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A Review of the Philippine Qualifications Framework:
Towards Improved Skills Recognition and Mobility

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KOREA-WORLD BANK PARTNERSHIP FACILITY

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Telephone: 202-473-1000
Internet: www.worldbank.org

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Acronyms

AQRF	ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
DepEd	Department of Education
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IT-BPM	Information Technology – Business Process Management
JHS	Junior High School
NC	National Certificate
NCC	National Coordinating Council
NCS	National Competency Standards (Korea)
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NTESDP	National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFW	Overseas Filipino Workers
PCCI	Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry
PCTS	Philippine Credit Transfer System
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PQF	Philippine Qualifications Framework
PRC	Professional Regulation Commission
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
PSG	Policies, Standards, and Guidelines
PTQF	Philippine TVET Qualifications Framework
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SHS	Senior High School
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
TRs	Training Regulations
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVI	Technical Vocational Institutes
TVL	Technical-Vocational Livelihood
TWG	Technical Working Group
WG	Working Group

Executive Summary

The Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) aims to support an individual's career development and facilitate learner and worker mobility by setting lifelong training and education standards. As a key human resource development strategy to achieve the country's development objectives of improving labor productivity, the Government of the Philippines (GoP) established the PQF through the issuance of Executive Order No. 83 in 2012 and institutionalized it with the enactment of Republic Act No. 10968 in 2018. As prescribed under the law, the PQF National Coordinating Council (NCC) is mandated to review and update the PQF. The NCC recognizes the need to review the PQF's relevance, adequacy, appropriateness, and feasibility during the initial stage of its implementation. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), as the Interim Secretariat of the PQF-NCC, requested the World Bank to review key elements of the PQF, focusing on its relevance to industry and employers' needs, adequacy in its scope of coverage, appropriateness of design and methodology, and feasibility of implementation and utilization.

Background and Rationale for the PQF Review

The Philippines maintained robust economic growth in recent years (before the COVID-19 crisis), which ultimately led to a steady reduction in poverty. Prior to the pandemic, up until 2019, the Philippine economy grew by an annual rate of at least 6 percent for 14 consecutive quarters, which marked the most robust economic growth since the mid-1970s. This robust economic performance translated into a reduction in poverty. The share of the poor population declined from 23.3 percent in 2015 to 16.6 percent in 2018, lifting close to 6 million individuals out of poverty. Continuous structural transformation and steady remittances from abroad are recognized as arguably the two most important factors that have been supporting the robust economic growth in the country. In particular, the growing trend of Filipinos working abroad, with their increased remittances received at home, has been a major source of income in the country.

Despite strong economic growth driven by steady structural transformation and remittances, stagnant levels of worker productivity and prospects for skills mobility remain critical challenges that require policy attention. In the midst of an overall shift from a low- to a higher-skilled workforce, an increase in low-skilled services, especially in sales and retail workers, has been prominent. Widespread informality and a significant share of elementary occupations also characterize the Philippine labor market, highlighting the importance of improving labor productivity. The increasing trend of Filipinos working abroad also calls for nurturing a skilled and competitive workforce and aligning their skills with the demand from receiving countries to promote labor mobility. To address the labor productivity issue through quality education, lifelong learning, and workers' mobility, the GoP introduced the PQF in 2012, following the establishment of the Philippine Technical and Vocational Education and Training

(TVET) Qualifications Framework (PTQF) in 2004 and the Philippine TVET reform initiated by TESDA in 1998.

A well-functioning National Qualifications Framework (NQF) facilitates human capital development and skills mobility. A successful framework increases the consistency of qualifications, provides transparency for individuals and employers with more broadly recognized learning modalities, clarifies learning pathways and progression, and strengthens national education and training reform policies. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the mobility of students and workers has been severely restricted. The movement of people and labor matters because it contributes to the more efficient and productive use of human resources and catalyzes knowledge transfer; this is crucial to boost productivity. It is, therefore, necessary to have common standards and qualifications through NQFs for governments to adequately assess the opportunities and challenges with labor mobility. The mechanisms to reference, compare, and recognize different qualification systems will become more complex in a post-COVID environment, with the proliferation of academic and professional online learning that requires the process of certifying and recognizing multiple qualifications at the proper level. With this review conducted at the early stage of the PQF's implementation, policy recommendations will be provided to strengthen the PQF's design, implementation, and utilization, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Key Findings

