



WORKSHOP ON THE NATIONAL SKILLS QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTATION

Workshop Report

Date: 11th September 2015
Venue: FICCI Federation House

➤ Introduction

The Cabinet notified national Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), on 27th December 2013. NSQF is a competency-based framework that organizes qualifications into ten levels. Each of these levels is characterized by categories of competencies such as professional knowledge, professional skills, core skills and responsibility. Currently the mammoth task of aligning qualifications to the NSQF levels is being carried out, with over 900 Qualifications Packs and 93 NCVT qualifications have already been aligned. For successful implementation of NSQF, it is essential that stakeholders should continuously deliberate on the successes and challenges faced during the NSQF implementation.

The India-EU Skills Development Project along with the National Skills Development Agency and FICCI jointly held a Workshop on the NSQF Implementation at the FICCI Federation House in Delhi attended by key stakeholders involving government organisations and the project partners. The focus was to bring together the stakeholders operating in the skills ecosystem and discuss issues pertaining to NSQF implementation across education and training systems thus improving understanding of NSQF and its implementation and carve out way forward on how the stakeholder cooperation can be further developed.

The workshop was organized alongside three sessions with project experts presenting each theme. The detailed agenda of the workshop is attached as Annexure 1.

➤ Inaugural Session

- **Address by Ms. Shobha Mishra, Senior Director, FICCI :** Ms. Shobha discussed about the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) and its importance in Indian context. She emphasized that with NSQF, which is an outcome-based system, aspects like life-long learning in terms of vertical and horizontal mobility will be in place. She further mentioned that in India 93% population is working in unorganized sector, which is a challenge for NSQF implementation. She stated that NSQF implementation requires participation of all stakeholders and FICCI is happy to provide a forum for the same.
- **Address by Ms. Jyotsna Sitling, JS, MSDE & DG, NSDA:** Ms. Sitling started her speech by mentioning that there is pertinent need for skilling in the country and NSQF will play a very crucial role in standardizing the processes. She mentioned that currently there is very limited interaction between the vocational and general education. She briefed the forum on various initiatives of MSDE and NSDA in skilling landscape in the country such as Skill Policy, 2015, Common Norms for 73 schemes of 22 GoI ministries, RPL, National Skill Development Mission, NSQF, LMIS. There would be National Skill Research Division (NSRD) that would be set up under NSDA set up for technical and research support for policy inputs and accordingly formulating strategy.
- **Dr. Johann Hesse, Head, EU-Commission:** Dr. Hesse brought out parallels between India and EU Countries and how the partnership is helping India to develop framework, standards. He discussed role of EU Commission in India for skilling activities. He also emphasized that Industry needs to come forward to adopt the changes and act as “trustees of poor” for inclusive growth. Industry can also be taken on board for Training of Trainers (ToTs) to make the training more impactful.
- **Address by Mr. Vaclav Klenha, Team Leader, India-EU Project:** Mr. Klenha briefly discussed the purpose and agenda of the workshop.

