ASEAN QUALIFICATIONS REFERENCE FRAMEWORK (AQRF): CONTEXT, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

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CONTEXT OF AQRF: INTERRELATED GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS

- *Globalization: political and discursive shift*

- *Emergence of regional economies (e.g. EU, ASEAN EC) and the demand for a pool of workers and talent*

- *Increased importance of Quality assured sector-based qualifications practices, NQFs, RQFs, MRAs as tools for comparability and mobility*

- *Emerging Networks of Regional Qualifications Reference Frameworks (e.g. UNESCO)*

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CONTEXT OF AQRF: ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

- ***AEC****: single market and production base for better economic opportunities;*
  - *Vibrant market of 600 million people*
  - *Combined GDP of nearly $3Trillion USD by 2025 and*
  - *Closer integration could lift aggregate output by 7% and generate 14M additional jobs*
- ***Goal:*** *to continuously build complementary physical and human infrastructure that will enhance the competitiveness of AEC*

CONTEXT of AQRF: ASEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

Requisite of AEC: *freer flow of labor, particularly* **skilled workers** *within ASEAN*

- ➤ *90% of ASEAN workers in ASEAN are not skilled*
- ➤ *Skilled ASEAN workers working outside ASEAN*
  - ✧ *Demographic transitions in other countries—e.g. BRICs Turkey, Mexico to further tap same ASEAN talent pool as high income countries do now*
  - ✧ *ASEAN will have to compete for the same workers—more destinations for citizens of ASEAN countries*
- ➤ *Student mobility—a value in itself but from the AEC perspective, a precursor of skilled workers*

Requisite of AEC: *trong regional identity/consciousness*

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BEYOND THE POLITICAL ECONOMIC IMPERATIVES AND CONTEXT

PARADIGM SHIFT in Education

From education to learning

From learning to Lifelong Learning : the key for individuals in the 21st century

From learning inputs to learner outcomes

- TO HELP ***individuals*** *adapt to the evolving requirements of the labor market"* and better master *"the changing time-frames and rhythms of individual existence."*

QUALIFICATIONS-RELATED ASEAN INITIATIVES

"An ASIAN Bologna Process"

ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF)

- ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (AQAF, 2014)
- SEAMEO RIHED - 2008 Meeting - The Roadmap to Harmonisation of Higher Education Area
- ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN, 2008)
  - Mobility of worker, students and services

MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENTs for professional services (e.g. engineering, health, architectural services)

ASEAN competency-based occupational standards
Skills Recognition System – e.g. Tourism professionals
Mobility (Economic /Trade)

ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework

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AQRF: WHAT IT IS

A hierarchy of levels of complexity of learning which use learning outcomes as the metric of the hierarchy.

Its level descriptors include cognitive and functional competence. In ASEAN, personal and ethical competence are valued and included in NQFs

- Cognitive competence involving the use of theory and concepts, as well as informal tacit knowledge gained experientially
- Functional competence (skills or know-how), those things that a person should be able to do when they work in a given area
- Personal competence involving knowing how to conduct oneself in a specific situation
- Ethical competence involving the possession of certain personal and professional values

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AQRF: WHAT IT IS

A translation device that

- Enables comparison of qualifications across AMS;
- Addresses education and training sectors that incorporates informal,   non-formal and formal learning and promotes lifelong learning;
- Provides a common spine of levels to which all NQFs relate
- Broadens the understanding of the national qualifications systems of ASEAN Member States for people from other ASEAN countries and from outside the ASEAN region.

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AQRF: WHAT IT IS

A framework that specifies

❑ Learner Outcomes as common metric

❑ Components

▪ Level Descriptors along the domains of:

➢ *Knowledge and skills and*

➢ *Application and responsibility*

▪ Credit or amount of learning

	Knowledge and Skills	Application and Responsibility
	Demonstration of knowledge and skills that:	**The contexts in which knowledge and skills are demonstrated:**
Level 8	• is at the most advanced and specialised level and at the frontier of a field • involve independent and original thinking and research, resulting in the creation of new knowledge or practice	• are highly specialised and complex involving the development and testing of new theories and new solutions to resolve complex, abstract issues • require authoritative and expert judgment in management of research or an organisation and significant responsibility for extending professional knowledge and practice and creation of new ideas and or processes.
Level 7	• is at the forefront of a field and show mastery of a body of knowledge • involve critical and independent thinking as the basis for research to extend or redefine knowledge or practice	• are complex and unpredictable and involve the development and testing of innovative solutions to resolve issues • require expert judgment and significant responsibility for professional knowledge, practice and management
Level 6	• is specialised technical and theoretical within a specific field • involve critical and analytical thinking	• are complex and changing • require initiative and adaptability as well as strategies to improve activities and to solve complex and abstract issues

NOTE: AMS CAN HAVE MORE DOMAINS THAN THE AQRF

:PHILIPPINES

- Knowledge, Skills and Values

- Application

- Degree of Independene

MALAYSIA

- Knowledge of subject area
- Practical skills
- Social skills and responsibilities
- Values, attitudes and professionalism
- Communication, leadership and teamwork skills
- Problem solving and scientific skills
- Managerial and entrepreneurial skills
- Information management skills

AQRF: WHAT IT IS

A framework that specifies

☐ A referencing process (*or the process of establishing a relationship between the AQRF levels and those of the AMS*)

☐ A requirement to reference the QA system of Member States to a Quality Assurance Framework such as :