This review finds that the PQF is based on a robust framework, but its implementation is weak, with limited utilization and evidence of labor market impact. Several challenges were identified through the review, including the following:

- **PQF Principles and Architecture.** The review confirms that the principles and objectives of the PQF are appropriate. PQF meets the fundamental purpose of qualification, retaining the relevance and effectiveness of knowledge, skills, values, and applications. It also promotes education and training system reforms toward achieving a lifelong-learning society. Descriptors of expected learning outcomes along the three domains (knowledge, skills and values, application, and degree of independence) for each of the eight levels are mostly clear and distinguishable. Nonetheless, level progression across all dimensions and levels needs more uniformity. Post-degree professional qualifications through the professional track (i.e., PQF Levels 6 to 8) also require further empirical tests and adjustments.

- **Governance.** The review notes that the PQF Act and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) have already prescribed the overall governance structure, including the PQF-NCC, technical working group (TWG), working groups (WGs), and the PQF's Interim Secretariat. The composition and membership of PQF-NCC and its TWG and WGs, however, have not been finalized yet pending the inclusion of representatives from the economic and industrial sectors. While the roles and responsibilities of each involved entity are relatively well defined, clarity on the staff complement and budget to execute PQF related tasks is lacking. In particular, appropriate budget allocation

in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) to support the full implementation of PQF has not been made, and each member agency of the PQF-NCC currently shoulders PQF related expenses.

- **Preparedness for implementation.** Awareness of PQF among stakeholders and beneficiaries is low. Few awareness-enhancing campaigns and activities have taken place so far to increase understanding and acceptance of the PQF. Practical guidance, operations manuals, and capacity-building activities for PQF implementation have yet to commence. Some practitioners expressed concern that it is not straightforward to translate the PQF level descriptors into the curriculum, vertical and horizontal career paths, and human resource management for relevant agencies, education and training service providers, and employers. Efforts to align and adapt the existing curriculum and qualification standards, or develop new ones, according to the PQF level descriptors, are required to proceed to PQF implementation.
- **Integral measures for implementation.** Systems and policies essential for PQF implementation, such as the Philippine Credit Transfer System (PCTS) for equivalency and pathways and integrated quality assurance, need to be strengthened. Currently, individual quality assurance practices managed separately by three education agencies tend to overlook skills acquired through nonstandard forms of education and training, and they should be incorporated within the PQF level descriptors. Moreover, there is a need to establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of PQF implementation and utilization, focusing on alignment with PQF descriptors and qualifications standards.

Policy Recommendations

In the short term, the PQF can be strengthened by reinforcing the core governance structure. Completing the constitution of PQF-NCC, TWGs, and WGs, with the inclusion of economic and industry sector representatives and budget allocations, should be prioritized

to institutionalize key activities for PQF implementation. PQF leadership should then proceed to the development of the official Operations Manual, which should serve as the main reference for education curricula, training regulations, qualification standards, assessment tools, and equivalency pathways to be aligned with PQF. At the same time, active awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building activities for practitioners and implementers should take place.

Given that PQF implementation has not commenced yet, pilot projects are strongly recommended. The pilot testing could focus on specific qualification levels, sectors, or groups of stakeholders to inform how flexibly and efficiently PQF could be utilized. A more flexible structure of the PQF applicable to both formal and non-formal skills development modalities will tremendously help promote an individual's lifelong learning and career development. Through these pilot projects, two important points – applicability of adding professional qualifications to the PQF Levels 6 and 8 and the appropriateness of setting Senior High School (SHS) as a foundation level of the PQF – can also be revisited and re-assessed.