- **Address by Mr. Jean Marc Castejon, Expert, India-EU Project:** Mr. Castejon facilitated launch of NSQF handbook and distribution of certificates to NSQF Workshop participants. He also mentioned the support and contribution of NSDA in developing the first handbook on NSQF.
- **Populating the NSQF and advocacy strategy of NSQF stakeholders to make NSQF compliance aspirational:**
 - **Mr. Anant Prakash Pandey, PS to Chairman of NSDA and Chair of session:** Advocacy needs to be more direct and more functional, that would lead to rising of aspiration. While we do acknowledge that qualification template /file is one of the organized ways of entering qualifications into a registry, we also need to incorporate flexible measures and create scope to incorporate feedback into the NSQF implementation process. Any reform, which doesn't reach its stakeholders, doesn't achieve its mission. So the reform has to trickle to the bottom of the pyramid.
 - **Mr. John Hart, Senior Expert in Qualifications Framework:** stated that advocacy of NSQF has to be more direct with the role of state in NSQF implementation and strategy for advocacy to be clearly defined. He mentioned aspiration was a challenge in the skills development eco-system, as well as termed life-long learning to be a wonderful concept under NSQF. He specified quality and monitoring to be very important for certifications and NSQF alignment and added importance of quality assurance. Towards the conclusion he stated lack of clarity about the points in notification such as the procedure of qualification template, ensuring enough qualifications and the best ways to do it.
 - **Mr. RP Singh, Mission Director- Jharkhand SDM:** The Jharkhand SDM is 9 months old and a lot of work has been done in last 6 months. The SDM functions as the nodal agency for imparting skill development programs in the state with 18 departments running the skill development programs. The SDM carried out work on popularizing NSQF in the state and organized workshop on World Skill Day along with organizing a conclave with all PSUs to explore skill development activities under CSR. The SDM created 6 sectors in state that have maximum potential for providing skills training. The JSDM has decided to have one scheme and one EOI with all corporate partners and government departments requested to abide by the scheme and EOI. Branding of SDM has been done through IIM Ranchi. The SDM concluded with three suggestions for NSDA:
 - Outsource institutions like TISS, IIM, NIRD etc. for popularising NSQF.
 - Appointing a nodal agency in every state to take lead for advocacy of NSQF.
 - Provide some sort of financial aid to SSDM for various activities.
 - **Mr. Vijay Sahoo, President HR, Reliance:** He proceeded with stating that the NSQF was a national necessity in terms of current skill development eco-system and it brings an international perspective and comparability. He mentioned that it was very difficult for overseas companies to employ people from India in certain specialized skill based jobs. He said that we need to see the possibilities of International certifications on how to conduct training programs as per International standards. He stated the need to look at possibilities of International certifications and how to conduct training programs as per International standards. The NSQF alignment he termed as being vital for institutes, sector skills councils and other key stakeholders however they will need to have complete clarity on key elements of NSQF. He suggested branding communication and creating content should be done on regular basis as part of advocacy. To conclude he remarked if we have good training institutes and good sector skill initiatives the word will spread and there wouldn't be any requirement for aggressive advocacy.

- **Mr. I.S. Gahlaut, CEO Capital Goods Sector Skills Council:** There is a need for balance in implementation of NSQF which must be kept flexible and rigid and shouldn't make the user confused. He said the interpretation of levelling under NSQF in the right way was very important. As we are facing a shortage of trainers in skill development, industry workers can be a good option to train as trainers because of their domain knowledge and expertise. All the skill development training initiatives need to be aligned with the National Skills Policy. The qualification file is a trade certification process of NSQF alignment which makes any qualification standard driven. The interpretation of NSQF is important and the key part is the definition of 10 levels, level descriptors at the time are bit difficult to interpret. The decisions made are solely on column of responsibility and not the other components; they may be required to be reviewed. He pointed out the definition of professional bodies and licensing body needs to be clarified and the regulatory management be kept flexible so as to avoid confusions for the user. The suggested way could be to have an annexure to the qualification file which would have re-interpretation of level descriptors to help usage. This is a common problem across many qualifications frameworks. To conclude he queried about the participation of the Forestry and Wildlife sector that has not yet featured in skilling and inquired the approach being adopted for advocacy NSQF at national and state level.