- East Asia Summit Vocational Education and Training Quality Assurance Framework
- INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice for Quality Assurance (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education)
- ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework (indigenous framework)- developed by ASEAN Quality Assurance Network-AQAN).
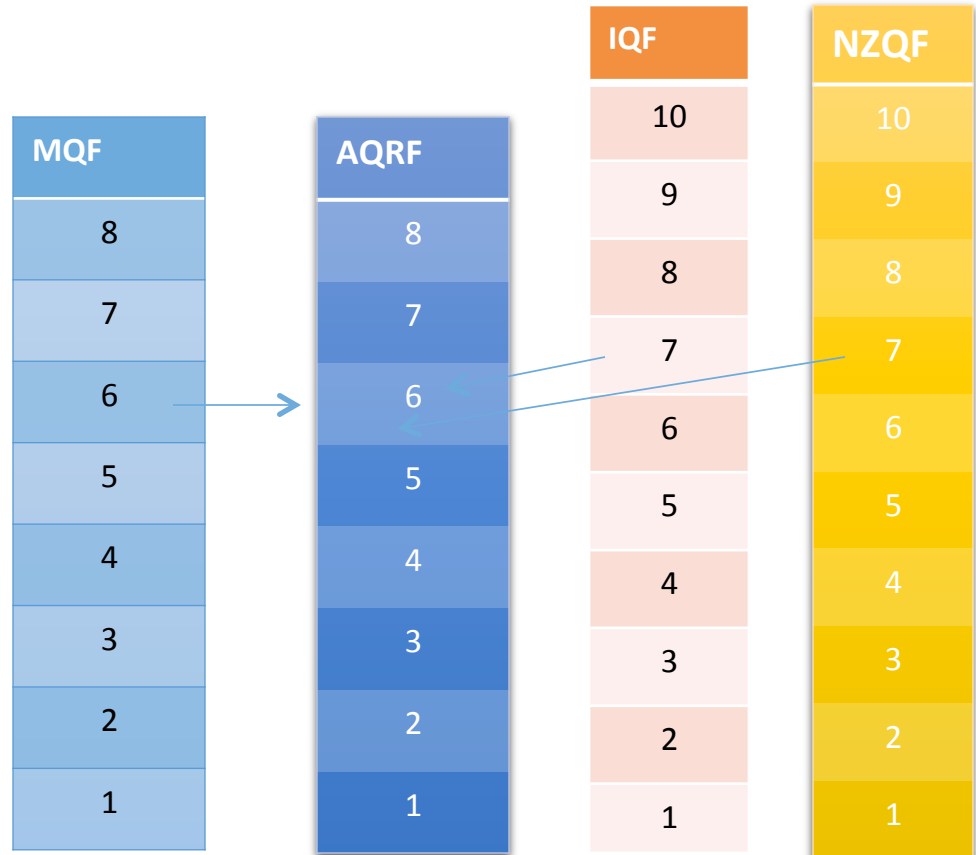
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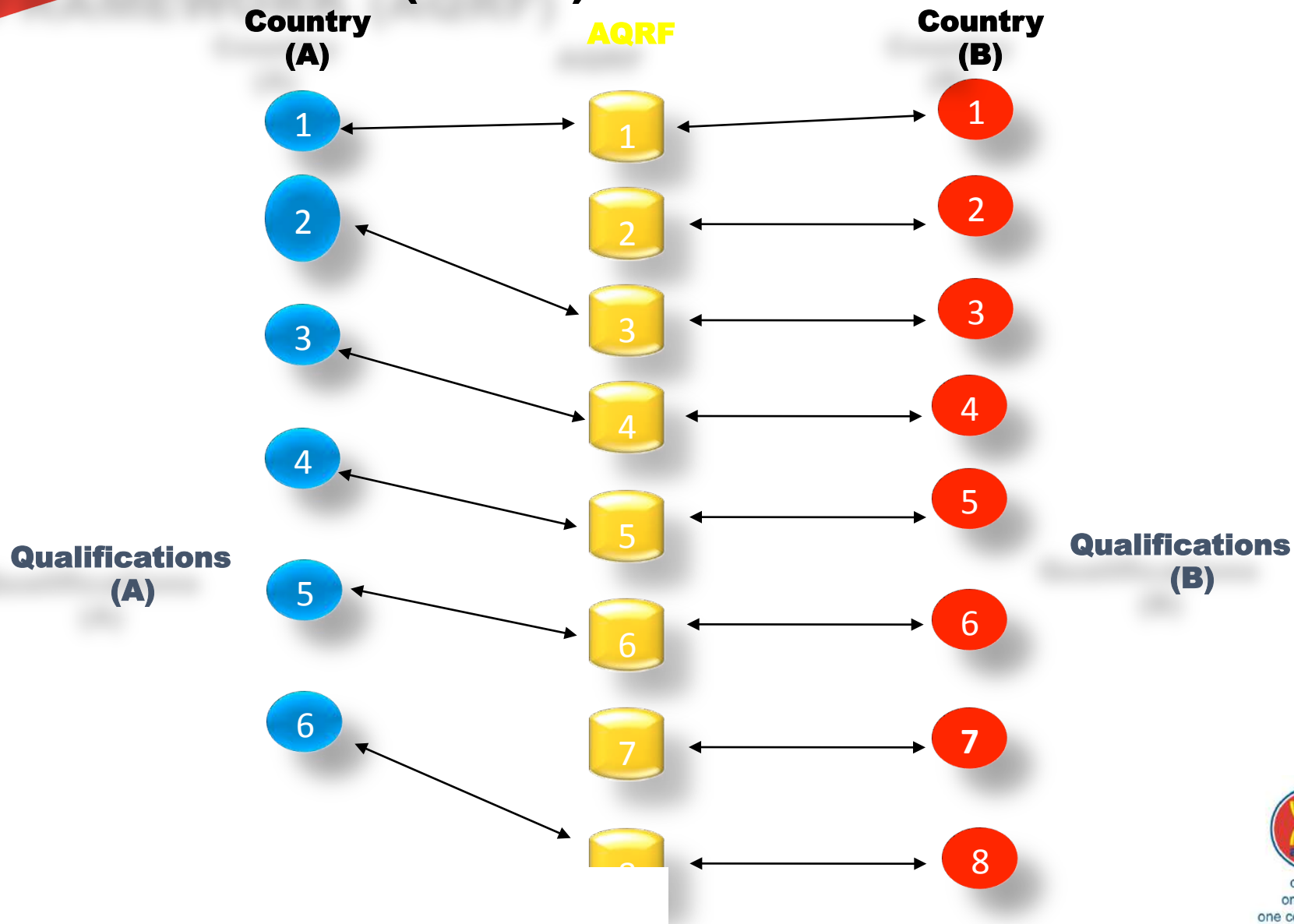
ASEAN QUALIFICATIONS REFERENCE FRAMEWORK (AQRF)