In the medium to long term, based on the pilots and implementation lessons, PQF design and related policies, such as a singular quality assurance system and ladderized credit transfers, can be further enhanced. The introduction of pilot activities for major areas with robust monitoring and evaluation systems, including quality assurance for short courses leading to micro-credentials, would help test the relevance and applicability of the PQF and identify good practices for the realization of the PQF objectives. These building blocks are imperative to create momentum and expedite the full operationalization of the PQF, especially in the context of COVID-19 and the diversification of skills development modalities.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Philippines increasingly emphasizes lifelong learning and skills mobility for labor productivity as an integral part of the country's growth strategy. The Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022 presents a series of activities to improve labor productivity through human capital investment. Investment in this area is critical given that the country's growth has benefited from a steady structural transformation shifting resources from low- to high-productivity sectors and occupations and from robust flows of remittances from Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). Key initiatives to invest in human capital and enhance labor productivity include the K-12 education reform, which mandates compulsory education up to Grade 12 while promoting an early start of schooling from kindergarten, and a series of laws for skills development and higher education to enhance quality, with an emphasis on learning outcomes.

Aside from improvements in basic education requirements, an important milestone in the country's skills development came with the introduction of the national qualifications system known as the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF). The PQF is based on the legal and regulatory foundation of Executive Order No. 83, issued in October 2012, enacted into a law entitled An Act Institutionalizing the Philippine Qualifications Framework (hereafter, the PQF Act) in January 2018, and subsequently promulgated Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) in January 2019. In order to implement the PQF, a National Coordinating Council (NCC) was constituted to spearhead its implementation. The Council is chaired by the Department of Education (DepEd), with the following as member-agencies: Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). The PQF Act also specifies the inclusion of one representative each from the economic and industry sectors in the NCC.

A well-established NQF is central to a government's efforts to develop a skilled and competitive workforce, and the PQF aspires to play such a role. An NQF focuses on setting national standards and levels of learning outcomes, supporting an individual's lifelong career development among different education and training sectors, and aligning domestic qualification standards with international ones for better labor mobility. By defining the standards and levels of learning outcomes of the knowledge, skills, and values of learners, of workers, and of professionals, an NQF guides the development, recognition, and awarding of qualifications. It also increases consistency in qualifications, provides individuals and employers with more broadly recognized learning forms, clarifies learning pathways and progression, and informs national education and training reform policies (World Bank 2013). Many countries have a qualifications framework to guide their education and training policies, and these frameworks are regularly updated based on the changing nature of work and evolving labor market demand for skills in order to recognize new and restructure existing qualifications. As an NQF, the PQF also aims to be utilized as a tool

for workforce development by the government, human resource management by firms, quality assurance by education and training service providers, and lifelong career development by individuals.

To ensure that the PQF remains responsive to the skills demand and needs of the international and domestic labor markets and fully achieves its mandate, the PQF Act requires regular reviews and updates of the framework. This PQF review, the first of its kind, aims to assess various aspects of the framework, including:

- relevance, appropriateness, and consistency of the PQF levels and qualifications by design;
- stakeholders' awareness of the PQF;
- feasibility of implementation and governance structures; and
- effectiveness of the PQF in facilitating life-long learning and mobility through pathways and equivalencies between higher education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET).

TESDA, as the Interim Secretariat of PQF's NCC, requested the World Bank team to conduct a review and provide key lessons and recommendations for the PQF, considering that the framework is still at a very early stage of implementation.

The review is based on a combination of desk research, an online survey conducted among various stakeholders, and in-depth qualitative interviews with selected key informants. The findings from the quantitative survey and key informant interviews provide complementary information (Figure 1.1), with the latter focusing more on detailed topics through candid and open discussions.

- **Desk and literature review.** The review covers the overall policy context (e.g., economy, labor market, education, TVET system, among others) in the Philippines and internationally, cases for NQFs from various studies, notably those done by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries and other advanced NQF examples, including the ones from Australia and Hong Kong; and PQF Act and its IRR.

- **Online stakeholder survey.** Stakeholders, including government agencies, education and TVET providers, industry, and professional organizations, were given an online questionnaire to assess their awareness, knowledge, and acceptance of PQF operations.

