the following:

- An understanding of implicit/explicit models of competence.
- An understanding of power relations.
- An understanding of the existence of multiple functions.

3. The notion of “representation” in qualifications systems

There are many questions to be addressed: of power relations; of (unequal) partnerships; of voices (loud/powerful, weak/unheard); of models of competence; of value-laden language; of mediated empirical evidence from the processes of work; of implicit and explicit attempts to stimulate economic and social processes – of all things that are crucial to understanding the (actual and possible) role of qualifications and related mechanisms.

While diverse, these aspects can be brought together through the notion of “representation”. This is a powerful concept for synthesising consideration of the operation and purposes of qualifications. It includes mediation of observation by theory; description of reality through language; and the informal and formal representation that occurs through consultation. By using the notion of “representation”, the extent to which groups’ interests, meanings and understandings are represented in the development processes also becomes clear. Alongside this, use of the concept allows theory and practice in representative apparatus (democratic representative arrangements) to be brought to bear. That in turn allows the administrative arrangements in place to support representation to be subjected to due critique.

Even more than a basis for effective review and critique, this could be the means of developing far more legitimate, accountable and inclusive practical arrangements for the development and refinement of qualifications.

4. Ongoing changes in qualifications system regimes

In recent years numerous initiatives to change qualification system regimes have been seen in all countries that have participated in Thematic Group 3. Central to the analysis in this report, “qualifications

system regimes” is taken to include: the specific partners who develop and maintain occupational qualifications, the forms of co-operation in which such work takes place, the levels on which it takes place, and the instruments used to carry it out. Some of the initiatives examined in our analysis have already been implemented, and relevant experience has been obtained regarding their effects. Some of these initiatives are still in progress however, and it is thus not yet possible to determine whether they will truly achieve their intended aims.

For this study, the TG3 participants selected relevant initiatives in their own countries and described them in working papers. In the following sections these papers are used as a basis for analysing the participation structures and co-operation forms applied by the partners involved in regulating qualifications. Before doing this, however, we briefly present the drivers, goals and focuses of the various initiatives.

5. Drivers, goals and focuses of initiatives for change

The selected initiatives for changing the qualification system regimes were prompted especially by quantitative and/or qualitative problems in the relevant national labour markets. In some cases, the problems had already arisen. In others they were expected to arise in the near future, given the growing requirements to which the countries’ workforces were being subjected. Only in the case of Belgium (Flanders) did the changes in the regime relate directly to the aim of promoting lifelong learning. At the same time, the changes carried out in other countries could have the function of promoting lifelong learning. This becomes apparent on closer inspection of the goals and focuses of the various initiatives.

These initiatives are aimed at changing individual components of qualifications systems.⁴ In all cases except Switzerland, measures have been taken to change control of the system. In Switzerland, a new law on professional education has been prepared and adopted. Its aims include changing access to qualifications and progression for individuals, and changing accreditation and awarding processes, in order to enhance flexibility for future developments and thereby make it possible to meet the demand for modern skills.

In Belgium (Flanders), the administrative structure of ministries responsible for vocational training – and co-operation between such ministries – has been reorganised via implementation of an entirely new set of arrangements between government, social partners and key agencies. This is formalised as the Education, Training and Work Organisational Platform, intended to permit development of a comprehensive, coherent qualifications framework. The effort will also include revising the descriptors present in qualifications and in accreditation and awarding processes.

The central aims of the Czech initiative include integrating social partners in the development of qualifications. The aim here is to enhance the scope of application of the vocational training system and to open the way to tighter regulation of the continuing training system.

The initiatives described by Dutch and German representatives are located at the sectoral level. In the Netherlands, an attempt has been made to promote cross-sectoral development of qualifications – in order, *inter alia*, to expand the scope of application of innovative learning programmes.

⁴ Behringer and Coles differentiate the following components of qualifications systems: scope of application, control, accreditation processes for qualifications, the framework within the qualifications system, descriptors present in qualifications, access to qualifications and progressions for individuals, and stability of the qualifications system (Behringer and Coles, 2003).

In Germany, initiatives to change qualification system regimes are aimed at continuing training in the information technologies sector. A mixture of public and private control has been introduced in the development of qualifications, and accreditation and awarding processes have been changed with the aim of linking informal learning, work experience and the traditional methods of upgrading training.

In all of the qualifications systems considered here, control lies with the government. In some cases, responsibilities are distributed among several different ministries or among different state institutions on different levels (such as the federal government and the cantonal authorities in Switzerland or the federal government and the *Länder* in Germany). In addition, important players such as the social partners and representatives of the education sectors are involved in consultation and decision-making processes.

6. What is the relative power of partners in qualifications systems?

The systems in question involve a range of different partners, with the aim of making appropriate decisions that will be acceptable to all parties. This is best expressed as “mediated consensus”. In principle, existing power structures can be changed through inclusion of new partners. The nature of the initiatives in the various countries suggests, however, that the powers of new partners are likely to remain rather limited. The reasons for this include:

- Additional partners are included only for the duration of change processes (Switzerland).
- Participation of social partners is on a voluntary basis and is not legally enshrined (Czech Republic).
- Participation extends primarily to consultation processes, and not to decision-making processes (Switzerland, Belgium-Flanders).
- New partners are competent only for limited functions, such as accreditation and awarding of qualifications (Germany).

The cross-sectoral initiatives in the Netherlands, which aim to establish networks between various sectoral organisations, tend to strengthen the position of the partner who receives ownership of, and operates, the newly developed qualifications.

In line with this, the study of Thematic Group 3 has produced evidence that qualifications become a focus of various partners’ aims to incorporate their own interests, through influence on the design and regulation of those qualifications.

7. Conclusions

As the sample cases from the various countries show, the past few years have seen a number of relevant changes in the countries’ qualification-systems regimes. New partners have been included in the governance of qualifications, and many different forms of co-operation have been applied or tested. In closing, we will briefly discuss the potential significance of these changes – which have come about primarily as a result of problems in the countries’ labour markets – in the promotion of lifelong learning.

The study shows the different structural forms that have emerged in the transformation of arrangements – and reinforces the notion that the promotion of lifelong learning must include strengthening the links between the various different qualification and training areas. This process, in turn, includes strengthening the links between general education, vocational training and higher education, and intensifying co-operation between education and employment, with the aim of integrating formal, non-formal and informal learning. Overall, this process entails extensive participation and co-operation among relevant partners. Analysis of the various sample cases has revealed that in some instances new partners have been included in qualification-systems regimes and that this has changed participation structures and forms of co-operation. The state or other responsible parties have sought to maintain their existing

influence in the face of such changes, by selecting the partners and thus deciding on the “admission” of interests. What is more, discussion and decision making have often been confined to carefully and narrowly selected subjects at the expense of other, potentially relevant issues. For example, in some cases new arrangements have been put in place in particular sectors with no challenge to sector demarcations. It is essential to recognise the persistence of existing power relations, even within reformed structural arrangements. Under these conditions, no comprehensive co-operation between old and new partners has ensued, and traditional power structures have remained largely in place. This tends to preserve the influence of established interests and block access to the options that would be available for all participants under arrangements with more comprehensive co-operation and integration.

Still, it should be remembered that more comprehensive co-operation between various partners would not be without its own problems. The extent to which new partners’ decision-making processes could be integrated in such consultation and decision-making systems is unclear. What is more, a polarisation of interests could emerge from newly integrated systems, with the result that the systems would block decisions or permit agreements only at the level of the “lowest common denominator”. Such risks grow as the spectrum of involved partners, interests and issues becomes more comprehensive. Whether the “strategy of limited co-operation” seen in the case studies enables links between training sectors to be strengthened to an extent conducive to promotion of lifelong learning is a question that needs continued empirical monitoring.

We would suggest that if qualifications are to promote lifelong learning, their development must not stop at sectoral and occupational boundaries. Such demarcations must thus become more permeable, or at least must be changed, in keeping with the requirements of process-oriented labour organisations and the development of overarching competence profiles – in other words, in line with the transformation of work processes themselves. As the case studies show, it is usual for social partners and education sector representatives, or organisations engaged by these partners, to develop qualifications or be involved in relevant development steps. With such arrangements, the state frees itself of a number of weighty management problems and decision-making responsibilities. It no longer has to take the various relevant interests into account; it can leave this task up to the participating partners. Still, as the example of the Netherlands indicates, sectoral organisations do not always find it easy to co-operate inter-sectorally. Industrial relations within individual sectors – manifested, for example, in various labour market regulations – can tend to make existing demarcation lines inflexible. At the same time, the example of the Netherlands also shows how network-oriented co-operation, across sectoral boundaries, can make such demarcations more permeable, thereby permitting development of more innovative competence profiles that are more relevant to the labour market.

Finally, lifelong learning can also be promoted via recognition of a wide range of forms of learning used to acquire qualifications. The relevant spectrum includes organised, virtual, and workplace learning (including informal and non-formal learning – see Colardyn and Bjørnåvold, 2005). The key to this approach is that comparable qualifications earned in different ways must be considered to have the same value. The case studies show how different countries are seeking solutions in this area, on different levels. In Switzerland, a legal framework has been created that includes all relevant political and societal groups. In Belgium (Flanders), an inter-ministerial organisation has been created, through administrative reorganisation, in order to strengthen coherence between qualifications earned via formal, non-formal or informal learning. In Germany, a new decision-making body, consisting of experts from the “practical” sector, has been created to control the development of workplace-oriented qualifications, including their certification and awarding. This body, like the qualifications it has developed, remains a part of the traditional qualifications system, however. A common feature of all these approaches is that they seek to promote mutual confidence in the value of different avenues to qualifications, by promoting co-operation between strong partners and co-ordinating different interests in defined, planned ways. This finding emerges powerfully from the study: policy makers are recognising the need to adapt qualifications systems

to new forms of industrial organisation but are not switching to fully “flexibilised” and “individualised” arrangements. Tripartite and wider forms of organised co-operation are not being abandoned but are being refined and transformed. Co-operation, consensus and collaboration remain prominent in the management and operation of systems; they retain a crucial role in mediation of sectoral and competing interests.

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APPENDIX B: SYNOPSIS OF COUNTRY QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEMS AND REFORM PROGRAMMES

Australia

Australia introduced the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) in 1995. It is inclusive of all national qualifications (15 in 2005) in the three sectors of education and training: schools (final two years), vocational education and training, and higher education. The AQF has built upon the previous, long-established system of national tertiary course award levels in Australia, and was introduced with the main aim of supporting major reforms towards industry-based vocational education and training in the last decade. The Australian Qualifications Framework is seen as a powerful tool for:

- Better transition pathways for all young people through the addition of two lower-level vocational education and training qualifications to the system. These can be achieved in a range of learning settings – including upper secondary school education, which has now been further broadened with the introduction of school-based apprenticeships with an AQF qualification outcome.
- Strengthened linkages (including credit transfer) between qualifications in all three sectors. This includes –articulated programmes between school education, vocational education and training and higher education; scope for delivery of qualifications in sectors other than the sector that sets the standards, in order to optimise student choice within the constraints of local infrastructure; and institutional partnerships at the sectoral interface, in particular diploma to degree.
- Innovatory training packages based on national industry competence standards. The qualifications specified in the training packages are all accredited against the AQF requirements for the vocational education and training certificates and diplomas, and so are fully integrated into the national system of qualifications in post-compulsory education and training.
- Expanded education, training and employment opportunities through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), where explicit and detailed AQF requirements underpin reliable assessments of an individual's informal learning as an alternative pathway towards achievement of an AQF qualification.
- Improved capacity to respond to 21st century technology advances through a new short-cycle sub-degree qualification in higher education, combining a multidisciplinary academic knowledge base with generic employment-related skills.
- New industry-based learning pathways through the addition of postgraduate qualifications focusing on competence in a workplace environment that are more readily accessible by a wider range of the adult population.
- Enhanced comparability of Australian qualifications with qualifications in other countries – based on significant commonalities in rigour of standards and accreditation and delivery and assessment requirements under the AQF – supporting transnational recognition and global mobility.