SAMPLE REFERENCING With AQRF and Other NQFs

Referencing of the Malaysian Qualifications Framework to the AQRF, EQF and NZQ: Malaysia

AQRF: What It Is NOT

- **It Is not an NQF**—the AMS qualifications are not directly referenced to the AQRF but through the NQF although AQRF will link the NQFs to one another;
- **It is not a QA framework but is intimately linked to the QA framework and vice versa.** AQRF is underpinned by a set of QA principles and broad standards related to 1) the functions of approving agencies 2) systems for the assessment of learning and issuing of qualifications and 3) regulation of the issuance of certificates
- **It is not recognition tool** but supports recognition and must become part of a wider set of recognition tools (e.g. MRAs, the UNESCO Tokyo Convention)

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MRA is an example of a recognition tool: Ideal Typical Relation to AQRF
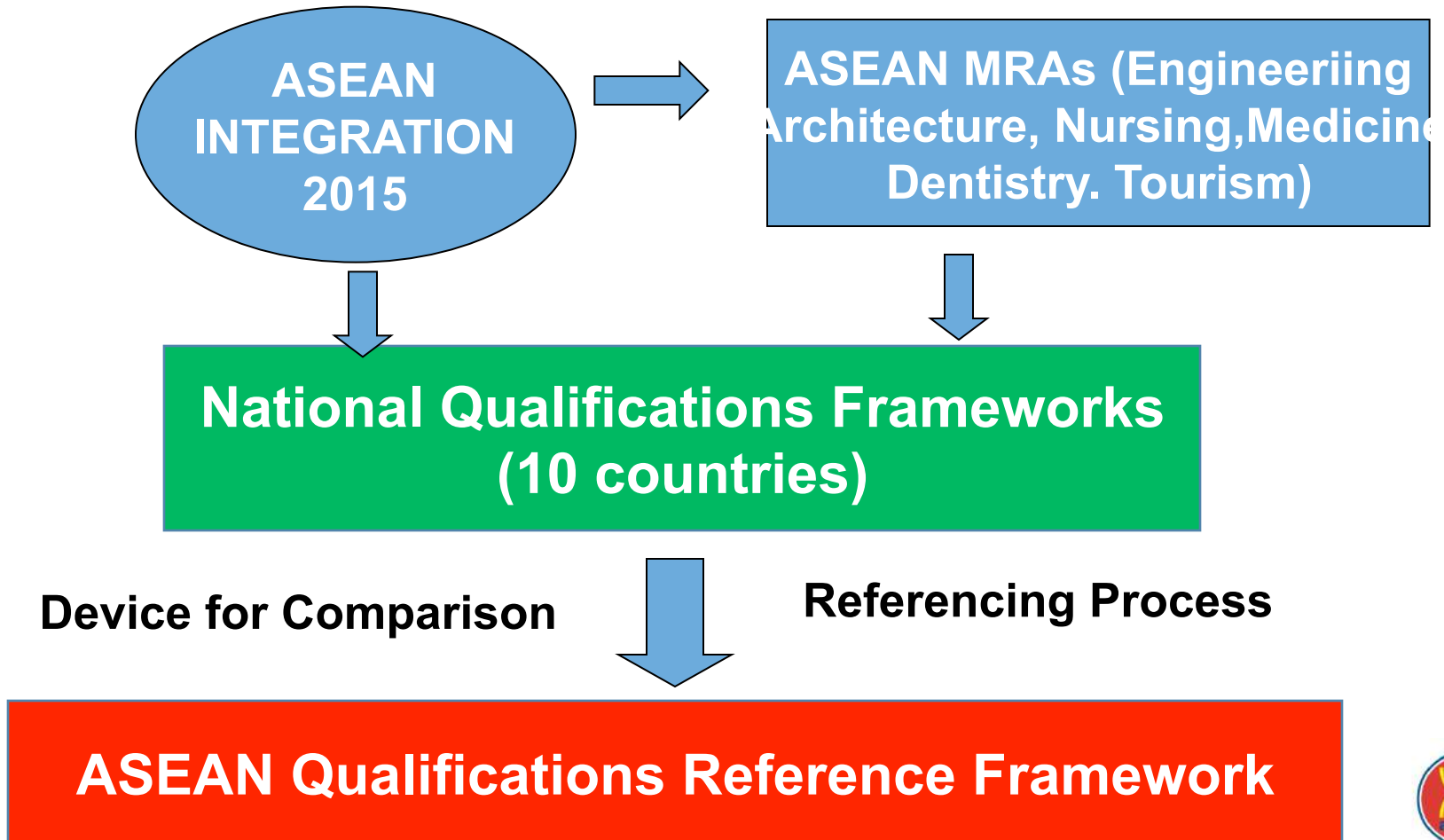
AQRF PURPOSES

