

Introduction and context

The Kenyan Qualifications Framework (KQF) is currently being developed by the Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA, www.knqa.go.ke) in accordance with the Kenya National Qualifications Framework Act No. 22 of 2014 and under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (MOE). The Authority has recently developed and gazetted the Kenya National Qualifications Framework regulations (2018) which it is implementing.

The Sessional Paper of 2005 (MoE, 2005) and the *Policy Framework for Education of 2012* (MoE, 2012) highlighted the need to both coordinate and clarify Kenya's education and training system. The current multiplicity of qualifications and awarding bodies¹ makes it difficult for employers to understand what competences they can expect the holder of a particular qualification to possess (ibid.). The KNQF is intended to address this situation by establishing a common regulatory system for the development, assessment and award of qualifications. A central register of qualifications will set out clear criteria for the achievement of awards, detailing the knowledge and skills required in each case (MoHEST, 2014). The Framework is also in the process of establishing a Learner's database (the Kenya National Learners record database, KNLRD) to track the people who are awarded qualifications in the Country.

The KNQF needs to be understood in the context of the two major reforms to Kenya's education and training policy, which occurred in 2005 and 2012.

Policy objectives

The objectives of the KNQF are set out in the KNQF Act No. 22 of 2014 (MoHEST, 2014). They are as follows:

¹Kenya's three main awarding bodies are the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT), the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC) and the Council of Higher Education (CHE).

- To establish the Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA);
- To establish a system of accreditation in the Country;
- To establish a database of Institutions awarding qualifications, qualifications and learners;
- To establish a system of assessment and examination for qualifications in the country;
- To establish standards for recognizing qualifications obtained in and outside of Kenya;
- To develop a system of competence, lifelong learning and attainment of national qualifications;
- To align the qualifications obtained in Kenya with the global benchmarks in order to promote national and transnational mobility of workers;
- To strengthen the national quality assurance systems for national Qualifications; and
- To facilitate mobility and progression within education, training and career paths.

About the award of national qualifications, an institution shall not award national qualifications unless it is recognized or accredited in accordance with the KNQF or unless it is a university accredited in accordance with the Kenyan Universities Act No.42 of 2012.

Levels and use of learning outcomes

The 10-level KNQF is aligned with the East African Community (EAC) qualifications framework. The EAC framework is annexed to the EAC Common Market Protocol for Mutual Recognition of Academic and Professional Qualifications, to which Kenya is a signatory.

The KNQF acknowledges two separate sub-frameworks within this overarching framework: one for academic and the other for vocational qualifications. However, core generic competences involving the application of knowledge in practical situations are the same for both domains. These core competences include the ability to:

- Analyse, synthesise and create;
- Solve problems;
- Organize, plan and communicate;
- Use ICT;
- Work in teams;
- Engage in developing projects, research and innovations;
- Work autonomously.

KNQF qualifications therefore incorporate both theoretical knowledge and employable skills. Credits obtained through RPL and through the Kenya Credit and Transfer Systems (KCATs) are considered in order to determine which level of qualification an individual should work towards.

The KNQF contains level descriptors at primary, secondary, tertiary, TVET and university levels. Descriptors are also provided for 'short cycles' linked to the main TVET levels and graded 'sub-cycles' for artisanal skills (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. Kenyan Qualifications Framework