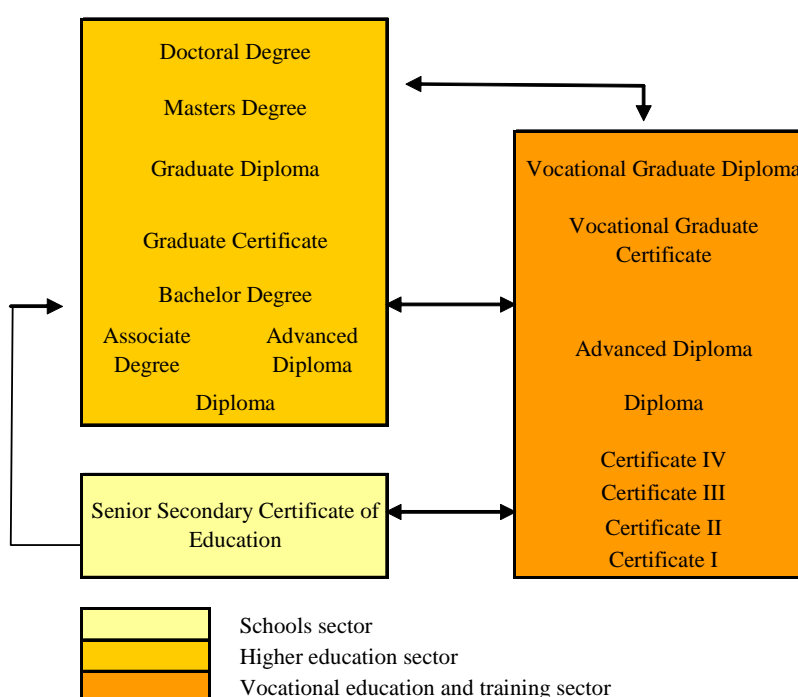
The table and chart below provide a description of the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Australian Qualifications Framework – Table of qualifications 2005 (by sector of accreditation)

Schools sector accreditation	Vocational education and training sector accreditation	Higher education sector accreditation
Senior Secondary Certificate of Education	Vocational graduate diploma Vocational graduate certificate Advanced diploma diploma Certificate IV Certificate III Certificate II Certificate I	Doctoral degree Masters degree Graduate diploma Graduate certificate Bachelor degree Associate degree, Advanced diploma Diploma

Initial Education and Training Systems in Australia

Cross- sectoral qualification linkages



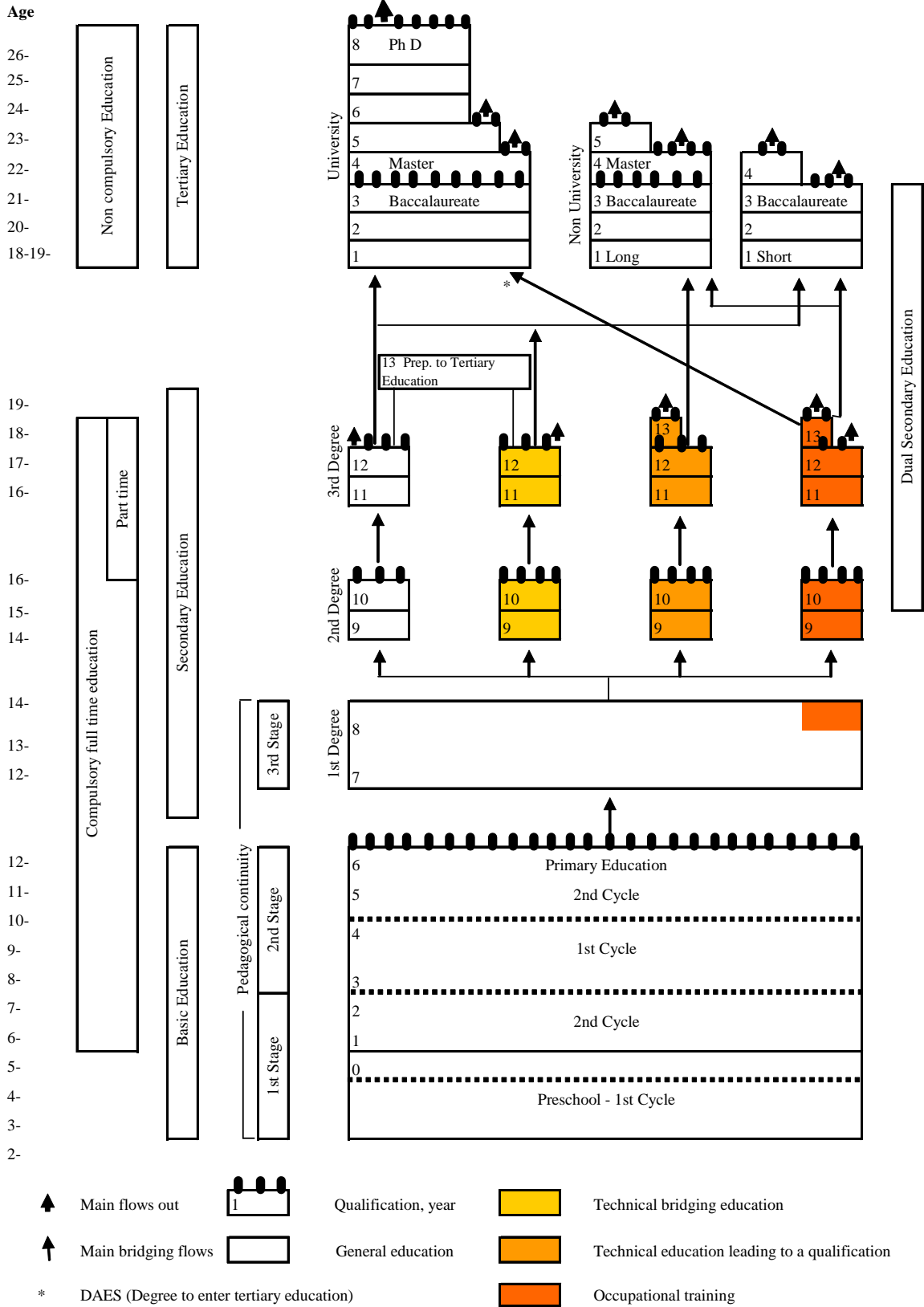
Belgium (French speaking)

Recent reforms of the qualifications system in French-speaking Belgium include:

- The creation, following up on a co-operation agreement among the non federal French-speaking entities, of a transversal framework for the validation of vocational competencies. The main objective of this framework is to allow citizens aged 18 and above to have competencies acquired in the workplace during vocational training or by their experience recognised. These competencies will be formally recognised through Competencies awards (*Titres de compétences*) given by the French Community of Belgium (*Communauté française de Belgique*), the Walloon Region (*Région wallonne*) and the French-speaking Community Commission (*Commission communautaire française – Ccof*).
- Reinforced collaboration among the sector of education, the sector of vocational training and the branches. This has allowed for a better match between the objectives of the education sector as a whole and the more specific needs of the firm.
- The progressive evolution towards teaching practice based on the acquisition of competencies.

The chart below describes the initial education and training systems in French-speaking Belgium.

Initial education and training systems in French-speaking Belgium



Source: Ministry of French Community, Directorate for International Relations, Brussels, 2004.

Denmark

Recent reforms of the national qualifications system in Denmark include:

- New IT-based information and advice for all learners on qualification systems and programmes offered by social partners.
- Fresh initiatives launched to renew the principles of dual vocational education, in line with the government’s plan on “Better Education”.
- Both the general and the vocationally oriented gymnasium have also undergone reform in 2003. The main aim has been to improve young people’s study competence and thus strengthen the basis for more young people completing a higher education programme. One of the elements in the gymnasium reforms is to emphasise qualifications as supposed to subjects.
- There is a new framework for the adult vocational training programmes. This is intended to optimise single subjects in the vocational education and training programmes and in the adult vocational training programmes, facilitate transfer credit in completed vocational training, implement systematic measurement and evaluation of results, and co-ordinate development work between vocational education and training programmes taking place in different locations.

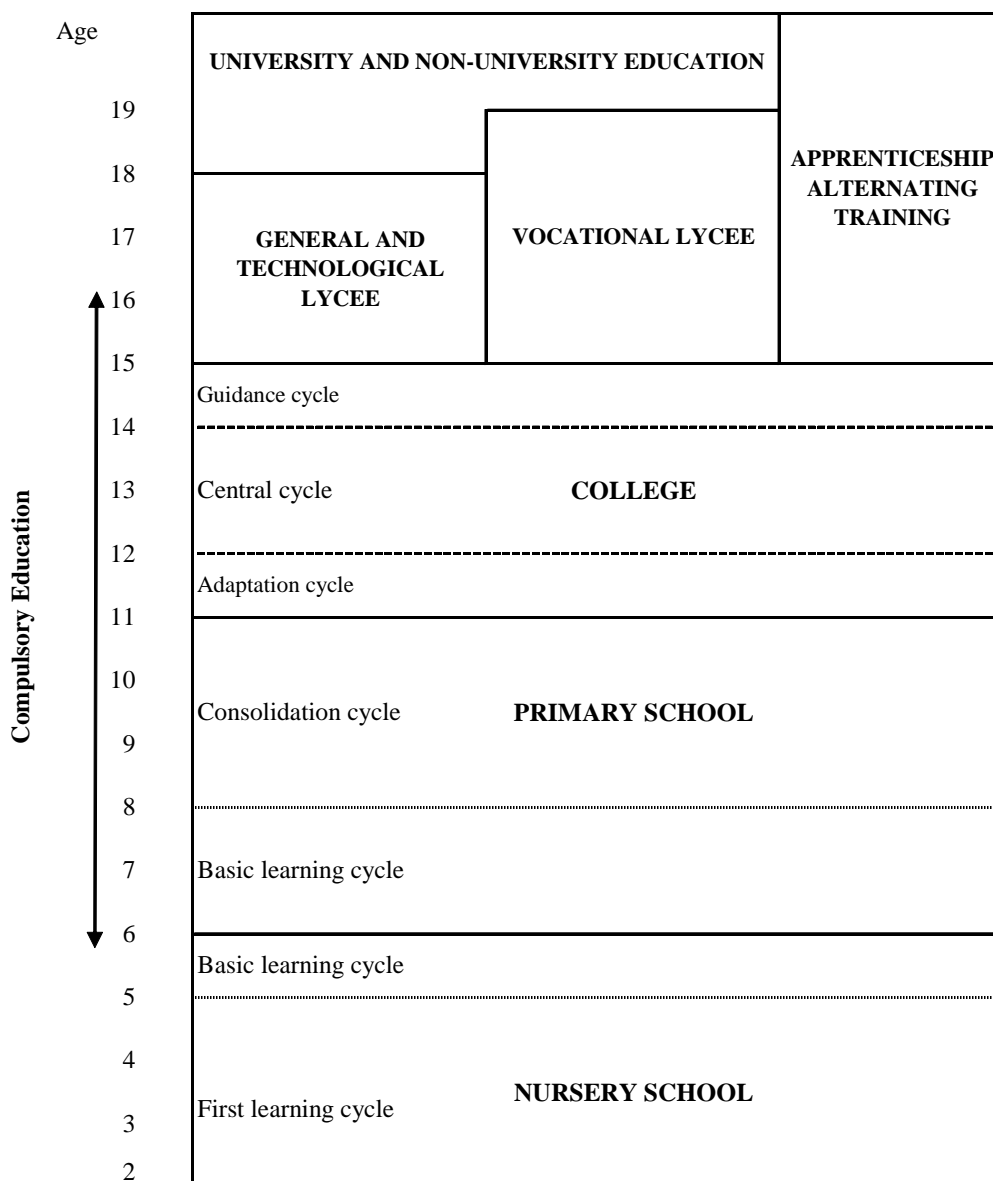
France

Recent reforms of the national qualifications system in France include:

- A right for individuals to lifelong learning now exists, and qualifications are intended to be the tangible evidence or benchmark of this right.
- A register of all vocational qualifications has been developed (RNCP – *Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles*). The register shows linkage with other qualifications. The process of registering a qualification is a compulsory step in the creation of a qualification, and therefore a means of regulation.
- Steps are being taken to create a vocational degree in higher education (*licence professionnelle*), intended to strengthen the links between higher education and vocational training/preparation.

The chart below describes the initial education and training systems in France.

Initial education and training systems in France



Germany

In order to encourage lifelong learning, recent initiatives to reform the German qualifications system have focused particularly on the close relationship between initial and continuing vocational education and training and/or academic education.

The qualifications acquired at the end of upper secondary education prepare the individual for access to institutions of higher education and/or transition into the employment system. The majority of the learning programmes cover a period of several years and are targeted towards adolescent learners and the achievement of the entire qualification. However, opportunities are also available for various groups of learners to exercise more self-determination and personal responsibility. Grammar school students are allowed an element of choice with regard to their courses and examination subjects in relation to their age and level of education. In recent years, the structuring of training under the dual system in mandatory and optional units has also increased the influence of the individual in deciding what he or she would like to learn. The question of which optional units are actually available also depends on the individual training company. Nevertheless, the aim remains the achievement of an entire qualification as proof of the individual's ability to study and/or take up skilled employment. As a rule, the individual must take a final examination; the system does not provide for the accumulation of employable skills to form an entire qualification. This is intended to preserve the value of the qualifications and to strengthen their portability.

The strict regulations for obtaining qualifications during the phase of general and initial vocational education and training are due to the fact that the German labour market is predominantly a vocational qualifications market. Individuals are paid according to the level of their qualifications, on the basis of collective agreements negotiated between the two sides of industry. The strictness expresses public responsibility for this phase of general and vocational education.

The rate of participation in and completion of educational programmes at upper secondary level is high by international comparison, thus confirming the relative success of this strategy. The proportion of school students with higher education entrance qualifications (*Abitur*) has risen steadily over the last twenty years. By gaining higher education entrance qualifications, learners can choose between access to vocational training or higher education, both of which open the way to attractive careers. The high portability of qualifications under the dual system of education and training is a particular incentive for those people leaving school with lower general education qualifications to obtain vocational qualifications.

There are programmes to help young adults without vocational qualifications gain a belated vocational qualification through the combination of learning and working, the modularisation of the curricula and the documentation of credits, without however abandoning the aim of gaining a full qualification.

There is potential in the system to increase the number of people with higher education or advanced vocational qualifications. The access to tertiary-level education is going to be opened by crediting vocational qualifications and work experience. The amended Upgrading Training Assistance Act offers increased incentives for upgrading training in the years to come.

As far as the promotion of lifelong learning is concerned, considerable potential is seen in the introduction of additional qualifications, which began several years ago. These may take the form of independent, supplementary qualifications or units that count towards advanced vocational qualifications. There are also great expectations for new qualifications frameworks, the certification of informally acquired competencies, and the introduction of a credit transfer system. These initiatives should open up new prospects for closer links between initial and continuing vocational education and training. Learners will be offered the following opportunities.

There will be possibilities for a relatively smooth transfer between vocational training and continuing training for competent trainees interested in acquiring demanding vocational qualifications, particularly for those with *Abitur*. Apart from numerous dual courses of study with integrated initial vocational qualifications, the introduction of qualification frameworks, which is already taking place in the IT sector and is planned for further sectors, should help individuals obtain qualifications right up to the tertiary sector.