- **Key informant interviews:** Interviews were conducted between July and August 2020 to facilitate an in-depth probe into practitioners' experience and views of the PQF and complement the quantitative survey, assessing the current status of the PQF and its implementation. The interviews were also intended to identify critical issues related to the design and implementation of the PQF and to gather views on measures to improve the PQF.

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the Philippine economy with triple shocks: a health crisis, strict containment measures, and a global recession. These shocks led to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracting year-on-year by 10.0 percent in the first three quarters of 2020 (World Bank 2020). It shook the labor market immensely; labor market indicators, including the 17.6 percent unemployment rate recorded in April 2020, showed that conditions were dire. Many workers who lost jobs in the industry and services sectors had to rely on agricultural activities, reversing some of the progress in structural transformation

made over a long time prior to the pandemic. Numerous OFWs had to be repatriated due to this global shock, and remittances dropped significantly during the early months of the pandemic. The labor force surveys conducted in July and October 2020 showed a modest rebounding of the labor markets, but not to pre-pandemic levels. The implications of the pandemic for skills development and the PQF are rather unclear at this point. However, promoting lifelong learning and the mobility and transferability of skills is even more important when the labor markets are in turmoil.

The remainder of this report consists of four sections. Section 2 provides a brief country background of the Philippines to put the discussions into context. Section 3 presents findings from the PQF review concerning the PQF's design, implementation, and utilization. Section 4 presents policy recommendations and discussions, and Section 5 concludes.

Figure 1.1 **Structure of Survey Instrument and Key Informant Interviews**

Survey		
Part A	**Purpose of the PQF**	• Ensuring the fundamental purposes of qualification • Driving broader education and training system reforms toward achieving a lifelong learning society
Part B	**Design, structure, and functions**	• Establishing coherent and integrative qualification systems
Part C	**Quality assurance**	• Promoting quality assurance
Part D	**Governance**	• Facilitating interactions among stakeholders
Part E	**Written comments**	• Providing opinions on primary issues and ways to improve the PQF
Key Informant Interviews		
Part A	**Governance and institutional mechanisms**	• PQF-National Coordinating Council, Technical Working Group, Working Groups, and coordination among key agencies
Part B	**Design of the PQF**	• Appropriateness of 8-level system, responsiveness, efforts of international recognition, responses to COVID-19
Part C	**PQF implementation**	• Policy context, awareness, capacity, curriculum and training regulations revisions, and credit transfer
Part D	**PQF utilization**	• Utilization by individual learners and workers, education and TVET providers, and employers
Part E	**Quality assurance, including M&E**	• Systematic data collection and information system
Part F	**Finance**	• Budget allocation

Chapter 2
Context

2.1 Macroeconomic and Labor Market Environment

The Philippines maintained robust economic growth in recent years before the COVID-19 crisis, which ultimately led to a steady reduction in poverty. Prior to the pandemic, up until 2019, the Philippine economy grew at least 6 percent year-on-year for 14 consecutive quarters, which marked the strongest economic growth since the mid-1970s. The gross national income (GNI) per capita, in real terms, had grown at above 4 percent annually since 2012. In 2019, the GNI per capita reached US$3,850,[1] and the country was on a pathway to rise from a lower-middle-income to upper-middle-income country status.[2] This robust economic performance translated into a reduction in poverty. The share of the poor population declined from 23.3 percent in 2015 to 16.6 percent in 2018, lifting close to 6 million individuals out of poverty. Almost all regions in the Philippines (except the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, BARMM) experienced a fall in poverty rates over the same three-year period. The country was on track to meet the goal of the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022, which was to reduce the poverty rate to 14 percent by 2022.

Continuous structural transformation and steady remittances from abroad have been recognized as arguably the two most important contributors to the country's robust economic growth. With structural transformation, the country's labor moved from agriculture to non-agricultural employment (Figure 2.1) and from non-wage to wage employment (Figure 2.2). The employment share of the agricultural sector has been steadily declining over time, from more than a third in 2009 to just over a fifth in 2019. Meanwhile, employment expansion has been observed for the services and industry sectors, which rose to their highest combined employment share of 77 percent in 2019. That same year, an additional 1.6 million jobs were created by both services and industry, while the agricultural sector recorded job losses of approximately 300,000. Notably, employment in the manufacturing sector— commonly associated with productive employment[3]— grew by 24 percent over a decade to reach 3.6 million workers in 2019. The expansion of the manufacturing sector was accompanied by increasing productivity (measured as value-added divided by employment) and by shifts within the sector from basic textiles, apparel, and paper products to more skills-intensive products, such as electronic components and transport equipment manufacturing.

