INDONESIAN QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS (IQF): HOLISTIC VIEW ON POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND FURTHER ISSUES

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Abstract: This paper aims to discuss Indonesian Qualification Frameworks (IQFs) holistically. Today, we are being exposed to the discussions on IQFs through many socialization programs and government publications. As education practitioners, we have to be familiar with universal concepts of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which most pioneers of NQF hold. It is not enough only having that, moreover, this paper presents other essential points about NQF and, specifically for Indonesian context, those are the potential benefits, the reasons of formulating IQFs, NQFs across countries, and further issues. I realize that this paper has not successfully contextualized into ELT as IQFs has recently been developed. However, this paper is significant engagement to IQFs for successful implementation.

Keywords: Qualification frameworks, global recognition, Indonesian context

A statement from Claudia Dorr-Voss (Surya, 2014), General Director of European Policies-Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, that Germany success facing monetary crisis European Free Trade has been influenced by the quality product and skillful human resource which have been prepared since 50-year ago aware us of the importance of strategic approach for development through National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs). What can be inferred from that? Planning for the quality needs mature preparation, hardworking and commitment from all related policy makers. Is Indonesia ready for that? What next after having NQFs?

The Asean Economic Community will be the momentum for entering more high competitiveness in many aspects including human resource and education system. Indonesia must prepare the citizens for being eligible person for more global competition. The situation needs deep thinking from any element. Indonesia has started formulating the 'key to enter the international door' by introducing Kerangka Kualifikasi Nasional Indonesia (KKNI) or Indonesian Qualifications Framework (IQFs). The formulation was done by

referring to other NQFs from other countries. Again, Globalization and ASEAN Free Trade Area 2015 and ASEAN community fasten the need for establishing IQF that is absolutely not easy for developing country. This paper attempts to discuss the basic concepts of NQF, key elements, and NQF across countries. The paper specifically views both potential benefits and further issues to have successful implementation of IQFs for Indonesian context.

The development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) has been a major international trend in reforming national education and training systems since the late 1990s. The initiative first started, and was diffused mostly, among European and English-speaking developed countries. However, since the late 1990s such frameworks have also been adopted by non-English-speaking and developing countries. The implementation of NQFs has been started in many countries through three generations as seen from Extent of NQFs worldwide based on Tuck (2007:1):

1st Generation (implementation started between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s)	**2nd Generation (implementation and development started in the late 1990s or early 2000s)**	**3rd Generation (currently under consideration)**
Australia; New Zealand; Scotland; South Africa; UK (excl. Scotland)	Ireland; Malaysia; Maldives; Mauritius; Mexico; Namibia; the Philippines; Singapore; Trinidad and Tobago; Wales	Albania; Angola; Barbados; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Botswana; Brazil; Chile; China; Colombia; Democratic Republic of Congo; Jamaica; Lesotho; Macedonia; Malawi; Mozambique; Romania; Serbia; Slovenia; Uzbekistan; Tanzania; Turkey; Uganda; Zambia; Zimbabwe

Indonesia is considered as the 3rd generation of NQFs. The KKNI/IQFs becomes the starting point for Indonesia to be recognized and equal with both developed and developing countries. However, it is great challenge and not easy process for Indonesia as other countries have prepared and implemented for many years ago. KKNI/IQFs is not too late to start as far as it is prepared and constructed through very careful and well-managed stages. Higher education practitioners are expected to be at the first line for that, therefore, being familiar with the world of QFs is important point of departure.

WHY NQFs?

Today, we are exposed by many socialization programs about KKNI/IQF. The official trainings were also given to university policy makers. However, there is still confusion about what KKNI is. This section mostly discusses about the universal concepts of NQF. Thorough discussion on NQFs should be begun from its basic concept which is the definition. According to Judy et.al (2009:6)

> A qualification framework is an instrument for the development and classification of Qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved...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 labor market recognition of qualifications within a country and internationally.

There are still more technical terms defining NQF which basically has similar points and focuses as stated by Tuck (2007:1) that it is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications, which are defined by learning outcomes, i.e. clear statements of what the learner must know or be able to do whether learned in a classroom, on-the-job, or less formally. Those ideas are line with what is formulated in another document that NQFs means a) describes all qualifications (degrees or diplomas) that are awarded in the higher education system and relates these qualifications to one another in a coherent way; b) defines the relationship between the different education qualifications; c) clarifies the level of qualifications within the specific national context; d) is internationally understood.