To build an ASEAN zone of trust that facilitate mutual recognition of jobs and skills qualifications in the ASEAN labor market and the mobility of persons.

Supports recognition of qualifications	Facilitate Lifelong learning	Promotes and encourage credit transfer and learners mobility as well as workers mobility
To better understand and higher education quality qualifications	Helps to improve national higher / TVET education & qualifications systems (in the process of alignment to AQRF)	As a mechanism for recognition against other regional qualifications frameworks

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AQRF FUNCTIONS in ASEAN

- Catalyst for the development of NQF and QA in the region;

- Communication platform for explaining AMS qualifications systems;

- Facilitator of mutual support of the national qualifications systems in ASEAN and the ASEAN Quality Assurance Framework

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AQRF FUNCTIONS IN ASEAN

- Advocate for the development of national approaches to validating learning gained outside formal education

- Promoter of learner-outcomes based qualifications and the philosophical and paradigm shift that underlies it

- Facilitator of worker mobility (and employment appropriate to the qualifications) within ASEAN and beyond

In so doing,

- Leverage the capabilities of human beings for human and national development of the ASEAN countries, for the competitiveness of the region and for forging regional identity and consciousness

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REFERENCING CRITERIA

Criterion 1. The structure of the education and training system is described

Criterion 2. The responsibilities and legal basis of all relevant national bodies involved in the referencing process are clearly determined and published by the main public authority responsible for the referencing process

Criterion 3. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are transparent

Criterion 4. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the AQRF

Criterion 5. The basis in agreed standards of the national framework or qualifications system and its qualifications is described

REFERENCING CRITERIA

Criterion 6. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer(s) to the national qualifications framework or system are described. All of the bodies responsible for quality assurance state their unequivocal support for the referencing outcome

Criterion 7. The process of referencing has been devised by the main public authority and has been endorsed by the main stakeholders in the qualifications system

Criterion 8. People from other countries who are experienced in the field of qualifications are involved in the referencing process and its reporting

Criterion 9. One comprehensive report, setting out the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent national bodies and shall address separately and in order each of the referencing criteria

Criterion 10. The outcome of referencing is published by the ASEAN Secretariat and by the main national public body

Criterion 11. Following the referencing process all certification and awarding bodies are encouraged to indicate a clear reference to the appropriate AQRF level on new qualification certificates, diplomas issued

Referencing Process

National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to AQRF

Responsible for building the zone of trust by providing transparency to the public

Responsible for the Referencing report of the NQF to AQRF submitted for consideration of The AQRF Committee

Responsible to assess whether a referencing report submitted by each National AQRF Committee meets the AQRF referencing criteria and advises the National AQRF Committee on how all the criteria could be met.

Consider and endorse the recommendations of AQRF Committee's decision on the Reference Reports

National AQRF Committees	AQRF Committee	AEM ASED ALMM

- AMS has the right to decide who will comprise the NAC.
- Ideally represents the main stakeholders in qualifications in the country

- Comprise s of 1 representative from each AMS
- High level executive committee that engages with the complex policy and technical issues arising from implementation and evolution of a regional qualifications framework. Reports to 3 Ministerial Bodies.