The question of access to continuing vocational education and training is particularly relevant for learners without formal vocational qualifications. For this group, flexibility of provision and the possibility of acquiring qualification units are just as important as the recognition of what they have learned informally. This applies not only to adolescents with poor starting chances and to young adults with low qualifications, but also to lateral entrants who are thus able to acquire a qualification in the field of continuing vocational training.

These initiatives, which are now also anchored in the new Vocational Training Act (as of 23 March 2005), are aimed at making the qualifications system as a whole more coherent, by restructuring training and continuing training, by introducing different forms of learning (both formal and informal), and by creating flexible learning paths from initial vocational training to continuing training and/or higher education. This means that learners enjoy framework conditions that allow more personal responsibility and self-determination when acquiring qualifications and developing competencies.

Outside the formal qualifications system several initiatives have been launched creating infrastructures and tools for the promotion of lifelong learning. The federal programme "Learning Regions – Support for Networks" involves the relevant stakeholders and institutions at local, regional and national level (such as continuing vocational training institutions, schools, universities, enterprises, associations, social partners, local communities and labour administration) and creates new infrastructures for lifelong learning. One hundred and eighteen million Euros have been made available for the period 2001-07 (51 million of which are ESF money). This bottom-up approach of the Learning Regions considerably promotes further development of the qualifications system in accordance with practical needs. The Learning Regions provide a framework for the joint development of proposals for new study courses by institutions such as the chambers of crafts, universities, and universities of applied sciences. Furthermore, the Learning Regions are testing concepts for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and contribute to increasing the responsiveness to the needs of enterprises, in particular SMEs.

With the project Quality Certification in Continuing Education of the Bund-Laender Commission for Educational Planning and Research Promotion (BLK), the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has set in motion the nationwide establishment of the LQW 2 quality development and certification procedure in the field of continuing education. Apart from an internal quality development process, LQW 2 guarantees that certified institutions also meet externally reviewed minimum requirements.

With the BLK's project "Lifelong Learning Passport with Certification of Informal Learning", the BMBF has introduced the test phase of a widely usable "Continuing Education Passport" with an integrated advisory concept. The *ProfIPASS* attaches particular importance to the documentation and recognition of informal and non-formal skills. It will be compatible with other relevant instruments to validate skills and qualifications, both in Germany and at European level.

The chart below describes the initial education and training systems in Germany.

Greece

Recent major reforms of the national qualifications system in Greece include:

- The upper-secondary cycle of education has been reformed with the establishment of Technical Vocational Schools (TEE) to provide technical and vocational knowledge and skills as well as an occupational awareness to facilitate young people's entry into the labour market. The day TEE are for young people 15+ who do not work, while the evening TEE are for working people up to the age of 50.
- The establishment of the Open University providing open access to higher education for all citizens.
- The introduction of the National System for Linking Vocational Education and Training with Employment (ESSEKA), which sets out the regulating framework for the implementation of an integrated and coordinated policy for human resources development and maximization of employment. This entails the linkage between Initial & Continuing VET systems (2003).
- The Cooperation Memorandum between the Ministry of Education & the Ministry of Employment for the planning and implementation of an integrated strategy for Life Long Learning in Greece (2005). This strategy is based on the following Actions:
 - Monitoring labour market trends for the identification of labour market needs
 - Development of job profiles and their accreditation
 - Development of training programmes to be based on accredited job profiles
 - Accreditation of Centres, Trainers and Training Programmes
 - Accreditation of knowledge, skills and competencies.
- The Law on the Systematization of Life Long Learning (2005), which sets the legislative framework for:
 - the accreditation of job profiles to be executed by EKEPIS, the National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training
 - the accreditation of VET Programmes and the awarding of the respective Certificates to be executed by:
 - OEEK, the Organisation for Initial Vocational Education & Training, the authority body for initial VET and
 - EKEPIS, the National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training, the authority body for continuing vocational training.
 - the accreditation of knowledge, skills and competencies and the awarding of the respective Certificates to be executed by OEEK and EKEPIS respectively.
 - the establishment of LLL Institutes (IDBE) at Higher Education institutes

It is to note that the participation and involvement of the Social Partners is engaged for in all stages of the planning and implementation of the integrated strategy for LLL in Greece.

Providers of adult Education within the context of LLL are mainly:

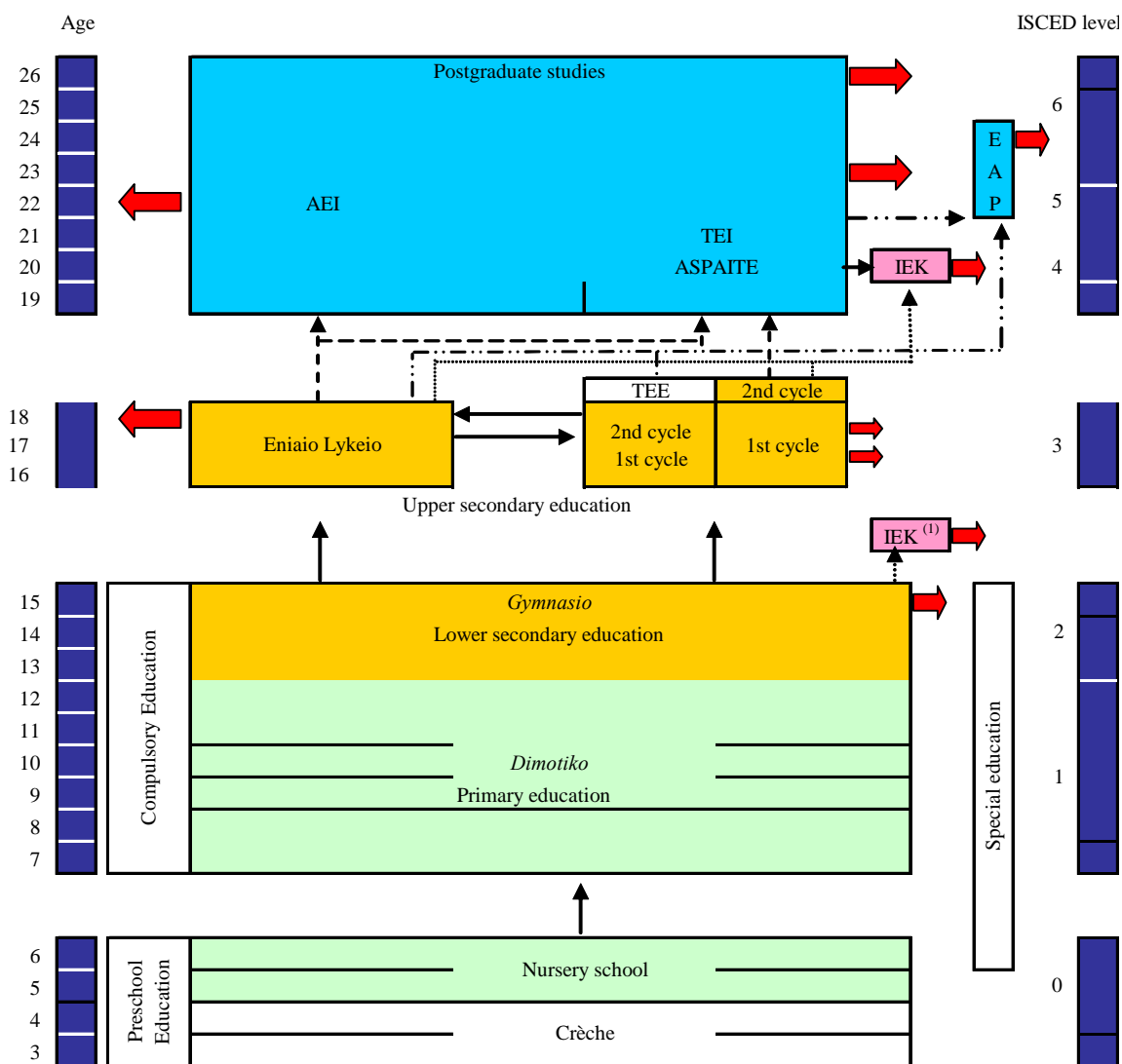
- Second Chance Schools, providing adults who have not completed the 9-year compulsory education with the opportunity of reintegrating into the formal education system and opening access opportunities into the initial and continuing VET.
- Adult Education Centres, providing adult VET for key competences.
- Local Authorities Centres, providing adult VET tailored to local needs.
- Institutes for Life Long Education, operating within the institutes of Higher Education for higher education graduates.
- The National Centre for Public Administration & Local Government, for public sector employees.

Providers of adult Training within the context of LLL are mainly:

- the Vocational Training Institutes (IEK) accredited by OEEK, which provide basic vocational knowledge, skills and competencies at post-secondary level to equip learners with qualifications for employment.
- the Vocational Training Centres (KEK) accredited by EKEPIS, which provide complementary, updated and/or upgraded knowledge, skills and competencies for the learners' integration and/or reintegration into the labour market, employment security, professional advancement and personal development.

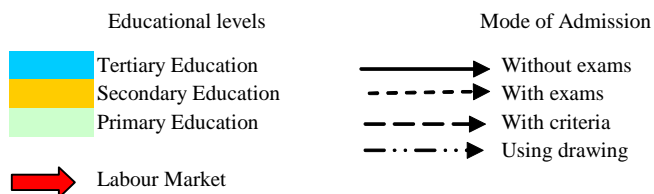
The chart below describes the initial education and training systems in Greece.

Initial education and training systems in Greece



⁽¹⁾ Post Gymnasium initial training in specialities placed in post secondary IEK

- AIE: Institutes of Higher Education
- TEI: Technological Education Institutes
- ASPAITE: Higher Institute of Pedagogical and Technological Education
- EAP: Open University
- TEE: Technical Vocational Schools
- IEK: Institutes of Vocational Training



Source: CEDEFOP, Panorama series 59, 2003.

Ireland

Recent reforms of the national qualifications system in Ireland include:

- The development of a national framework of qualifications that is inclusive of all qualifications and will lead to credit transfer systems.
- The development of the Applied Leaving Certificate, recognising achievement across a whole programme rather than simply individual subject attainment. It is focused on vocational preparation, and a range of modes of assessment is used.
- The development of the Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects (ACCS) scheme, initiated in 1989. The scheme allows learners to follow programmes for individual subjects and accumulate the credits gained towards an award. Its objective is to facilitate greater participation by learners on a part-time basis and promote adult learning.
- The development of a new model of standards-based apprenticeship.
- The development and implementation of the Higher Education Links Scheme, a process designed to facilitate transitions from further education awards to programmes leading to higher education awards.
- The Higher Education Links Scheme, a response to increasing participation in programmes leading to Level 2 NCVA awards in post-secondary education. Essentially, higher education places are made available through links between particular higher education programmes and one or more NCVA Level 2 Certificate awards in related areas of study.

Another major reform of the qualifications system in Ireland has been under way since 2001. The central element in the reform is the development of a National Framework of Qualifications, a structure of levels allowing qualifications to be compared easily. Following the launch of the Framework in October 2003, implementation has proceeded quickly. New Framework qualifications have been in use throughout higher education and training since the autumn of 2004, and the introduction of a new system of awards for further education and training (including vocational education and training) is expected in mid-2005.

The Framework is a structure of ten levels. Standards of knowledge, skill and competence have been set out for each level, defining the outcomes to be achieved by learners seeking to gain awards. This introduces new meaning to an award, that it recognises learning outcomes – what a person with an award knows, can do and understands – rather than time spent on a programme.

The ten levels accommodate awards gained in schools, the workplace, the community, training centres, colleges and universities, from the most basic to the most advanced levels of learning. All learning can thus be recognised, including that achieved through experience in the workplace or other non-formal settings.

A key feature of the Irish reform is that responsibility for awarding qualifications now rests with a small number of awarding bodies. A particular innovation is that all vocational education and training qualifications in Ireland are now awarded by one body, the Further Education and Training Awards Council.

The chart below describes the Irish qualifications framework.

The Irish Qualifications Framework

Level 1 certificate (FETAC)	Level 2 certificate (FETAC)	Level 3 certificate (FETAC)	Level 4 certificate (FETAC)	Level 5 certificate (FETAC)	Advanced certificate (FETAC)	Ordinary bachelor degree	Honours bachelor degree	Masters degree	Doctoral degree
		Junior certificate (SEC)	Leaving certificate (SEC)		Higher certificate (HETAC) (DIT)		Higher diploma	Post-Graduate diploma	
FETAC									
		SEC			HETAC				
					DIT				
						UNIVERSITIES			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10-Level Framework									

The diagram illustrates the 10-level structure of the National Framework of Qualifications. The Framework contains a set of 15 generic qualifications for which descriptors have been published. These are listed in the outer cells of the diagram.