The definition implies that qualification must be transparent, acceptable, and accountable to be applied locally, nationally and internationally. Looking at the definition, it is found that there are two essential elements of NQFs: a) a set of levels of learning to be achieved, stated in learning outcomes and competencies, which is should be based on common sense to be accepted, b) quality assurance through validation of qualifications and/or standards; accreditation and audit of education and training institutions; and quality assurance of assessment leading to the award of qualifications. It requires the involvement of stakeholders such as students, government department, workers' organization, professional bodies, and providers of education and training. Their views direct to the expected frameworks.

Some publications state that QFs provides excellent benefits. Forsyth, et.al (2009) proposes the benefits on four areas. First, benefits for qualification system and provision meaning that QF can reduce complexity and enable coherence, transparency and integration despite increasing regionalization, decentralization and individualization of provision. QF also leads to open access and enable progression to further qualifications, independent of whether they are initial, higher or vocational qualifications. QF enables learners and trainers/teachers to be guided and to facilitate them in identifying appropriate learning pathways.

Second, benefits to career development, guidance and employment placement, information and orientation including occupational mobility (demand side). QF levels can support accelerated change and adaptation of learners,

increase social acceptance, and give clear map on skills supply. Third, benefits to regulation, legislation, and institutional arrangements. The frameworks can provide reliability and sustainability of quality, establish reference points of standard, and can provide stability of qualification while at the same time allowing flexibility.

Fourth, benefit to the international and transnational. The situation provides intercultural understanding and mutual recognition, a more in-depth cooperation between teachers and trainers from different countries, and a place for sharing outcomes of training and for the development of a common language in the discourse of qualifications. International engagement, then, facilitates the teachers to the idea of Intercultural Language Learning (IcLL). Liddiecoat, et.al (2003) report that at a global level IcLL driven to understanding and valuing all languages and culture, understanding and valuing how to mediate among languages and cultures, and developing intercultural sensitivity as an ongoing goal. The interaction among teachers from different educational settings and countries becomes potential resource for global advancement in education.

NQFs ACROSS COUNTRIES

Referring to the benefits of QFs, of course, makes us optimistic to face global challenges. We think that the international door will be open for all workers and scholars from all around the world. Some countries have been the pioneers for NQFs implementation. German has undergone a lengthy process of development, it was in 2006 when the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, and the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK) agreed to work together on the development of a German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (German abbreviation is DQR) through the eight qualification levels (AK DQR, 2011). For sure, this policy has enhanced the opportunity for the citizens firstly on the European labor market, then next for global labor market.

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), the earliest and the longest-standing framework was introduced in 1995, and reviewed in 2009-2010 to keep it relevant to and consistent with current national policy and global change. As one of developed English speaking countries, Australia is considered as melting point for multination and cultural diversity which challenges the government to develop accessible framework for all. This becomes one of the main objectives that are accommodating the diversity of purposes of Australian education and training. The tag line 'one country, one qualification system' implies the effort to accommodate diverse citizens. In developing QF, one of crucial aspects is effective leadership which for sure driving the reforms must be done by people who are committed, influential, and persuasive in order to ensure full implementation.

Singapore formulated the QF in 2005 with The Workforce Skills Qualifications system based on the situation that most workers lacked of secondary qualification. Moreover, Singapore needed to prepare skillful and knowledgeable workers as there was significant increase of workforce. It is crucial to ensure that all workers are equipped with employable skills for

national and global workplace. The lesson learnt from Singapore's experience is the hand-in-hand collaboration between government agencies and stakeholders.

Malaysia as the nearest neighboring country developed its NQF in 2007 which mostly driven from higher education revolution. As the result from the movement, Malaysia was challenged to widen education access and increase the qualification. Education policies were directed to encourage partnership between public and private sectors, openness of education access, and the accuracy and consistency in naming the qualification. MQF has been beneficial guidelines for lifelong learning policy in Malaysia.

The national situation in Thailand that most workers had no qualification, and still remains in last few years which many workers on job areas yet remain without qualification affected the government to serve a tool for increasing manpower capabilities and competitiveness. In 2010, the Thai Qualification Framework (TQF) for Higher Education, and the Thai Qualification Framework for Vocational Education (TVQF) was approved by the Cabinet. The specific objective of TQF is focused on industry needs. Thailand holds essential factors for the successful implementation, those are: coordination, clear presentation, close cooperation, continuing monitoring and evaluation as well as research and development.