3 ASEAN Ministerial Bodies

Implementation at National Level

- Establishment of **National AQRF Committee**
  - AMS prerogative to select the members of their NAC
  - act as focal point for the AQRF in each AMS
  - Ideally consist of main stakeholders in qualifications in the country (including policy making agencies and qualifications agencies)
- Preparation of **Referencing Report**
  - overseen by the National AQRF Committee
  - prepared by team of experts in qualifications
- Submission of Referencing Report for **AQRF Committee's consideration**
  - The National AQRF Committee will be responsible for the Referencing report but it may not be directly engaged in writing the report or conducting the referencing process.
  - AQRF Committee will consider the report against AQRF referencing criteria and advises the National AQRF Committee on how all the criteria could be met. This back-and-forth process may take several times before a referencing report is accepted.

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Reference Report Assessment
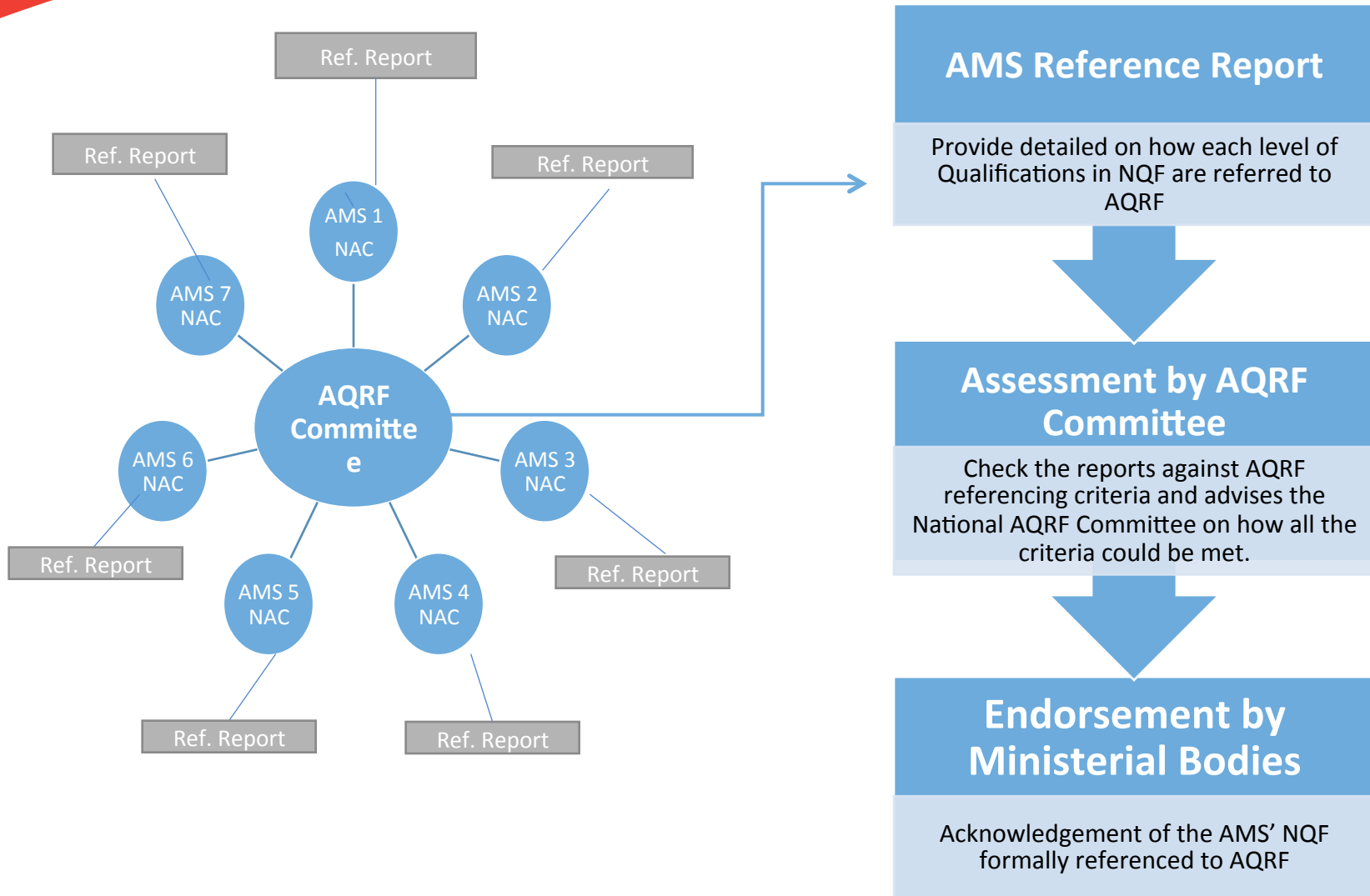
Preconditions for Referencing