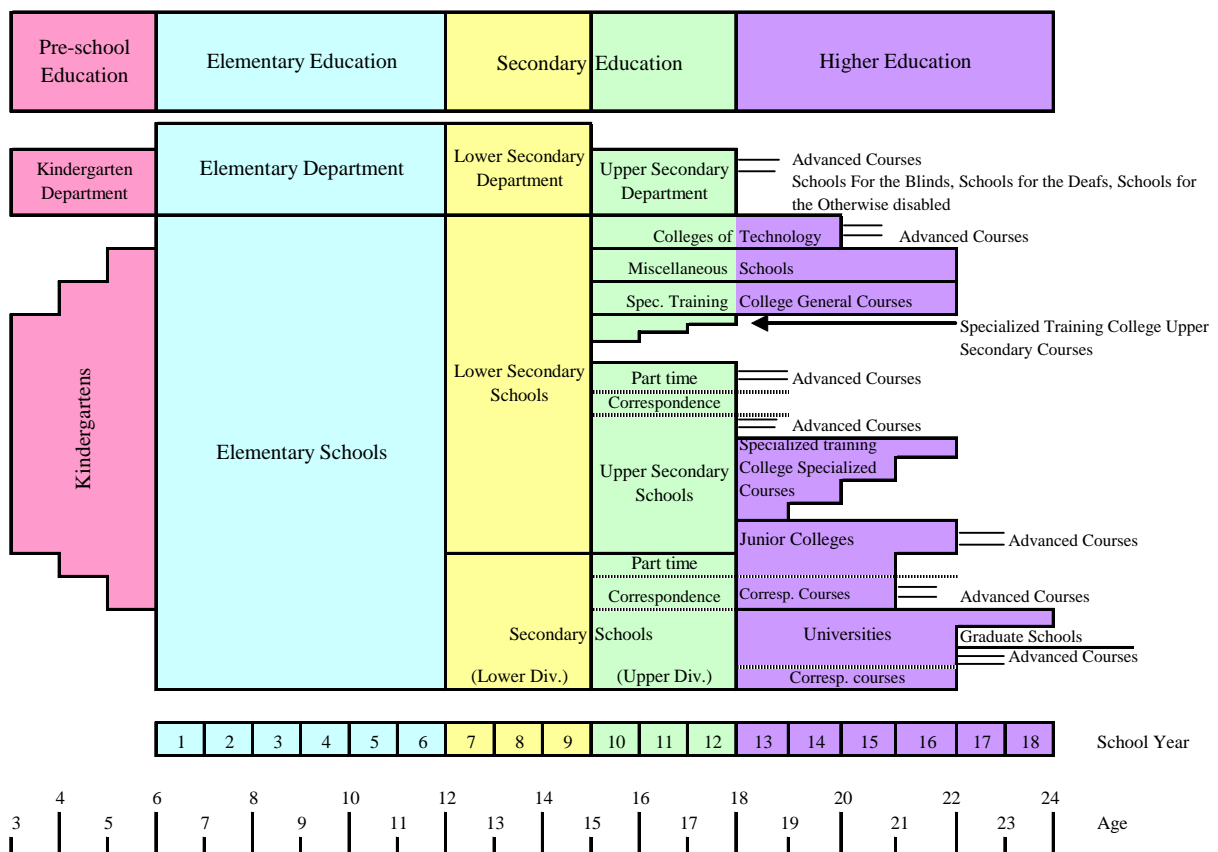
The diagram also illustrates the various awarding bodies whose qualifications are included in the Framework. These are shown as coloured bands extending across the levels of the Framework as appropriate.

Japan

Recent reforms of the national qualifications system in Japan include the creation of a new vocational ability evaluation system through a combination of private and public bodies. The trade skill tests lead to the title of Certified Skill Worker.

The chart below describes the initial education and training systems in Japan.

Initial education and training systems in Japan

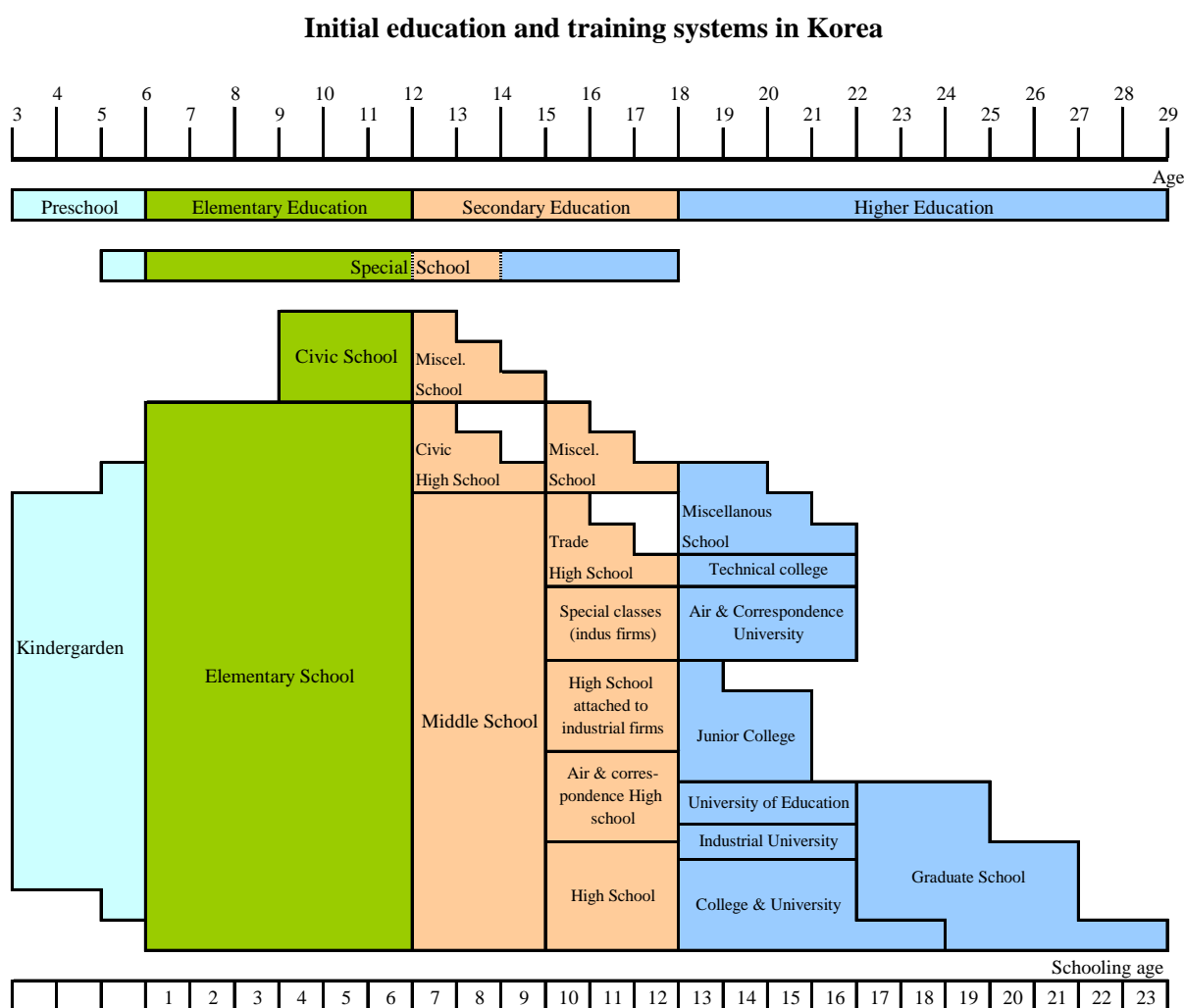


Korea

Recent reforms of the national qualifications system in Korea include:

- A programme based on the Workers' Vocational Training Promotion Act: the purpose of the Act is to stimulate the development and improvement of peoples' vocational capabilities throughout their working life, and to encourage the participation of the private sector in developing career capabilities and to provide better- quality public or national vocational training.
- The Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Education Act meets demand for equal recognition of individual achievements through lifelong learning with those from regular education and provides credits towards obtaining of degrees or credits.
- The Educational Reform Proposal of 1996 and Reform Proposals on Regulations of the Qualifications System of 1999 (two major reform efforts).

The chart below describes the initial education and training systems in Korea.



Mexico: The National System of Education – routes and qualifications

The National System of Education contains three education routes: a) academic, b) vocational and c) occupational. In general the first two operate in the formal context of the Mexican educational system, which comprises three consecutive stages of academic education: basic education (preschool, two years; primary, six years; and lower secondary, three years), upper secondary education (high school and technical professional, generally three years), and tertiary education (bachelor's degrees, normally four or five years; and graduate studies, between two and five years). Vocational education and training begins at lower and upper secondary levels and continues with higher education studies. Occupational learning includes job training, both in formal (training centres) and non-formal and informal environments (workplaces). Academic and vocational education qualifications are based on the accreditation of study subjects corresponding to each degree or study year. Qualifications for jobs are focused on prior learning recognition – formal, non-formal and informal – of people older than 15 and on the basis of Technical Standards of Labour Competence (*Normas Técnicas de Competencia Laboral, NTCL*), within the Modernisation Programme of Technical Education and Training (*Programa de Modernización de la Educación Técnica y la Capacitación, PMETyC*).

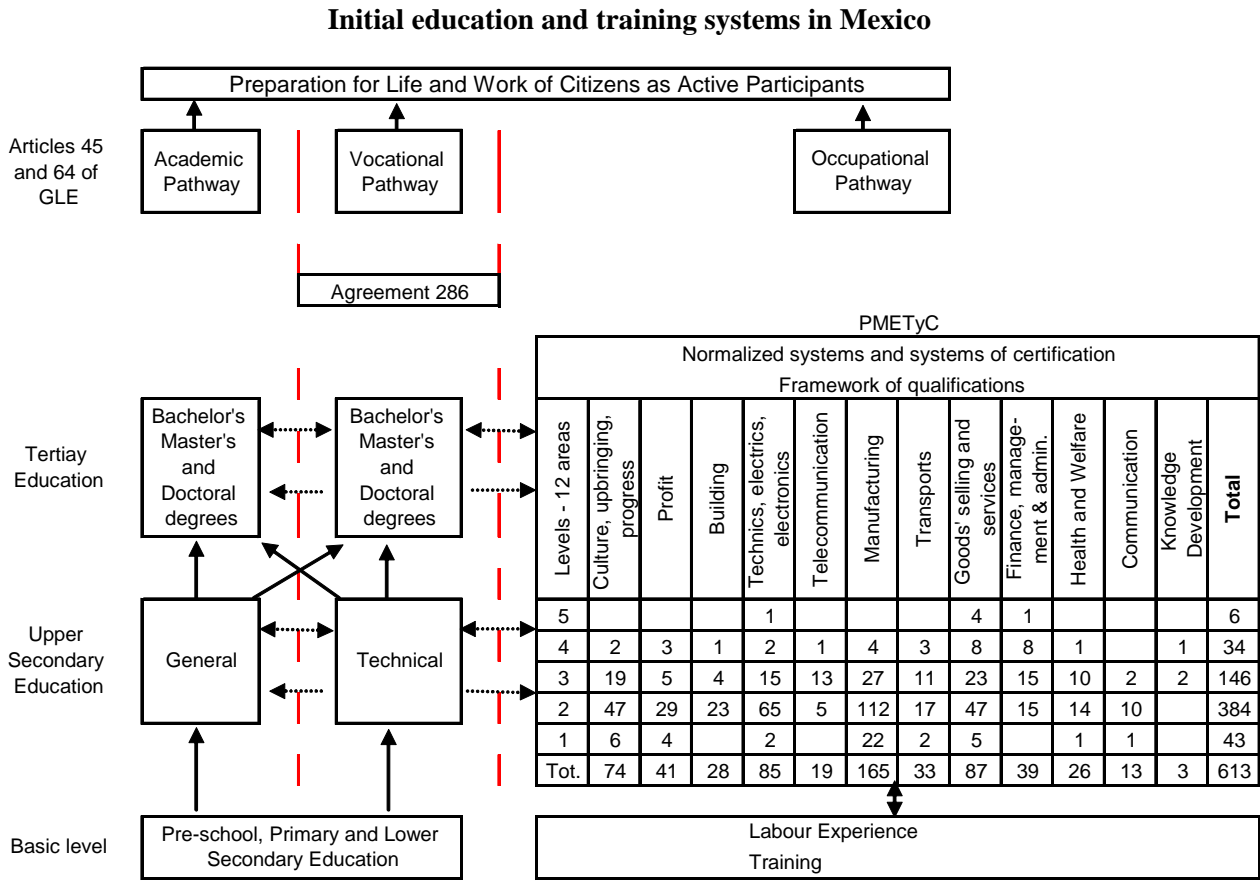
Some of the main reforms to the qualifications system

In relation to educational quality problems and challenges, the National Programme of Education (2001-06) highlights the importance of the abilities and skills required by employment, particularly concerning job training at upper secondary level. It also pays attention to the problems stemming from the lack of linkage between the curriculum and the needs of young people. Within employment it also emphasises the necessity to encourage labour competence standards' incorporation through curricular reform. These educational policy guidelines have had an impact in *PMETyC's* organisation and operation, and particularly in the Standardised and Certification Systems to which it is linked. These systems involve more than 600 *Normas Técnicas de Competencia Laboral*, in 12 main employment areas and five complexity levels, organised under a qualifications matrix.

Articles 45 and 64 of the General Law of Education (GLE) and Agreement 286 of the Public Education Ministry set the basis for recognition of prior learning – that is to say, for the accreditation of knowledge, abilities and skills that can be acquired by different routes and education models, and thus for the link between knowledge acquired by labour experience and through the National Education System. This framework provides the principles for the construction and integration (vertical and horizontal) of a National System of Qualifications that could promote lifelong learning in the Mexican population.

The focus of education based on competencies has been adopted by important institutions of upper secondary education, for example: General Directorate of High School (*Dirección General del Bachillerato, DGB*), General Directorate for Industrial Technical Education (*Dirección General de Educación Tecnológica Industrial, DGETI*), General Directorate for Agriculture and Livestock Technical Education (*Dirección General de Educación Tecnológica Agropecuaria, DGETA*), and the General Directorate for Sea Science and Technology Education (*Dirección General de Educación en Ciencia y Tecnología del Mar, DGECyTM*), all belonging to the Sub-secretariat of Upper Secondary Education (*Subsecretaría de Educación Media*); and the National System for Vocational and Technical Education (*Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional Técnica, CONALEP*). In this way several institutions have facilitated the implementation of important reforms to their corresponding models, to increase the flexibility, pertinence, equity and quality of their services.