➤ **Implementing the National Quality Assurance Framework:**

- **Mr. Pawan Agarwal, Joint Secretary MSDE, Chair of Session:** initiated the discussion by deliberating that earlier the focus was more on quality inputs and process, while in the new paradigm shift to outcome based approach the focus is more on placements/assessments and certification. But this should not imply that the focus should be completely withdrawn from inputs.
- **Mr. Jean Marc, Senior Expert in NQF:** stated that QA is an enabling framework, which allows all stakeholders to improve gradually. He emphasized that it should be a bottom-up approach which should build up on what already exists.
- **Ms. Gayatri Kalia, COO Skills, Ministry of Rural Development:** emphasized that NQAF articulates the need of the hour clearly. She informed that Self Evaluation has been a part of our process but self-evaluation even from reputed organisations comes out to be false. She acknowledged that there is a lot of Quality Assurance requirement at the state level, but it is not organised into a process. There is a need to ensure credibility in self-evaluation by imposing penalty for wrong Self-Evaluation. She also emphasized that when it comes to quality assurance the lowest common factor is quality of content; relying on curriculum aligned competency and not taking ownership for a minimum benchmark is also an issue. She emphasized that it is better to start two steps forward, first to see whether the TPs have the same vision of quality. She also suggested that Policy vision document, should define what Quality is but she also put forth a view that quality is difficult to define easy to experience.
- **Mr. Dilip Chenoy CEO, NSDC:** started by explaining that there is a Quality time equation and so whenever one looks at the system one also has to look at the Time scale of QA. He expressed that transposing a Global best practice to a country may not work as ecosystem of each country is very different and one needs to focus more on what has been working and can work. He also mentioned the ISO standards for trainers and assessors and its use in the framework.

He expressed that different level of accreditation being exclusionary, and not allowing more people to be trained as they set placement as a criterion for performance of training provider.

He acknowledged that the Risk assessment manual is interesting and will be of use to TPs and will help both types of entities individual and institutions. He pointed out that the document mentions multi-skilled workers, which should be changed to 'skilled and multi-skilled' to make it broader and more inclusive. Mr. Chenoy encouraged the use of skill India logo by saying it will be an innovative method. He also stated that another national level body NSQQA has been mentioned in the document, which confuses with the role of NSDA NSQC. The clarity in role and responsibility needs to be provided. Mr. Chenoy during his talk also tried to emphasize the role of SSCs by saying that earlier the industry criticised the government for not meeting the needs of skilling, and taking back the role to government might create the same situation. He also said that the multiplicity of bodies also surfaces as a problem. He also said that the cost of maintaining this quality will be high, which will make it an expensive proposition.

- **Mr. Sibi Chakravarthy, Madhya Pradesh SDM:** He cautioned that institutions in India have scarce resources and have a lot to implement already, including the NSQF. The presence of NQAF will put them under further pressure. There is a need to go beyond frameworks in the skilling ecosystem. There is also the need to check how the framework will have an impact on the skill quotient of students. He also stressed on the need to develop a clear regulatory framework for implementing and monitoring Quality Assurance norms. He further stated that placement must be an important criterion for vocational education in order to check the mushrooming of training providers that are not able to provide employment to trainees. Some other important criteria are quality training time and adequate equipment. He also raised the question of whether we will accredit any institution that claims to meet the NQAF requirements or will accreditation be based on the courses developed by the institute and aligned to the NSQF. Some of the institutions can be taken to be quality-assured, such as the IITs and IIMs. Some other institute may pick up their courses and then claim to be equated to the IITs and IIMs. He also emphasised on the need for experienced Assessors instead of self-evaluation processes, the need to strengthen the guild system as a quality assurance measure and the need to have least common standards across states over and above which the states must have flexibility. In response, the Chair, Mr. Pawan Agarwal mentioned in the era of cooperative federalism, it is important to give States the necessary elbow room. However, a national framework is essential in order to ensure mobility of workers nationally and internationally.
- **Mr AK Jain, Quality Council of India:** suggested the need to have training institutes where different types of trainings are provided under one roof in order to avoid duplication of resources. A robust and flexible NQAF system can enable this and can act like a common linkage. He stated that through the NQAF, a combination of outcomes and enablers will ensure quality. He also mentioned that international standards for assessors and trainers already exist and we do not need to reinvent the wheel.

During the Q&A session, Mr. Jean Marc clarified that QA is about standards for TPs, trainers and assessment. The definition of quality is linked to relevance. All standards are working towards making training relevant. If there is no placement, there is no relevance.