No.	Cycle	KQF Level	Qualification	Holders (Nomenclature: ISCED 97)
1.	Cycle V: HIGHER Education: H.E. Subcycle 3: Doctoral Programme	10	PhD/ Doctoral degree	Researcher/Innovator
2.	H.E. Sub Cycle 2 : Master's Programme	9	Master's degree	Scientist/Manager
3.	H.E. Sub Cycle 1: Undergraduate Programme	8	Bachelor's degree + professional cert./award, Bachelor's degree	Professional Nonprofessional / Uncertified worker
4.	Cycle IV : POST SECONDARY TRAINING (P.S.T.) Post-Secondary Training Sub Cycle 6: Post-Secondary Training Sub Cycle 5: Post-Secondary Training Sub Cycle 4: Post-Secondary Training Sub Cycle 3: Post-Secondary Training Sub Cycle 2: Post-Secondary Training Sub Cycle 1:	7 6 5	KVCET/KCSE+ Tech. Diploma KVCET/KCSE + Craft Certificate KVCET/ KCSE + Non tech. Diploma KVCET/ KCSE+ craft certificate KVCET + non employment skill certificate	Associate Professional, Certified Specialist or Technician Master Craftsperson Semi-skilled paraprofessional Craft Operator Semi-skilled Semi-skilled
5.	Cycle IV : UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION	4	KVCET , KCSE	Semi-skilled schoolleaver Unskilled school leaver
6.	Cycle III : JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION	3	KJCVET , KJSE Artisan Cert. (Theory and Practice) Artisan Cert. (Practice)	Semi-skilled Unskilled Skilled Artisan Skilled Operator
7.	Cycle II: UPPER PRIMARY Cycle I: ECDE & LOWER PRIMARY EDUCATION	2 1	CPE + GTT Cert. I CPE + GTT II CPE + GTT III	Teenager Skilled Operative Semi-skilled Semi-skilled Child

Source: MoE, 2012; MoHEST, 2012.

Stakeholder involvement and institutional arrangements

The KNQF Act mandates the establishment of the KNQA (MoHEST, 2014), which in turn is responsible for coordinating and supervising the development of policies on national qualifications and developing a framework for an accreditation system of qualifications and a system for the assessment of national qualifications.

The KNQA also develops and reviews the interrelationships of national qualifications in consultation with stakeholders, relevant institutions and agencies. The authority maintains a national database of national qualifications and publishes relevant manuals, codes and guidelines. Another important function of the KNQA is to advise and support any person, body or institution that is responsible for awarding national qualifications. It sets standards and benchmarks for qualifications and competencies including skills, knowledge, attitudes and values; defines the levels of qualifications and competencies; and provides for the recognition of attainment of competencies including skills, knowledge, attitudes and values. It also facilitates linkages, credit

transfers and exemptions, as well as vertical and horizontal mobility at all levels; this in turn enables entry, re-entry and exit from learning programmes.

Given the importance of the international comparability of qualifications, the Authority also establishes standards for harmonization and recognition of national and foreign qualifications and promotes the recognition of national qualifications internationally. It builds confidence in the national qualifications system that contributes to the national economy and provides pathways that support the development and maintenance of flexible access to qualifications (MoHEST, 2014). Table 2 shows the Kenya National Qualifications as currently developed.



KNQF STRUCTURE

KNQF Level	General and Further Education and Training Sub-Framework		Notional hours (minimum)
10	Doctorate Degree		3600 after KNQA level 9
9	Master's degree		2400 after KNQA level 7
8	Post-Graduate Diploma	Professional Bachelor's Degree	1200 after KNQA level 7 or 6000 after KNQA level 2
7	Bachelor's Degree		Master Crafts Person –I or Management Professional
6	National Diploma		Master Crafts Person –II or Professional Diploma
5	Craft Certificate National Certificate National Vocational Certificate-IV		Professional Certificate or Master Craft Person III
4	National Vocational Certificate- III/Artisan Certificate		National Skills Certificate –I GTT-I
3	National Vocational Certificate-II		National Skills Certificate -II / (GTT –II)
2	Secondary Certificate	National Vocational Certificate- I	National Skills Certificate -III / Government Trade Test (GTT-III)
1	Primary Certificate		Basic Skills/Skills for Life
			Birth Certificate

Table 2: The Kenya National Qualifications Framework, showing the levels, the different pathways and volume of learning required for each level.

Recognizing and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

One of the key goals of the KNQF is to recognize and assess the outcomes of learning in all settings, whether formal, non-formal or informal, including in the workplace. A number of measures are being taken to pursue this goal. Progression pathways from primary to higher education in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector are being promoted through the TVET Curriculum Development

Framework (TCDF), which was established in 2010 according to KNQF occupational standards. This is helping to link Youth Polytechnics (YP) and Vocational and Industrial Training (VIT) qualifications to formal TVET provision. The Authority is in the process of developing occupational and training standards for various professions in the country; and recently (2018) launched Competence Based Training and education (CBET).

A wide range of agencies offer courses at various levels to young people and adults. Universities offer a variety of distance learning, evening, school based and recognition of prior learning (RPL) courses; such courses were previously available only at the University of Nairobi. Complementary Basic Education (COBET) programmes (non-formal programmes equivalent to formal education) offer children and teenagers who have dropped out of school the opportunity to reintegrate into the formal system.