IQFs: FURTHER ISSUES

Indonesia has recently developed the Indonesian Qualifications Framework (IQF). The IQF holds a legal endorsement in the form of Presidential Decree no. 8/2012. The process was started in 2009, beginning with doing comparative study and library research of NQFs from Germany, Australia, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and other countries. In 2010, both the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration developed the IQFs, and then in 2011 it were launched. Follow up step is the implementation, synchronization among sectors and recognition from other sectors in 2012. Within the 4 years process, in 2016, will be the time for the equation between graduate qualification and IQFs, open system education by accommodating multi entry and multi exit education.

The potential benefits for Indonesia will be not far away from the benefits gained by other countries that have implemented NQF. Learning success stories from different countries help Indonesia gain the same benefits. The success stories of the implementation principles that I have mentioned from considering the developed countries cannot be straightforwardly generalized, especially to developing countries like Indonesia. Therefore, Young (2005) reminds that an important, but less contentious, issue is that developing countries are under considerable pressure to get their qualifications recognized internationally. The development of the referencing role of NQFs is consistent with the broader trend to internationalization, which is a feature of European countries as the EU drives the development of a European qualifications framework. The trend towards international accreditation needs to be treated not just as an opportunity for developing countries to get their qualifications recognized internationally, but as an opportunity to learn about what really happens in other countries.

Planning to implement IQFs cannot be separated from having holistic view not only on the benefits but also on the obstacles and further issues. Ulicna & Coles (2011:7) describe the obstacles which have been identified:

- Recognition of professional bachelor degrees in view of further study in countries where no equivalent qualifications exist is problematic; and,
- Diversity of practices and approaches among higher education institutions within the same country.
- Higher education institutions are increasingly developing their own centers/units for foreign qualification recognition. They are at the same time creating their own practices in this area which are not always in line with the internationally agreed procedure.

As IQFs is considered as promising way, Indonesia expects more from this as the framework for quality improvement. However, it should be taken in very careful way because of its potential problems. It may be that initial expectations are too high in terms of both what can be achieved, and how quickly the benefits of introducing an NQF are likely to become apparent. For sure, lack of government support is often given as an explanation of implementation difficulties by the new qualifications authorities themselves. However, lack of support or adequate resources are an endemic problem in most systems of education and training. They do not adequately explain the difficulties associated with implementing IQFs that may be specific to them. Again, this is about political and administrative difficulties.

In most national governments, which also happen in Indonesia, the departments of education, labor and industry and trade are all likely to be involved and are likely to have different agendas concerning how an NQF should develop. The interconnection among the ministries are still weak causing fragmented and partial mechanism. Hence, difficulty in recruiting members and staff with appropriate expertise also becomes challenge to face. The situation will be worsen when staff who lack the appropriate skills and knowledge can protect themselves behind bureaucratic procedures and delays in the registration of qualifications, rather than focusing on the quality of learning and the specific skills and knowledge to be acquired.

Instead of providing potential benefits, while at the same time we must be ready to overcome the following further issues taken from Young (2005): a) lifelong learning and employability which can raise problematic sides. It is suggested that adults to continue to learn throughout their working lives. It supports their working skills, but, there should be clear link to connect between working and learning qualification, b) assessment issues which of course, the multientry and multiexit system (the implication of formal, non-formal, and informal education) require appropriate forms of assessment, c) costs issue as setting IQF will emerge high cost system of testing certificating for qualifications. Trust and professionalism become crucial aspects to occupy by agencies that manage the system. Low trust society like Indonesia will need extra effort to manage.

CONCLUSION

The complexities of formulation and future implementation of IQFs must

be realized. Therefore, Indonesia will not be trapped into designing over-complex approaches, having over-ambitious visions; and applying top down strategies. A logical conclusion would appear to be that any future strategy especially for a developing country with limited resources should be based on simplicity, a feasible vision and local initiative. To be fair, it is very difficult for Indonesia to do that.

Dealing with ELT context, those all discussions will be strong supplement for formulating the frameworks for English education. The relevant ELT practitioners and stakeholders should be able to work hand-in-hand filling the gap between learning and workplace demands.

RECOMMENDATION

I realize that the discussion on this paper is still at the surface level. My initial understanding on IQFs helps me to be ready for the implementation. Some recommendations made are:

A. Planning and Implementing IQFs should be holistic as it will involve many aspects.
B. Readiness from all relevant elements is a must.
C. Government agencies should give their total commitment.
D. Every sector of education should work based on one main goal and keep the Sustainability of the program
E. It is extremely important that developing countries considering the introduction of an NQF do learn lessons from the experience of countries which have already moved in that direction. In particular, it is important that they do not assume that an NQF is any kind of 'magic wand' (Young, 2005) of educational reform.

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