Mr. Dilip Chenoy pointed out the need to ensure coherence between the NQAF and the 2015 National Policy. He also mentioned that since the assessment criteria have the flexibility to respond to the industry which is continuously evolving. He also noted that currently there is lack of trust towards private sector training providers.

Ms. Gayathri Kalia mentioned that the skilling ecosystem is currently getting diverted in chasing numbers. Instead, the focus of NCVT and SSCs should be towards ensuring quality, through qualified trainers and assessors, incorporation of tracking mechanisms and taking other such

measures. Each aspect of QA is process intensive. It is a long process, but it will work if all stakeholders participate.

Mr. AK Jain reiterated the importance of quality. He cautioned that quality should not be comprised merely because it is costly, because poor quality is disastrous. NQAF is an excellent start towards building quality and we should think towards how to improve it.

The Chair, Mr. Pawan Agarwal, closed the session by noting the importance of the issue of quality for the Ministry of SDE. The Ministry is working towards finding good practices in the QA systems in India. While international examples may be useful, Indian context is required for establishing a QA system in India. Through the NQAF, we will be able to codify the good practices in India, which will enable even the common person to view good quality. He also noted the need to have an employment-linked system. The NQAF will incorporate all quality norms and will help build confidence in the system.

➤ **Recognition of Prior learning and Assessment**

- **Mr. Sushil Ramola (CEO B-Able):** Mr. Ramola stressed that a large population of the workforce is in the unorganized sector and that RPL is critical for these category of workers. At present the NSQF does not indicate any clear pathways for progression for workers who have gained knowledge experientially. RPL could be an avenue to encourage lifelong learning and employability of workers. Mr. Ramola felt that technology could be leveraged to design more cost-effective models for RPL. Some of the challenges highlighted by Mr. Ramola are as follows- mobilization of candidates, aggregating stakeholders for RPL exercises, assessment of RPL candidates.
- **Mr. Ashwani Kumar Joshi, CEO, Construction SSC:** Only 10% of the workforce in the construction sector is in the organized sector and this workforce is very prone to migration. The key challenge according to CEO of the construction SSC is the mobility of workers from the unorganized to the organized sector. The construction SSC has initiated efforts to identify the core skills for select job roles for RPL and is currently exploring whether partial certification can be awarded for RPL candidates. The benefits of RPL should be clear both to the employers and employees to ensure greater participation. Some observations that have emerged from the RPL initiatives of the SSCs are as follows:
 1. Orientation of the candidates for RPL is very important
 2. A more feasible model cost model needs to be established for RPL in the certificate.
- **Mr. Binit Bhatt CEO, Gems and Jewellery SSC:** Approximately 25000-30000 candidates are being targeted by the SSC. However, employers are very reluctant to let their employee undergo RPL assessment and certification.

The other persistent challenge is in terms of mobilization of candidates. Mr. Bhatt felt that this challenge can be overcome by indicating some benefits to candidates during orientation such as bridge-training, possibility of higher wages, professional mobility, etc.
- **Mr. Satyendra Arya (CEO, Agriculture SSC):** The mobility of candidates after an RPL process is very important and in order to support the same Government agencies have to be roped in, linking RPL certification to soft loans can do this. There has to be targeted campaign to popularize RPL amongst potential candidates.