The chart below describes the initial education and training systems in Mexico.



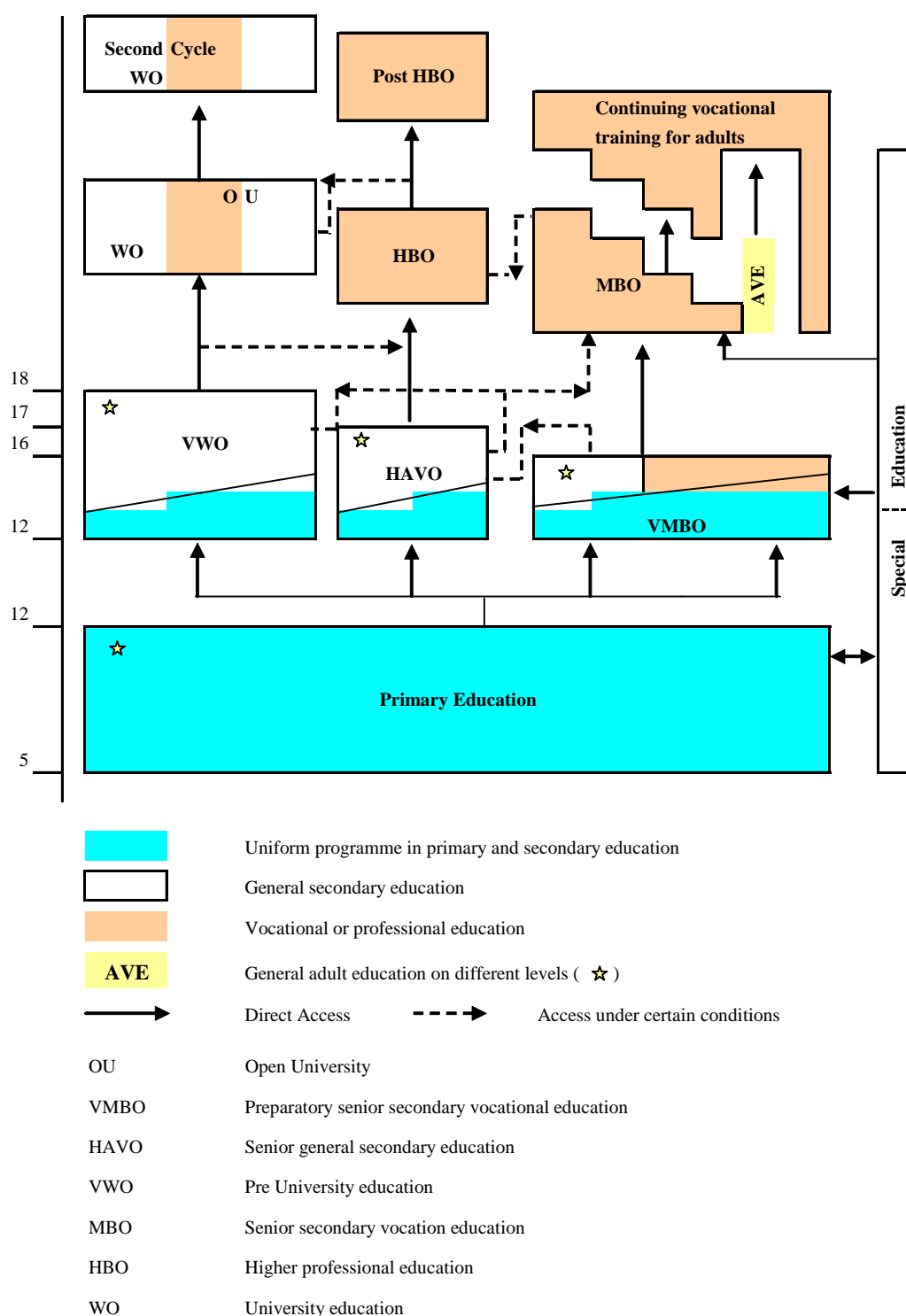
The Netherlands

Recent reforms of the national qualifications system in the Netherlands include:

- A national action plan regarding lifelong learning, focusing on both promoting the employability of the employed, unemployed and teachers, and combating educational disadvantages and reorientating education and training towards lifelong learning.
- A co-ordinating agency for the regulation and control of qualifications.
- Development of broad competence-based qualifications, including cross-sector qualifications.
- Flexible dual trajectories combining learning and work.
- The accreditation of prior learning.

The chart below describes structure of the education and training systems in the Netherlands.

Initial education and training systems in the Netherlands



Source: CINOP, 2004.

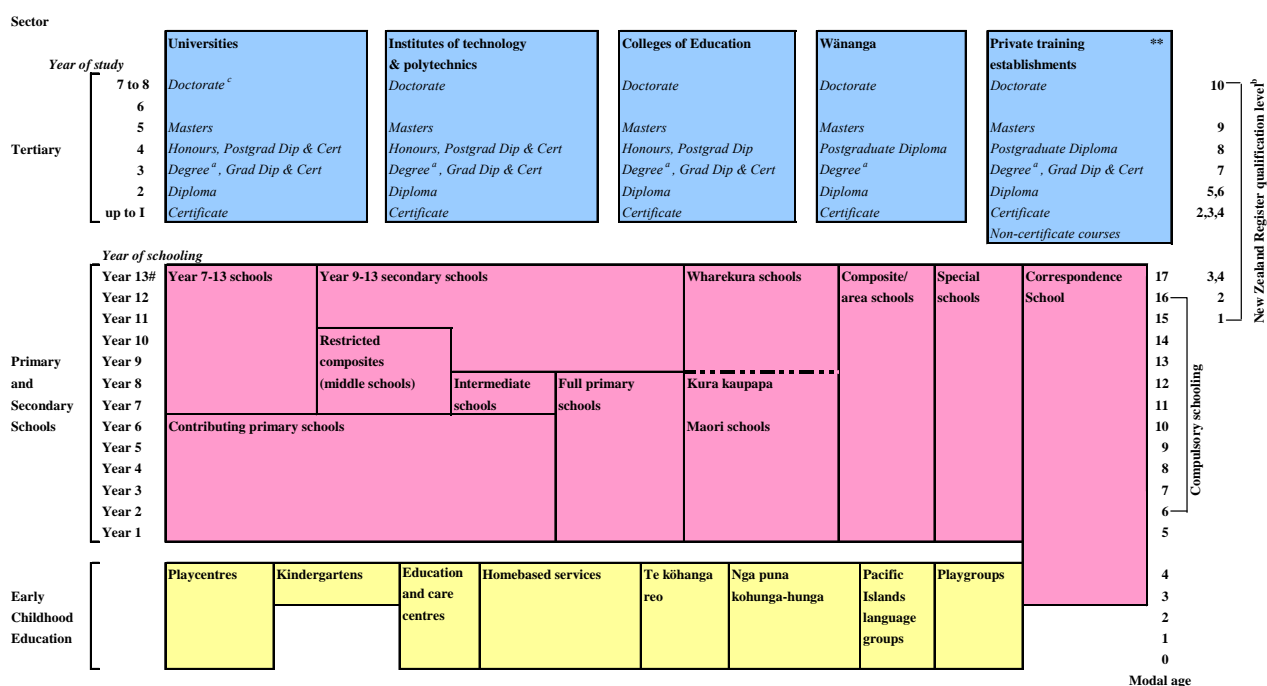
New Zealand

Recent reforms of the national qualifications system in New Zealand include:

- Development of the National Qualifications Framework.
- Development of unit standards.
- Development of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). The first stage was implemented in 2002, with level 2 implementation planned for 2003 followed by level 3 in 2004. The National Certificate of Educational Achievement will have full integration with the standards-based National Qualifications Framework, using “achievement standards” developed for the school curriculum and unit standards from the National Qualifications Framework. Achievement standards differ from unit standards in that there are three different levels of achievement (achieved, achieved with merit, and achieved with excellence), with in some cases are externally assessed.
- International benchmarking and mutual recognition agreements.
- The adult literacy strategy with the goals of increasing opportunities for adult literacy learning, developing capacity in the adult literacy teaching sector, and improving the quality of adult literacy programmes. The creation of a strategy for adult and community education (ACE).
- The development and enhancement of policy for and funding and delivery of foundation education.
- Modern apprenticeships, credit recognition and credit transfer arrangements.
- A system that identifies and defines foundation skills critical to participation in society and the labour market, and acknowledges learner progress in these skill areas through the National Qualifications Framework. It is acknowledged that learners can acquire foundation skills without that learning being recognised by qualifications. Secondary education has been reformed to develop positive attitudes to lifelong learning.
- A common credit currency, a levels system, learning outcomes and subject classification system for all qualifications quality assured in New Zealand. This register provides a basis for credit recognition and transfer.

The chart below describes structure of the initial education and training systems in New Zealand.

Initial education and training systems in New Zealand



The majority of students complete their schooling within 13 years but a small number continue to study in the school system for another year or two.

^a A small number of degrees are in excess of 3 years.

^b Certificates can be registered at any level, and diplomas can be registered at any level between 5 and 10.

^c Apart from the universities, currently only one of the institutes of technology also offers a doctorate.

** PTEs include a large range of institution types and sizes, many of which are focused on short-certificate or non-certificate level courses.

Portugal

The education and training system in Portugal is based on a series of principles aiming at facilitating and assuring the right to education and training, as well as ensuring equal opportunities of access to and success in lifelong learning, in close co-operation with three Ministries – Education, Science and Higher Education, and Labour and Social Solidarity.

1 – Preschool education (optional attendance)

Aimed at children aged between 3 and 5 years. Both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity co-operate in promoting development of preschool education provision. The first ministry is responsible for pedagogical quality and the second for families' support.

2 – Basic education (compulsory schooling)

Aimed at young people aged between 6 and 15 years, and includes three sequential and progressive cycles organised as follows:

- 1st cycle, four years, general education, single-teacher scheme.
- 2nd cycle, two years, organised in interdisciplinary areas.
- 3rd cycle, three years, organised according to subjects within a unified curriculum plan.

It includes:

- *General courses*, mainly designed to lead students to further learning.
- *Initial vocational education and training courses*, designed to prepare young people (over 15 years old) for working life:
 - Vocational education and training courses.
 - Apprenticeship (alternating vocational education and training courses, aimed at first-jobseekers who left school before completing basic education).
- *Recurrent basic education* (a second opportunity for those over 15 years of age who left school early).

Successful completion of basic education entitles a person to an academic diploma (lower secondary education) or double certification – academic and vocational qualification certification (level 1 or 2).

3 – Secondary education

Aimed at young people aged between 15 and 18 years who successfully complete basic education, to prepare them for further learning and/or qualify them for working life.

It includes:

- *General courses*, mainly designed to lead students to higher education (university or polytechnic).
- *Initial vocational education and training courses*, designed to prepare young people for working life:
 - Technological courses.
 - Vocational courses.
 - Specialised artistic courses.
 - Apprenticeship (alternating vocational education and training courses, aimed at first-jobseekers who left school before completing upper secondary education)
 - Vocational education and training courses.

- *Recurrent secondary education* (a second opportunity for early school leavers, over 18). The recurrent secondary education courses are flexible and organised in a system of capitalised blocks. They take into account learners' prior experience and skills in the design of personalised learning plans.

Successful completion of secondary education entitles the person to an academic diploma (upper secondary education), allowing access to higher education or double certification – academic and vocational qualification certification (level 3), qualifying them for working life and/or allowing access to higher education.

4 – Post-secondary education - technological specialisation courses

Aimed at those who have a secondary education course or a legally equivalent qualification, and at those who have a level 3 vocational qualification. These courses award a technological specialisation diploma (TSD) as well as a vocational qualification certificate (level 4) and/or allow access to higher education.

5 – Higher Education

Higher education has a variable duration. It includes university education and the Polytechnic Higher Education, and awards a university degree (4 to 6 years) and a bachelor's degree (3 to 4 years) as well as the respective vocational qualifications (levels 4 and 5). At the present time, following the Declaration of Bologna, a number of recommendations were implemented, particularly those concerning the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) –the change in academic degrees to grant them a higher comparability, facilitating therefore mutual recognition and the promotion of free mobility.

6 – Adult education and training

This includes:

- *Recurrent education* – second-chance learning to early school leavers: aimed at providing schooling to individuals who are no longer at an age to attend secondary education (older than 18). There should be a second chance to learning at every level. Second-chance learning is organised in accordance with a studies plan, adjusted to the targeted age group level. It awards certificates and diplomas equivalent to those granted by regular basic and secondary education: certificate of vocational initiation, (level 1) and certificates of vocational qualification (levels 2 and 3).
- *Adult Education and Training Courses (EFA)*: Aimed at adults (older than 18) without basic education or vocational qualification. These courses are based on a training model according to competencies units, through which previous formally or informally acquired competencies are recognised and where basic academic education is articulated with qualifying training. They award integrated certification (academic and vocational) through a certificate of adult education and training, equivalent in legal terms to one of the three levels of basic education and level 1 or 2 of vocational qualification.
- *The National System for Recognizing, Validating and Certifying Competencies (RVCC System)*: Carried out on the basis of a National Key-Competencies Framework for Adult Education and Training points to the certification of an education level. This process is developed through the National Network of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competencies Centres and awards a certificate equivalent in legal terms to one of the three levels of basic education.

- *Continuing vocational training*: This includes a range of actions-type for occupational qualification and further training of non-qualified or semi-qualified active population, and for the specialisation of qualified active population. It promotes training paths targeted at updating, recycling and professional improvement.