- The country accepts the development of the AQRF as an enhancement to regional cooperation:

- Governance and management structures are being formulated: these include determining responsibility for referencing, setting up competent committees, organising consultations and the consultation and reporting process

- Quality assurance in the qualifications system is seen as critically important: particularly expanding current quality assurance systems towards the utilization of NQFs

- Linkages with other contexts for quality assurance are clear: for example considering how quality assurance works in programme design.

What the Preconditions Entail

- A pre–referencing process has been undertaken: countries should consider their qualification and quality assurance systems in relation to referencing and discuss together with other ASEAN Member States their outcomes and experiences.

- There is a raised awareness of linked projects e.g. MRAs and other alignments: this requires an understanding of the interdependence of the AQRF with relevant projects, which need to be scoped and understood.

- The key concepts are understood and that work on underpinning concepts (such as learning outcomes) is underway. Consideration was to be given to further capacity building, dissemination of accurate information, creation of an official portal and level of consultation with various agencies and bodies.

What Referencing Entails

- State of qualification systems–comprehensive / sectoral/bodies responsible

- Harmonisation within national qualifications systems?

- Implementation challenges at institutional levels

- Dealing with Outcomes, learning /credits, with non-formal and informal learning, standards-competency/skill standards, various stakeholder participation

- Call for a more holistic approach-transversal skills

- Selectivity, best fit approach and capacity building

MQF 2007
TQF 2009
IQF 2013
PQF 2013
BNQF 2013
VNQF 2014
CQF (to be endorsed)
Laos (in progress)
Singapore (WSQ System)
Myanmar (in progress)

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Status of ASEAN NQFs [source: BATEMAN And coles. EU SHARE RePort, 2016]

Country	Level of establishment	Stage
Brunei Darussalam	Inaugurated 2013, implemented	6
Cambodia	Inaugurated 2012, initial stages of implementation	5
Indonesia	Inaugurated 2012, initial stages of implementation	6
Lao PDR	Planned	3
Malaysia	Inaugurated 2007, fully implemented and at review stage	8
Myanmar	Planned	3
Philippines	Inaugurated 2012, initial stages of implementation	5
Singapore	Sector QF – Workforce Skills Qualifications system, Inaugurated 2003	7
Thailand	Inaugurated 2014, initial stages of implementation, 3 established sub frameworks (i.e. skills, professional and higher education)	4
Vietnam	Planned	3

1. No intent

2. Desired but no progress made

3. Background planning underway

4. Initial development and design completed

5. Some structures and processes agreed and documented

6. Some structures and processes established and operational

7. Structures and processes established for 5 years

8. Review of structures and processes proposed or underway.

Source: Bateman, Keating, Burke, Coles & Vickers (Vol IV, 2012) based on a scale developed by James Keevy, Borhene Chakroun & Arjen Deij (2010).

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What the AQRF Entails: QA Systems

- Ensuring a comparable quality assurance system – External Quality Assurance body, Q Standards, processes, assessments, Institutional internal quality systems, indicators and National Qualifications framework (if any)
  - Preliminary survey against AQAF principles by AQAN showed distinct differences including:
    - Establishment QA entity/entities
    - Independence
    - Varied experience
    - Differences in systems, scope, standards, and processes and outcomes
    - Strength of link between IQA and EQA
    - Resources
    - Higher education and TVET providers systems and

Brunei DS BDNAC 2002 / 2013
Cambodia –ACC 2003
Indonesia –BAN-PT -1994 Reforms
Laos –QASC 2013
Malaysia MQA (2007) (former LAN 1997-2007)
Myanmar (in progress)
Philippines – 5 EQAs under CHED (PAASCU 1957)
Thailand - ONESQA/ OHEC
Singapore - CPE
Vietnam - GDETA/VNU

Challenges of the AQRF [Source: bateman and coles. EU share report 2016]