The key challenges highlighted by Mr. Arya were as follows:

1. Most job roles in this sector are not considered as viable career options.
2. Retention of youth within the sector is an overall problem in the sector

➤ **Concluding Session**

Closing Session delivered by Anant Prakash Panday, PS to Chairman, NSDA

• **Key points of closing remark**

- Direct advocacy critical in order to make NSQF compliance aspirational
- Qualification template file need smoother transformations. The point raised by Mr Gehlot for simplification of Qualification File and his suggestion has been well taken.
- The state of Jharkhand was acknowledged for taking some key steps in NSQF implementation
- NSDA has an important role in supporting states as NSQF is a new subject

• **Quality Assurance**

Quality is important but extent of flexibility to be built in considering quality as an important yardstick

• **RPL**

- Challenges of RPL was brought by speakers such as advocacy for mobilization, costs involved
- It is important to have pro poor approach for effective RPL implementation
- RPL is a critical component of NSQF for unorganized sector

Annexure I

09:45 - 10:15	Registration of participants
10:15 - 11:10	<p>Opening remarks and moderation by: Ms Shobha Mishra Ghosh, Senior Director, Head of Skill Development Forum, FICCI</p> <p>Address by: Ms Jyotsna Sitling, Joint Secretary, MSDE, and Director General, NSDA</p> <p>Address by: Dr Johann Hesse, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to India</p> <p>Expected Workshop Outcomes: Mr Vaclav Klenha, India EU Skills Development Project, Team Leader</p> <p>Launch of the “Handbook for National Qualifications Frameworks Developers” and Award of Certificates to participants in India-EU project training programme:</p> <p>Introduction: Dr Jean Marc Castejon, Senior Expert on Qualification Systems, India EU Skills Development Project</p> <p>Launch of the Handbook: Ms Jyotsna Sitling, Joint Secretary, MSDE, and Director General, NSDA</p> <p>Award of certificates: Dr Johann Hesse, Head of Cooperation, Delegation of the European Union to India</p>

11:10 - 11:30	Tea Break
11:30 - 11:50	Keynote Presentation Status of NSQF Implementation and the Way Forward Ms Jyotsna Sitling , Joint Secretary, MSDE, and Director General, NSDA
11:50 - 13:00	Populating the NSQF and advocacy strategy of NSQF Stakeholders to make NSQF Compliance aspirational Session Chair: Mr Anant Prakash Pandey , Private Secretary to NSDA Chairman Introduction (15 min.): Mr John Hart , Senior Expert on Qualifications Frameworks Panelists: Shri Manish Garg , Joint Secretary, Department of School Education, MHRD Mr R P Singh , Mission Director, Jharkhand Skill Development Mission Mr Bijay Sahoo , Chairman, RASCI (Retailers Association of Skill Council of India) and President, Reliance HR Mr IS Gahlaut , CEO, Capital Goods Sector Skill Council
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 - 15:10	Implementing the National Quality Assurance Framework Session Chair: Mr Pawan Agarwal , Joint Secretary, MSDE Introduction (15 min.): Ms Belinda Smith , Senior Expert on TVET Quality Assurance Panelists: Ms Gayathri Kalia , COO - Skills, Ministry of Rural Development Mr Dilip Chenoy , CEO and MD, NSDC Mr Sibi Chakravarthy , Madhya Pradesh Skill Development Mission Mr RCM Reddy , Chairman FICCI Skill Development Forum; MD, IL&FS Education and Skills Mr A.K. Jain , Principal Advisor, Quality Council of India
15:10 - 16:20	Recognition of Prior Learning and Assessment Session Chair: Ms Jyotsna Sitling , Joint Secretary, MSDE Introduction (15 min.): Ms Karen Adams and Ms Isabel Sutcliffe , Senior Experts on RPL and Assessment Panelists: Mr. Shushil Ramola , CEO, B-ABLE Ms. Gayathri Vasudevan , CEO, Labournet Mr. Binit Bhatt , CEO, Gems and Jewelry SSC Col. Ashwani Joshi , CEO, Construction Skill Council of India Mr. Satyendra Arya , CEO, Agriculture Sector Skill Council
16:20 - 16:35	Tea break

16:35 - 17:00

Final Session

Report on Workshop Outcomes and Concluding Remarks:

Mr Anant Prakash Pandey, Private Secretary to NSDA Chairman

Vote of Thanks: **Ms Shobha Mishra Ghosh**, Senior Director, FICCI