Recent reforms of the national qualifications system in Portugal include:

Development of vocational training using an alternation model. Two main areas of reform:

- Initial vocational education and training supply (which is now being implemented)

Review of the legal framework on the apprenticeship system:

- Development and implementation of vocational education and training courses aimed at young people over 15 at risk of dropping out, or those who left school before having completed 12 years of schooling, as well as at those who, having completed 12 years of schooling, wish to enter the labour market with a formally recognised vocational training level. These courses award double certification – school and vocational training (level 1, 2 or 3).
- Reform of vocational education and training as an alternative to the general upper secondary education. The reform adjusts the current and emerging vocational profiles and defines a modular curriculum matrix allowing for transferability of the various training pathways, thus introducing more choice into upper secondary programmes. In fact, initial vocational education and training awards double certification – school and vocational (level 3). The goal, for 2010, is a doubling of the number of vacancies for the vocational and technological education at upper secondary level, to be reached at an annual rate of increase of 10%.
- Strengthening the links between the education and training systems and the labour market.
- Promoting more involvement of the social partners in the process of vocational education and training.
- Development of vocational guidance services, making them more accessible. Communicating the opportunities offered to acquire qualifications can facilitate integration of young and adult people into the labour market.
- **Adult education and training provision**
 - Development and implementation of the Adult Education and Training Plan since 2000/01, particularly targeting low-skilled working adults – employed and unemployed alike.
 - Implementation of the National System for Recognising and Validating Knowledge, Skills and Competencies non-formally and informally acquired. The competencies recognition and validation process is grounded in a national “Key-Competencies Framework for Adult Education and Training”, a reference for awards developed on the basis of clearly described learning outcomes.
 - Implementation of the Adult Education and Training Courses, supervised jointly by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity. This kind of training awards double qualification: school and vocational training certificates. The courses offer modular, flexible, tailor-made pathways, articulating education and vocational training through organised programmes. They are based on an initial process of recognising and validating prior non-formal and informally acquired knowledge, skills and competencies according to the “Key-Competencies Framework for Adult Education and Training”. The

Slovenia

Recent reforms of the national qualifications system in Slovenia include:

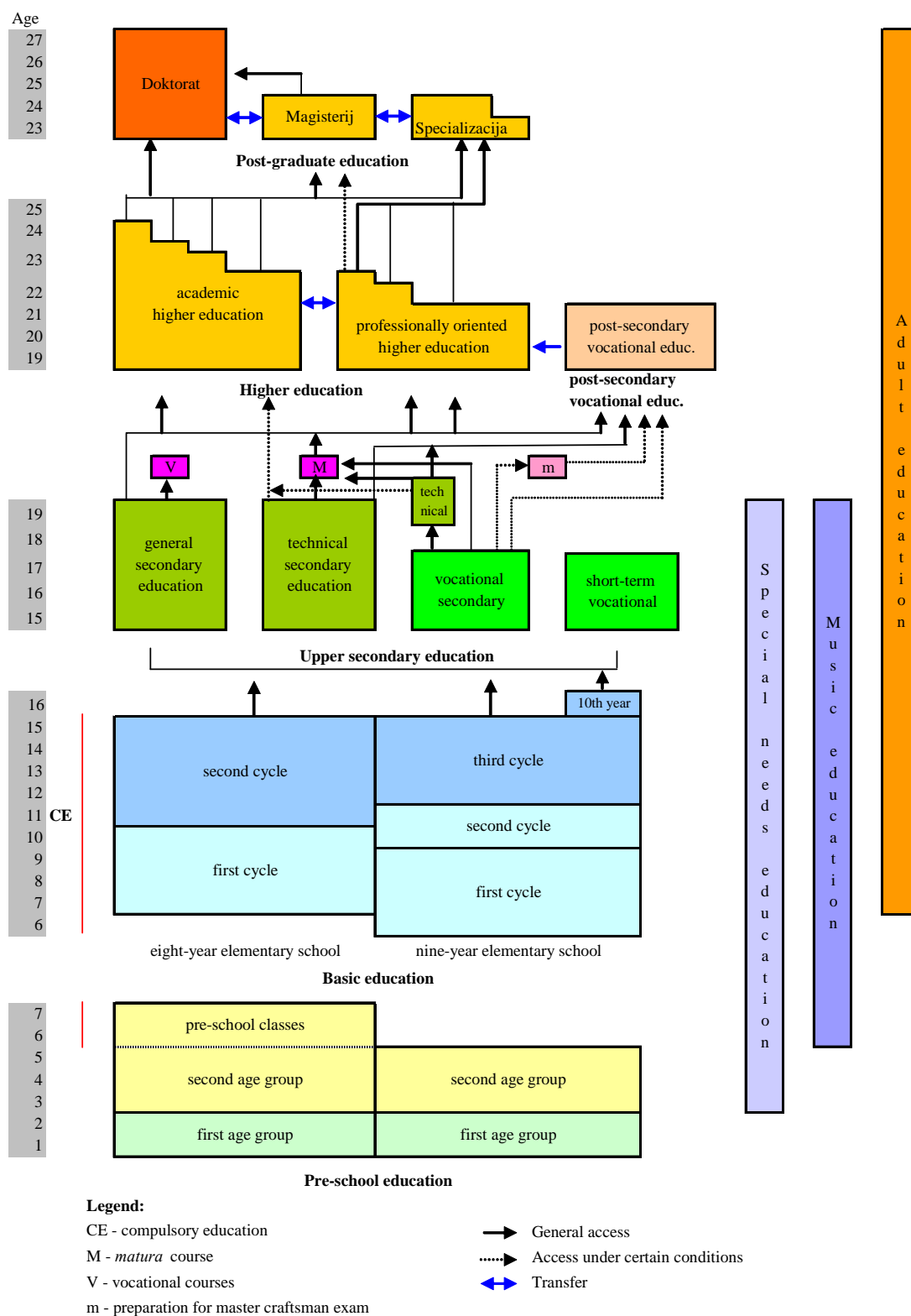
- A better choice of vocational programmes based on standards that open curricula (allowing local variation), “modularise” programmes, and integrate higher levels of knowledge. Modularisation of programmes reflects the need to increase adults’ access to educational opportunities, especially in order to improve their formal qualification attainments.
- The transition from *nomenklatura*, a document that was a legal basis for vocational education and training programmes until 2002, to occupational standards as the basis for educational programmes or for modules that are parts of the educational programme and/or the system of assessment and accreditation of prior learning.
- Introduction of the certification system.
- Assessment and certification of non-formal and informal learning and experiences as a measure to support lifelong learning were introduced at the end of the 1990s. The assessment takes place against nationally agreed standards of knowledge and skill requirements for performing certain jobs in the labour market.
- Adoption of acts related to the national qualification system development.
- Introduction of new forms of education and training in the educational system in the upper secondary and post-secondary level, enabling easier vertical and horizontal transfer from one educational level to another.
- Reintroduction of the dual system of education and training into the educational system.
- Promotion of the greater involvement of the social partners in the process of vocational education.

The Organisation and Funding of Education Act (1996) regulates the financing mechanisms, including qualifications, salaries and careers of teaching and non-teaching staff. This Act covers the whole vertical vocational education and training structure. In its final version, it now regulates more generally the procedures, bodies and organisations competent for approving standards for selected qualifications as the basis for assessment and recognition of prior and non-formal learning.

Recently, there have been initiatives for forming an expert group for the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework.

The chart below describes structure of the initial education and training systems in Slovenia.

Initial education and training systems in Slovenia



Source: Cedefop (2005). European training village, National vocational education and training systems, Vocational education and training systems and their development – eKnowVet database: Thematic overviews. www.trainingvillage.gr/etv/Information_resources/NationalVet/ (cited: 24 May 2005).

Spain

The basic structure of general education system has been shaped by Organic Law 1/1990 of 3 October on the General Organisation of the Educational System (LOGSE). Another law is being developed; a publication has been prepared for public debate ("*Una educación de calidad para todos y entre todos*" – *Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia*, 2004). The proposed new law will offer a response to some of the most pressing problems facing the education and training systems, particularly in the compulsory and post-compulsory stages. The main features of the debate over the new law include, firstly, simplification of the current legislative framework into a more structured form: this involves repealing, *inter alia*, Organic Act 1/1990 (LOGSE) and Organic Act 10/2002 on Quality in Education (LOCE). A second feature is the attempt to show how lifelong learning is a sound basis for developing education and training policies. Thirdly, the need for flexibility is prominent in, for example, attempts to facilitate and foster horizontal and vertical mobility within and between the general education and training systems. Some of the most important issues related to flexibility relate to compulsory education:

- Individual and specific group needs in the light of diversity/intercultural issues now facing the education and training systems.
- Integrating previous work on competencies in linguistics (foreign languages) and information and communication technologies.
- The establishment of a new core subject, "Education for Citizenship".
- The substitution of the current "Social Guarantee Programmes" with "Qualification Programmes", better integrated with education and vocational training systems and also linked to adult education programmes.
- The implementation of evaluation, based on basic competencies, at the end of the first cycle of compulsory education.

And in terms of post-compulsory education:

- Students' need for choice.
- Strengthening training in scientific methods, through a common subject element of all kind of Bachillerato.
- Reducing the option of four kinds of Bachillerato to three.
- Proposals concerning improving linkages among general education and vocational training schemes, intermediate and advanced levels of vocational training and advanced levels of vocational training and higher education.

Adoption of the new law was expected and could come into force in 2006.

The new law assumes and reinforces the proposals of the Organic Act 5/2002 on Qualifications and Vocational Training whose finality has been the creation of a National Qualifications and Vocational Training System. This system must foster lifelong training by integrating the different training offers and implementing the recognition and accreditation of occupational qualifications at national level. It embraces the three qualification subsystems (initial vocational training, occupational training and continuing training), and takes as institutional backbone the Qualifications Framework, composed of the National Catalogue of Qualifications with its associated Catalogue of Modules, which are now in development.

Some key features that deserve mention are:

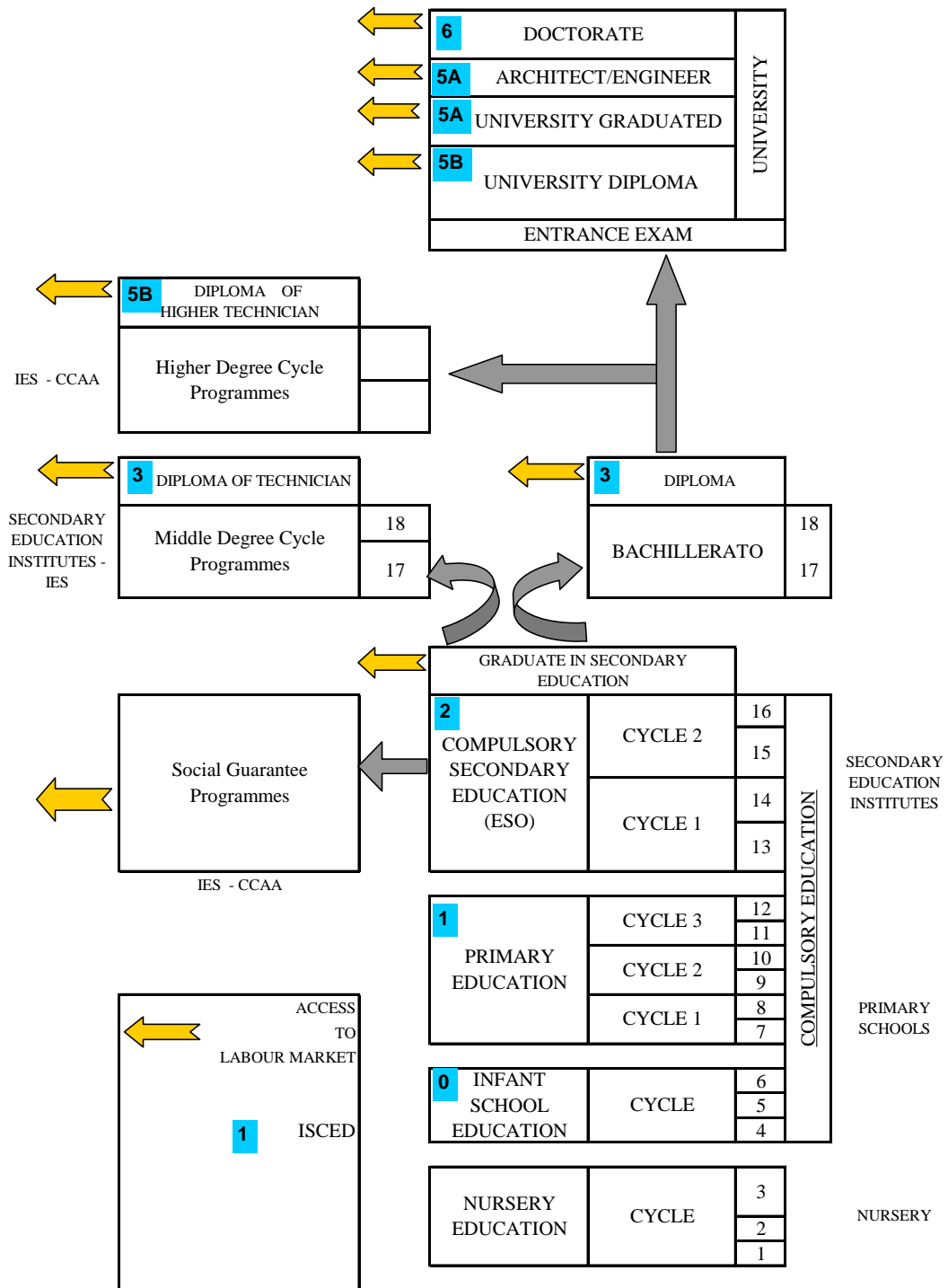
- The development of the National Catalogue of Qualifications and its associated Catalogue of Modules, as basic referent for public/private training offers.
- The experimental approach on evaluation, accreditation and recognition of competencies, acquired in work experience and/or informal learning, and linked to National Catalogue of Qualifications.
- The creation of a new structure built on the basis of the existing network of the Integrated Vocational Training Centres, with a training offer linked to the National Catalogue of Qualifications and open to young people and adults.