- Need to clarify 1) the role of AQRF in the context of lifelong learning and international relevance; and 2) the interconnections between learner centered education, mobility qualifications, international standards, frameworks, and quality assurance processes;

- How the membership, organization, orientation of the AQRF Advisory Committee will be achieved given uneven the development of NQFs of ASEAN member states;

- Issue of substantiation of NQF levels and possible problem of producing evidence that the levels correspond with the AQRF in the referencing process since levels are based on experience/national values

- Need for AQRF to become a part of a wider set of tools of recognition—e.g. how it would relate to *Mutual Recognition Agreements for accounting services, dental practitioners, engineering services, nursing services, surveying qualifications, architectural services, tourism services. In Higher education* the AQRF needs to be consistent with the *UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Degrees in Higher education (as amended in 2011).*

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STATUS OF THE AQRF: BACKGROUND Chronology of AQRF

July 2010

AANZFTA-FJC initiated the *Capacity Building for National Qualifications Frameworks* Project (NQF Phase I)

May 2012

- Completion of NQF Phase I
- Commencement of NQF Phase II (establishing TF-AQRF)

July – October 2012

Establishment of TF-AQRF – coordination with SLOM and SOMED

October 2012 – March 2014

- Meetings of TF-AQRF I- IV
- Finalisation of AQRF Document

Aug 2014-May 2015

Endorsement by AEM (25 Aug 2014)
Endorsement by ASED (11 Sep 2014)
Endorsement by ALMM (ad-ref in May 2015)

2014-2016

TF-AQRF continued to work on implementation plans, including finalisation of AQRF Governance Structure at its last meeting (7th TF-AQRF)

2016

In the process of seeking endorsement of AQRF Governance and Structure Document by AEM, ASED and ALMM [

Status of AQRF

- AQRF endorsed by the Ministers of Finance, Education and Labor and is now officially an ASEAN Framework for implementation

- Ongoing endorsement of the governance structure by the Ministers of Education and Labor (May); Economic Minister (August)—now endorsed by Education Ministers

- The defunct Task Force AQRF elected the Interim Committee Chair and Vice Chair for pre-requisite work for Ministerial endorsement and subsequent work;

Status of AQRF

- AQRF Committee to be established by the third quarter of 2016

- AMS Commitment of support for AQRF implementation [remaining formal endorsement by the Economics Ministers upon the recommendation of the Senior Economic Officials

- Support for the establishment and strengthening of the AQRF] Committee (The activities and establishment of the AQRF would be supported externally by Australia and New Zealand from June 2016 to June 2018 as endorsed by the AANZFTA FJC at their 8th Meeting on 13-18 March 2016 in Melbourne, Australia----AQRF linked to other regional qualifications frameworks even before its official endorsement

Meanwhile, 4 AMS have expressed their intention to reference in 2018—Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand

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Critical role of the first 4 countries referencing to the AQRF

- *The four countries will be breathing life into AQRF by the sheer act of referencing in 2018*

- *Of the four countries, Malaysia is most advanced in its development*
  - ➤ *Malaysia has the same agency that is responsible for both QF and QA—an ideal combination that is difficult to replicate*
  - ➤ *The QF and QA Systems are comprehensive-covering education and training sessions*
  - ➤ *Malaysia is in the best position to shape the referencing process and enhance the level of understanding of the newly established AQRF Committee [the equivalent of the EQF Advisory Committee]*
  - ➤ *Malaysia has begun referencing to other countries—e.g. New Zealand;*
  - ➤ *It can provide **PROOF OF CONCEPT***

Related Developments

UNESCO

SOURCES

Slide 5: Delors, J. et al. (1998). *Learning: the Treasure Within.* Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century. p. 100

Slides 6,14,17,27,29 Adapted from Professor Zita Mohd's presentation at the 1st Year Asean+3 Forum On Skills, Standards And Qualifications Framework, Incheon Korea 14-16 April 2015

Slides 10, 20, 2 AQRF document

Slides 22-24,31 input of the ASEAN Economics Secretariat assigned to AQRF

Slides 28, 30 : Bateman, Andrea and Michael Coles. EU SHARE State of Play Report 2016

THANK YOU!