Three international standards guide the assessment of skills in Kenya: these are the International Labour Organization's ISCO 88 Standard, UNESCO's ISCED 97 Standard, and the ISO Standard 9000 Series on Education. In addition, the Kenya National Occupational Classification Standard (KNOCS) guides the Exemption and Credits Transfer System (ECTS), which is promoted through a combination of conventional testing methods and e-assessment methods for RPL. The Authority is in the process of developing and implementing the Kenya National Classification of Education Standard (KNCES).

Curriculum Development

The KNQF has developed and is implementing Level descriptors for each level of education and Training in the country. The descriptors describe the *level, the purpose of each qualification, knowledge, skills, competences and volume of learning* that must go to each level of training. The Authority is now in the process of developing occupational and Training standards in consultation with industry players and trainers, so that the country's qualifications can become more aligned with employer's and industry needs. To effectively do this the Authority is working with various existing curriculum development bodies to re-align the country's qualifications with requirement of the framework. These include the Kenya Institute for Curriculum development (KICD), and the TVET Curriculum development and Certification Council (CDACC), and various other institutions such as universities and TVET institutions that have legal mandate to develop curricular in the country.

KNQF implementation

In order to avoid reinventing the wheel, the government intends to reform existing institutions for the implementation of the KNQF. One of these institutions is the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC), which was established in 1980 to oversee national examinations and award certificates in both the formal and informal learning sectors. In the formal education and training system, a national system of certification from primary through secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education already exists in Kenya. In the informal learning sector, trade tests are used to certify artisans and craftspeople (Kerre and Hollander, 2009) mostly through the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA). In the Accounting sector, the Authority is working with the Kenya Accountants and Secretaries National examination Board (KASNEB); and for various professions, the KNQA is working with professional bodies that have

developed and are implementing qualifications such as the Nursing Council, Kenya Veterinary Board (KVB), Engineers Registration Board (ERB), and Council for Legal Education (CLE) among others. The KNQF will continue to use these existing systems of certification.

Referencing to regional frameworks

The Annex to the EAC Common Market Protocol for Mutual Recognition of Academic and Professional Qualifications has proposed a 10-level framework designed to accommodate all qualification types and levels in the region. This framework emerged as a result of an audit of qualifications frameworks in the East African Partner States, which have agreed to harmonize the qualifications frameworks within the EAC. Other qualifications frameworks with 10 levels include those of Mauritius, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Australia. An exercise on harmonization of the East African education systems and training curricula is currently in progress, under the coordination of the Inter-university Council of East Africa (IUCEA), an organization of the EAC.

Important lessons and future plans

The Kenyan Government sees the KNQF as a tool to aid accreditation, teaching and assessment in accordance with established national curriculum development practice and standards. The KNQF has already had several successes. For example, the mutual recognition of Kenyan and international qualifications has been greatly facilitated by the KNQF. Foreign qualifications can now be much more easily assessed, which has resulted in an influx of foreign teachers and students to Kenya. The system is supporting the Kenyan Government policy on internationalization of education in the country.

Kenya's development of the KNQF highlights the importance of building on existing institutions and structures rather than importing models from outside the country or trying to reinvent the wheel. And, in doing this the country has strived to support and work with established systems of training, education, assessment and examination in order to produce a truly efficient and functional qualification framework.

Abbreviations

CDACC	Curriculum Development and Certification Council
COBET	Complementary Basic Education
EAC	East African Community
ECTS	Exemption and Credits Transfer System
ICT	Information communications technology
KASNEB	Kenya Accountants and Secretaries National Examination Board
KICD	Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development
KNEC	Kenya National Examination Council
KNOCS	Kenya National Occupational Classification Standard
KCATs	Kenya Credit Accumulation and Transfer system
KNLRD	Kenya National Learners Record Database
KNQA	Kenya National Qualifications Authority
KNQF	Kenya National Qualifications Framework
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHEST	Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology

NITA	National Industrial Training Authority
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
TCDF	TVET Curriculum Development Framework
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
VIT	Vocational and industrial training
YP	Youth Polytechnic

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