Deployment of Filipino workers abroad and remittances have been a major source of income in the country, highlighting the

1 GNI per capita, Atlas method, based on World Development Indicator.
2 Upper-middle-income economies have a GNI per capita of at least $3,996 (2018). The Philippines has been classified as a lower-middle-income country since 1987.
3 Based on the 2016 Annual Survey of Philippine Business and Industry from PSA, manufacturing contributed the highest value-added share among sectors, with Php 1.3 billion (26.4 percent).

Figure 2.1 **Annual Employment by Sector, 2009-2019**

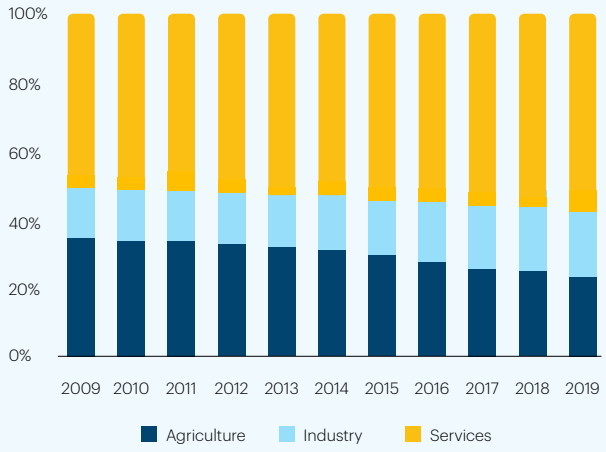
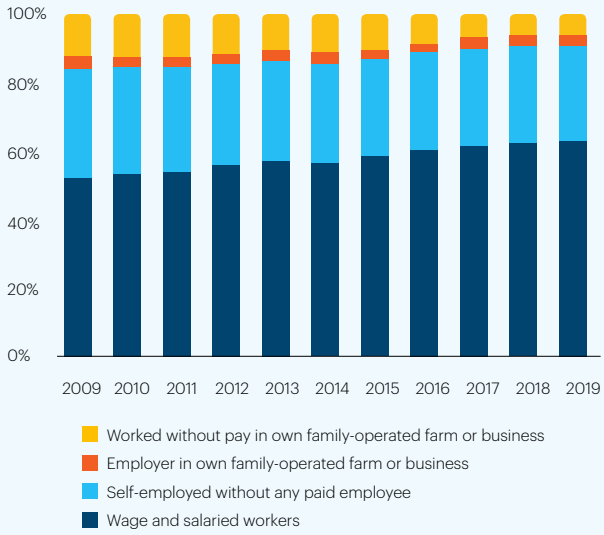