One central aspect is the way in which decentralisation and territorial co-operation between the General State Administration and Autonomous Communities is considered both in the case of general education and in vocational training policies, including for example the means of participation of social partners.

The chart below describes structure of the initial education and training systems in Spain.

Initial education and training systems in Spain

SPANISH EDUCATION SYSTEM



Note: CCAA: Autonomous Communities.

Source: Ministry of Education and Science.

Switzerland

Fundamental reforms were implemented in the Swiss post-compulsory education system during the last decade, and more are under discussion for the decade to come. On the institutional level, the reforms now in place improve vertical permeability:

- The introduction of the *maturité professionnelle* in 1993 (an additional qualification to that awarded at the end of apprenticeship), as well as the establishment of the universities of applied sciences in 1996, had two main goals: to enhance the attractiveness of professional education by allowing vertical transparency, and to create a new application-oriented qualification at university level.

- In general education, the profile of college-based *maturité* has been adapted to the actual needs in 1995.

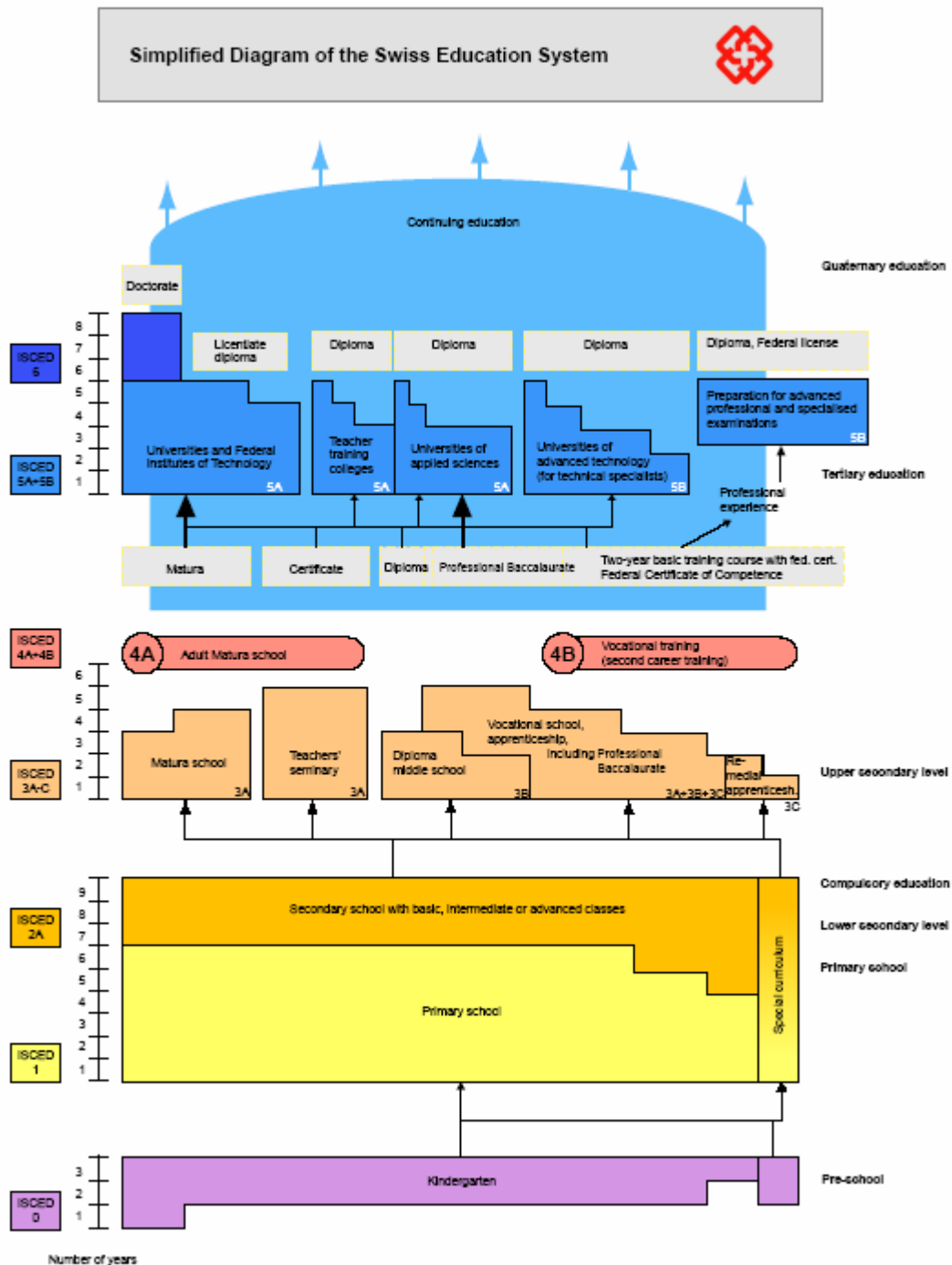
- In the early 1990s, special measures were aimed at enhancing postgraduate programmes in universities, universities of applied sciences and higher professional education.

- In 2002, the *law on vocational education* was amended. One of the main goals was to dissociate qualifications from precise training programmes, in order to increase flexibility in the system. This reform is based on long experience in the sector of higher professional education (“professional exams” and “higher professional exams”) as well as that in other sectors (federal exams for general *maturité* or professional *maturité*, professional qualification without apprenticeship). This kind of qualification has also come to be considered as an answer to the growing need for modularisation in education programmes.

- The university sector (universities and universities of applied sciences) is adopting the principles of the Bologna Declaration by restructuring study programmes (modularisation/ECTS) and introducing new degrees (bachelor’s, master’s) through legislation.

Discussions on horizontal permeability (from general to professional education and vice versa) have also had tangible results.

Initial Education and Training Systems in Switzerland



United Kingdom

The National Vocational Qualifications system, introduced in late 1980s, involved features of modularisation, outcome standards drawn from work practice, core and options credit arrangements, and recognition of informal learning together with a centralised design framework. Uptake reached some 400 000 per year by the late 1990s, but National Vocational Qualifications do not – as originally envisaged – replace other forms of vocational qualification.

General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs), introduced from 1992, was an attempt to apply National Vocational Qualifications precepts to full-time learning of 16- to 19-year-olds. Though similar to existing BTEC awards, General National Vocational Qualifications carried greater official recognition and were used by school VIth forms wanting to diversify from an academic curriculum. They were modified into A level-style qualifications in 2000 in the interests of showing parity, and to allow mixing with academic qualifications.

“Access” courses evolved to provide a channel for adults without the normal A level entry qualifications to enter higher education. Often they embody credit principles, allowing a wide range of choice. They are recognised by individual, and groupings of, universities.

From 1992 most courses funded by central government are restricted to those that carry qualifications. This leads to a considerable increase in qualification titles. The Open College Network emerges as a major provider of unitized qualifications, validated on a co-operative basis and with an internal credit framework. Partial relaxation of funding restrictions in 2001 brings in courses not leading to qualifications.

Academic and vocational accreditation authorities merged. This was accompanied by the development of qualifications frameworks throughout the United Kingdom, into which each type of qualification could “fit” in a comprehensible relationship with others. There was a drive to rationalise qualifications within the frameworks.

Key skills have been incorporated into courses and qualifications. The intention has been that these skills would provide a platform both for employability and for future learning. Specific qualification in key skills has had a mixed reception in 16-19 institutions, but resulted in 260 000 awards in 2002/3.

In the case of young people studying in school or college, the United Kingdom government has recently announced plans for England to develop a rationalised system of a limited number of specialised vocational diplomas up to pre-university level. These would also have links with the apprenticeship system.

Since 1994 apprenticeship revived with government support, centred round National Vocation Qualifications, key skills and an off-the-job technical certificate. Apprenticeships are available at levels 2 and 3; one in four young people participate before the age of 22.

The charts below provide a description of the structure of the initial education and training systems in England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Initial education and training systems in England and Wales

Phase of education	Type of institution		Year/grade key	Typical age	
Higher and further education	Further education institutions (Such as further education colleges, tertiary colleges, specialist colleges, and adult education centres)	Higher education institutions (universities and other higher education institutions)		18 +	
Upper secondary education	GCE 'A' Levels, GCE 'AS' Level examinations and Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) (taken at age 17/18) provide access to further and higher education and the world of work.				
	Further education institutions	School sixth forms or sixth form colleges		17-18 16-17	
	General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs), General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and GCSEs in vocational subjects (Vocational GCSEs) (usually taken at age 16) provide access to post-compulsory general/academic and vocational studies and the world of work.				
	Secondary schools		Key Stage 4	Y11 Y10	15-16 14-15
Key Stage 3			Y9 Y8 Y7	13-14 12-13** 11-12**	
	Lower secondary education	Primary Schools*		Key Stage 2	Y6 Y5 Y4 Y3
Key Stage 1					Y2 Y1
	Primary education	Primary Schools*		Foundation stage***	R
Reception classes (R) in primary schools					
Pre-school and nursery education	Pre-school setting which include pre-school groups, playgroups, day nurseries, nursery centres and nursery schools.			3-4 0-3	

Bold = compulsory education

* In some areas, there are separate schools for *key stage 1* and *key stage 2*, known as infant and junior schools respectively.

** In some areas of England, there are *middle schools*, which normally provide a four-year course for children aged between 8 and 12 years, or 9 and 13 years. In such cases, two-tier systems of primary and secondary schools exist alongside three-tier systems of first schools (for 5- to 8- or 9-year-olds), *middle schools* and secondary schools (for 12- or 13- to 16-/17-/18-year-olds).

*** Following a consultation in 2003, the National Assembly for Wales (*NAfW*) is planning to introduce a “foundation phase” of education for 3- to 7-year-olds. A pilot project for the foundation phase began in September 2004 and will be implemented gradually through a rolling programme running until 2008.

Source: NFER-Eurydice, April 2005.

Initial Education and Training Systems in Northern Ireland

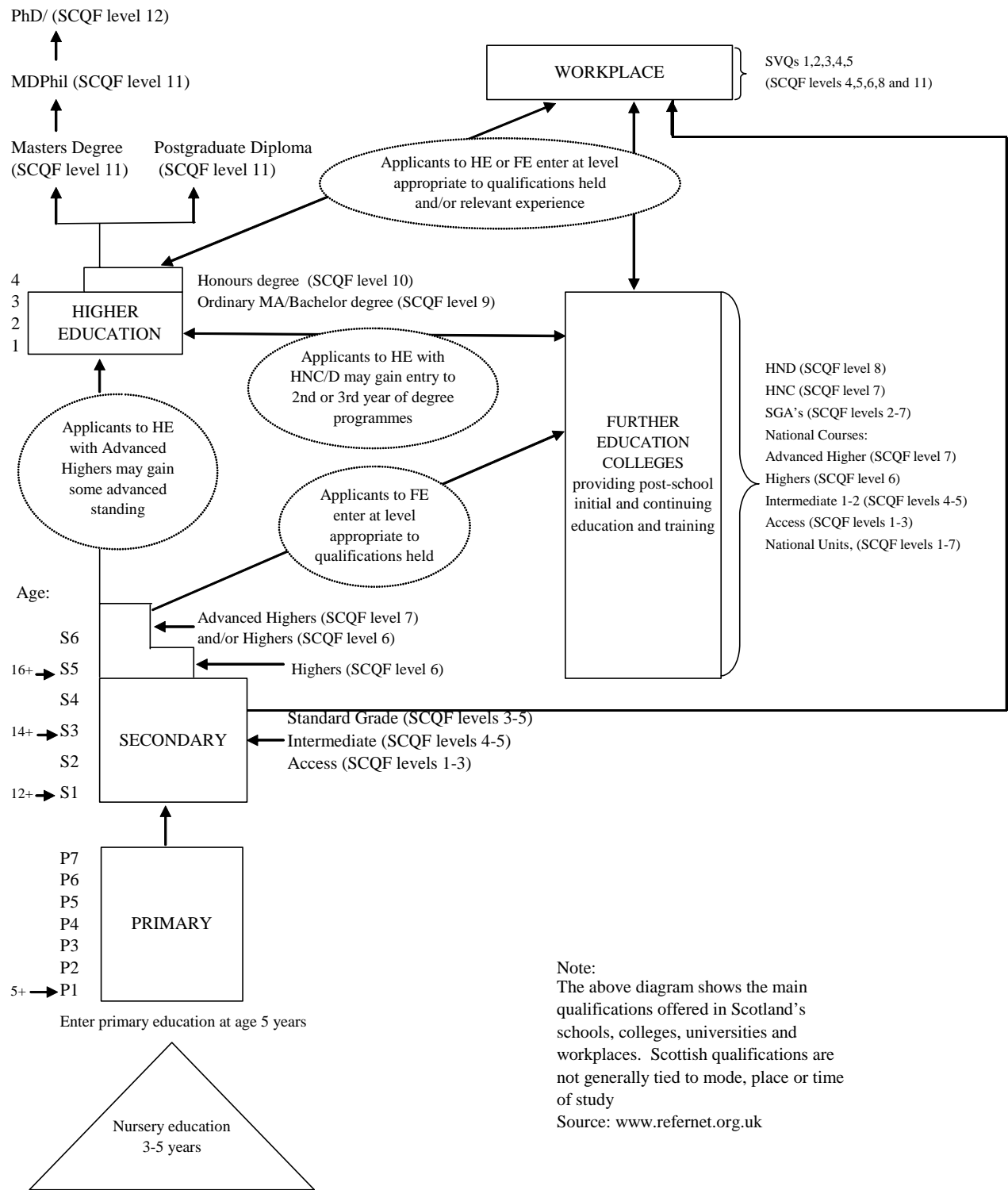
Phase of education	Type of institution		Year/grade key	Typical age	
Higher and further education	Further education colleges	Higher education institutions (universities and other higher education institutions)		18 +	
Upper secondary education	GCE 'A' Levels, GCE 'AS' Level examinations and Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) (taken at age 17/18) provide access to further and higher education and the world of work.				
	Further education institutions	School sixth forms or sixth form colleges		17-18	
	General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs), General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and GCSEs in vocational subjects (Vocational GCSEs) (usually taken at age 16) provide access to post-compulsory general/academic and vocational studies and the world of work.				
	Secondary schools		Key Stage 4	Y12	15-16
			Y11	14-15	
Lower secondary education	Secondary schools		Key Stage 3	Y10	13-14
				Y 9	12-13
Primary education	Primary schools		Key Stage 2	Y 8	11-12
				Y 7	10-11
			Key Stage 1	Y 6	9-10
				Y 5	8-9
				Y 4	7-8
				Y 3	6-7
Pre-school and nursery education	Pre-school settings which include pre-school groups, playgroups, day nurseries, nursery centres and nursery schools		Foundation stage*	Y 2	5-6
				Y 1	4-5
					0-3