Figure 2.2 **Annual Employment by Status, 2009-2019**

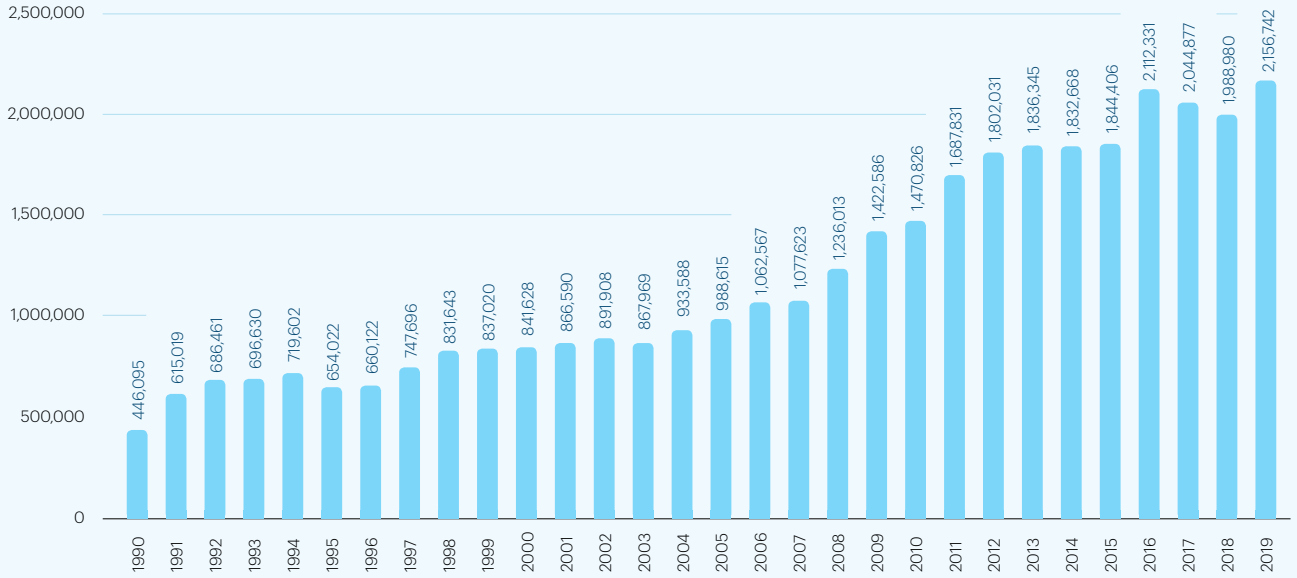


Source Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) - Labor Force Surveys.

importance of nurturing a skilled and competitive workforce and aligning their skills with demand from receiving countries. The number of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) has been increasing massively (Figure 2.3), with the majority heading to various parts of Asia or the Middle East (e.g., Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar). Almost 80 percent of this overseas worker population are land-based, and more than half are employed in elementary occupations, with Household Service Worker as the top occupation. In many cases, sea-based OFWs work in deck occupations (e.g., cooks, waiting staff). Salary and incomes remain the main driver for working overseas.[4] Remittances have greatly increased over time and remained close to 10 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) throughout the 2010s (Figure 2.4).

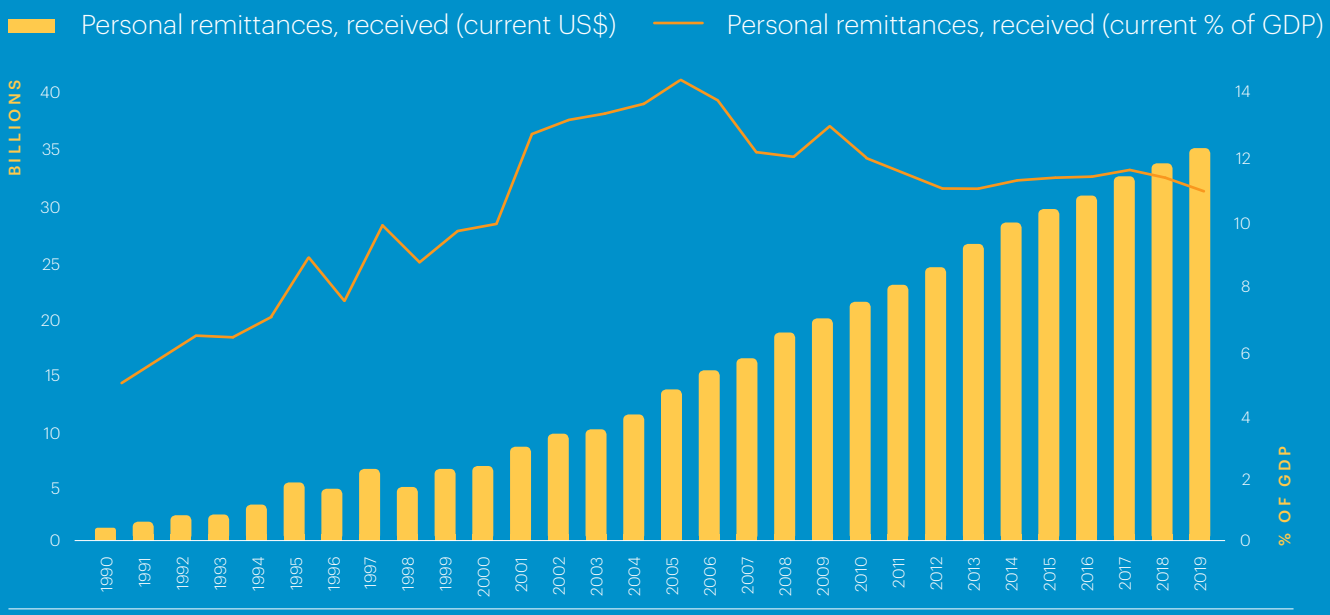
[4] Based on an online survey conducted in 2015 by DOLE and JobStreet.