Bold = Compulsory

* Following an extensive review of curriculum and assessment arrangements, a foundation stage covering the preschool year and years 1 and 2 of primary school (pupils aged three to six) has been proposed. Key stage 1 would then comprise years 3 and 4 and key stage 2 years 4, 5, and 6. Statutory changes are expected from September 2006.

Source: NFER-Eurydice, April 2005.

Initial education and training systems in Scotland



APPENDIX C: LIST OF THE FIFTEEN COUNTRIES THAT PREPARED A BACKGROUND REPORT AND NATIONAL CO-ORDINATORS⁵

Australia:	Mr. Matthew James
Belgium (French speaking):	Mr. Dominique Barthélémy (in French)
Denmark:	Mr. Jan Reitz Jörgensen
France:	Ms. Nadine Prost (Background Report available in French only)
Germany:	Mr. Georg Hanf and Mr. Jochen Reuling
Greece:	Ms. Tina Simota
Ireland:	Ms. Anna Murphy and Mr. Edwin Mernagh
Japan:	Ms. Keiko Fujimori
Korea:	Ms. Dong-Im Lee
Netherlands:	Mr. Ben Hövels
New Zealand:	Ms. Jo Doyle
Portugal:	Ms. Cândida Soares
Slovenia:	Mr. Miroљub Ignjatovic
Switzerland:	Mr. Andri Gieré (Background Report available in French only)
United Kingdom:	Mr. Sandy Rodger

⁵ The authors of the Country Background Reports are given in most of those reports.

APPENDIX D: COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN THEMATIC GROUPS AND CO-ORDINATION

Participants in Thematic Group 1 (8 countries)

Co-ordination: Ms. Anna Murphy, Ms. Tina Simota and Mr. Edwin Mernagh

Country delegates

Australia:

Ms. Judy Forsyth, Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board to MCEETYA

Czech Republic:

Mr. Miroslav Kadlec, National Institute of Technical and Vocational Education

Germany:

Mr. Georg Hanf, BIBB

Greece:

Ms. Vasso Papadiamanti, EKEPIS (National Accreditation Centre)

Ms. Tina Simota, EKEPIS (National Accreditation Centre)

Ireland:

Ms. Anna Murphy, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Mr. Edwin Mernagh, National Qualifications Authority of Ireland

Italy:

Ms. Gabriella Di Francesco, ISFOL

Spain:

Ms. Francisca M^a Arbizu Echávarri, INCUAL (National Institute for Qualifications)

Mr. José Luis García Molina, INCUAL (National Institute for Qualifications)

United Kingdom:

Ms. Mandy Hobart, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

International organisations

CEDEFOP: Mr. Burkart Sellin

ILO: Ms. Akiko Sakamoto, Skills Development Department

OECD:

Mr. Mike Coles, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (United Kingdom), Research consultant to the OECD

Mr. Patrick Werquin, Head of project

Participants in Thematic Group 2 (12 countries)

Co-ordination: Ms. Jo Doyle

Country delegates

Belgium (Flanders):

Ms. Patrice Schoeters, VIZO

Ms. Ria Van Herck, VIZO

Denmark:

Ms. Annelise Hauch, Ministry of Education

Ms. Vibe Aarkrog, the Danish University of Education

Mr. Steen Høyrup, the Danish University of Education

Finland:

Mr. Petri Haltia, University of Turku, Department of Education

Mr. Kari Nyysola, National Board of Education

France:

Mr. Michel Aribaud, Ministry of Education

Ireland:

Ms. Angela Lambkin, FETAC

Mexico:

Mr. Miguel Ángel Tamayo Taype, Ministry of Education

Ms. Maria Luisa de Anda y Ramos, Ministry of Education

Netherlands:

Mr. Rigo Van Raai, Empowerment Centre EVC

Ms. Betty Feenstra, Empowerment Centre EVC

New Zealand:

Ms. Jo Doyle, New Zealand Qualifications Authority

Portugal:

Ms. Cândida Soares, Ministry of Labour, Department for Studies, Forecasting and Planning

Slovenia:

Mr. Miroljub Ignjatovic, Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana

Sweden:

Ms. Carina Lindén, Ministry of Education and Science

United Kingdom:

Mr. John Dick, SQA, Scotland

Mr. Sandy Rodger, Department for Education and Skills

International organisations

ILO: Ms. Akiko Sakamoto, Skills Development Department

EUROPEAN COMMISSION: Mr. Jens Bjørnåvold

OECD:

Mr. Mike Coles, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, United Kingdom), Research consultant to the OECD

Mr. Patrick Werquin, Head of project

Participants in Thematic Group 3 (6 countries)

Co-ordination: Mr. Georg Hanf and Mr. Jochen Reuling

Country delegates

Belgium (Flanders):

Ms. Rita Cabus, Service for Educational Development, Ministry of Education of the Flemish Community

Ms. Rita Dunon, Service for Educational Development, Ministry of Education of the Flemish Community

Czech Republic:

Ms. Miroslava Kopicova, National Training Fund

Germany:

Mr. Georg Hanf, Federal Institute for Vocational Training, BIBB

Mr. Jochen Reuling, Federal Institute for Vocational Training, BIBB

Switzerland:

Mr. Peter Gentinetta, Formation Musique Recherche Zulauf

Ms. Madeleine Zulauf, Formation Musique Recherche Zulauf

Netherlands:

Mr. Ben Hövels, Knowledge Centre Vocational Training and Labour – KBA

United Kingdom:

Mr. Tim Oates, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

International organisations

EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION:

Ms. Evelyn Viertel

OECD:

Mr. Patrick Werquin, Head of project

Two additional countries acted as observers only: Italy and Poland.

APPENDIX E: LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACCS	Accumulation of Credits and Certification of Subjects (Ireland)
ACE	Adult and Community Education (New Zealand)
AET	Adult Education and Training (Portugal)
AFPA	<i>Agence pour la formation professionnelle des adultes</i> (Adult Training Organisation, France)
ALL	Adult Literacy and Life skills survey
ANPE	<i>Agence nationale pour l'emploi</i> (Public Employment Service, France)
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ANUIES	<i>Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior</i> (National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institution, Mexico)
AVCE	Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (United Kingdom)
BIBB	<i>Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung</i> (Federal Institute for Vocational Training, Germany)
BTS	<i>Brevet de technicien supérieur</i> (Technical Degree at Tertiary Level, France)
CBR	Country Background Report
CDIP	Conférence suisse des directeurs cantonaux de l'instruction publique (Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education)
CEDEFOP	<i>Centre européen pour le développement de la formation professionnelle</i> (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training)
CFC	<i>Certificat fédéral de capacité</i> (Federal Certificate of Capacity, Switzerland)
Céreq	<i>Centre d'études et de recherche sur les qualifications</i> (Research Centre on Employment and Qualifications, France)
CESS	<i>Certificat d'enseignement secondaire supérieur</i> (Upper Secondary Education Certificate, Belgium)
CINOP	<i>Centrum voor Innovatie van Opleidingen</i> (Centre for Innovation in Education)
CQP	<i>Certificat de qualification professionnelle</i> (Job-Related Training Certificate, France)
CVT	Continuous Vocational Training
CVTS	Continuous Vocational Training Survey (European Union)
DfES	Department for Employment and Skills (United Kingdom)
DGEFP	<i>Direction générale de l'emploi et de la formation professionnelle</i> (Division for Employment and Vocational Training of the Ministry of Labour, France)
DIVA	<i>Dienst Informatie Vorming Afstemming</i> (Training and Alignment Information Service,

	Belgium (Flanders))
EC	European Commission
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System (European Union)
ECVET	European Credit Transfer in Vocational Education and Training
EDUQUA	<i>Éducation de qualité</i> (Quality Assurance System in Adult Learning, Switzerland)
EFA	Adult Education and Training Courses (Portugal)
EKEPIS	<i>Εθνικό Κέντρο Πιστοποίησης</i> (National Accreditation Centre for Continuing Vocational Training, Greece)
ETF	European Training Foundation
EULFS	European Union Labour Force Survey
Eurydice	European information network on education (not an acronym)
FD	Foundation Degrees (United Kingdom)
FDA	Foundation Degrees for Arts (United Kingdom)
FDS	Foundation Degrees for Science (United Kingdom)
FETAC	Further Education and Training Award Council (Ireland)
FMR	<i>Formation Musique Recherche</i> (Training Music Research, Switzerland)
FOREM	<i>Office wallon de la formation professionnelle et de l'emploi</i> (Walloon Office for Vocational Training and Employment, Belgium)
GCE	General Certificate of Education (United Kingdom)
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education (United Kingdom)
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualifications (United Kingdom)
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HE	Higher Education
HERO	Higher Education Research Opportunities
HES	<i>Hautes écoles spécialisées</i> (Specialised Tertiary Education College, Switzerland)
IALS	International Adult Literacy Survey
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDBE	Lifelong Learning Institutes (Greece)
IKA	<i>Kompetenceafklaring</i> (Individual Competence Clarification, Denmark)
ILO	International Labour Office
INCUAL	<i>Instituto Nacional de las Cualificaciones</i> (National Institute for Qualifications, Spain)
ISFOL	<i>Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori</i> (Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers, Italy)
IT	Information Technology
ITO	Industry Training Organisations (New Zealand)
LFS	Labour Force Survey

LLL	Lifelong Learning
LM	Labour Market
LSC	Learning and Skills Council (United Kingdom)
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (Australia)
NAFW	National Assembly for Wales
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement (New Zealand)
NCVQ	National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications (Spain)
NCVA	National Council for Vocational Awards (Ireland)
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research (Australia)
NFER	National Foundation for Educational Research (United Kingdom)
NQAI	National Qualification Authority Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework(s)
NQS	National Qualifications system(s)
NUD-IST	Numerical Unstructured Data – Indexing, Searching and Theorising
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification (United Kingdom)
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEVA	Observatory of Entries into the Working Life (Portugal)
OFFT	<i>Office fédéral de la formation professionnelle et de la technologie</i> (Switzerland)
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
PSE	Open-choice study programmes in higher education (Greece)
PTE	Private Training Organisations (New Zealand)
QA	Quality Assurance
QCA	Qualification and Curriculum Authority
QF	Qualifications Framework
QS	Qualifications system(s)
RNCP	<i>Registre National des Certifications Professionnelles</i> (National Vocational Qualifications Directory, France)
ROC	Regional Vocational College (Netherlands)
ROME	<i>Répertoire opérationnel des métiers</i> (Job Directory, Belgium and France)
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisations (Australia)
RVCC	Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences (Portugal)
SCQF	Scottish Qualifications Framework

SQA	Scottish Qualification Authority
SSC	Sector Skills Council (United Kingdom)
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEE	Technical Vocational Schools (Greece)
TG	Thematic Group
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TSD	Technological Specialisation Diploma (Portugal)
USA	United States of America
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (United Kingdom)
UK	United Kingdom
VAE	<i>Validation des acquis de l'expérience</i> (Recognition of Prior Learning, France)
VAP	<i>Validation des acquis professionnels</i> (Recognition of Job-Related Prior Learning, France)
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VIZO	<i>Vlaams Instituut voor het Zelfstandig Ondernemen</i> (Flemish Institute for Independent Entrepreneurship)
WB	World Bank

Three letter country codes used in the tables and graphs

AUS	Australia
BEL	Belgium
BFL	Belgium (Flanders)
BFR	Belgium (French Speaking)
CAN	Canada
CHE	Switzerland
CHI	Chile
CZR	Czech Republic
DEU	Germany
DNK	Denmark
ESP	Spain
FIN	Finland
FRA	France
GRE	Greece
KOR	Korea
HUN	Hungary
IRL	Ireland
ITA	Italy
JPN	Japan
KOR	Korea

MEX	Mexico
NLD	Netherlands
NOR	Norway
NZL	New Zealand
POL	Poland
PRT	Portugal
SLV	Slovenia
SWE	Sweden
UKM	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America