Figure 2.3 **Annual Deployment of OFWs, 1990-2019**



Source | Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA).

Figure 2.4 **Trends in Remittances and Share of GDP, 1990-2019**

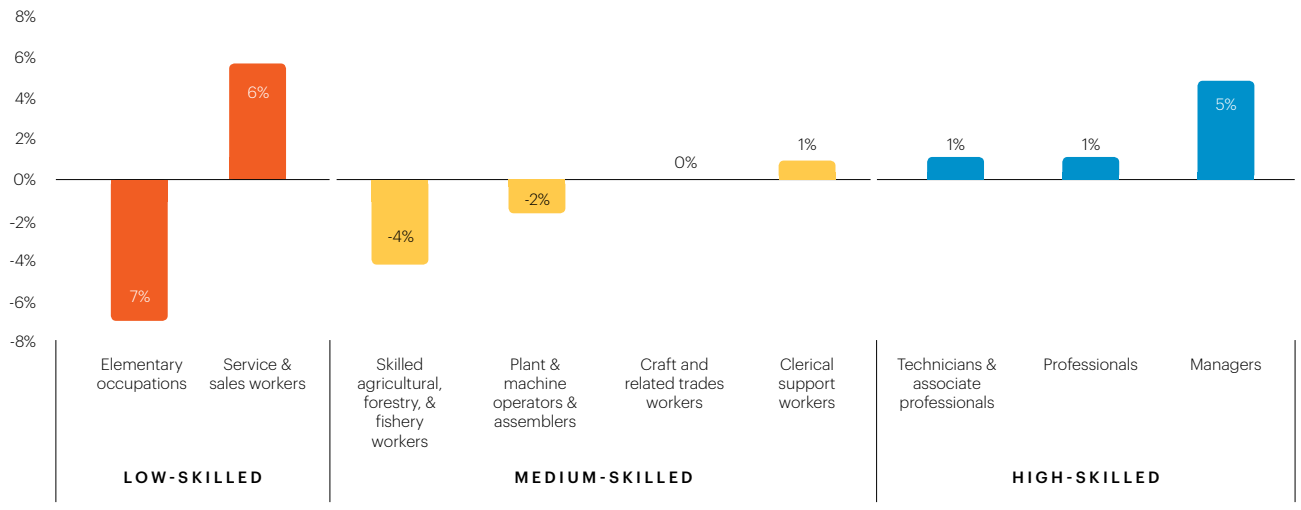


Source | World Development Indicators (WDI).

Despite this robust economic growth and positive developments, worker productivity and skills remain critical challenges requiring policy attention. The share of high-skilled jobs—including technicians, professionals, and managers—increased during 2007–17, while that of elementary occupations and skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers declined (Figure 2.5).[5] In the midst of this overall shift from a low- to a higher-skilled workforce, however, increases in low-skilled services, especially in sales and retail workers, have been prominent.

The share of informal workers, who tend to engage in low productivity jobs in the labor market, is high. Among 42 million workers in the Philippines (based on July 2019 Labor Force Survey), about 27 million (64 percent) workers were in wage employment (Figure 2.6). Relatively less vulnerable were the 11 million wage and salaried workers with monthly incomes and slightly over one million employers with paid employees. The rest can be considered as vulnerable workers, consisting of daily wage earners (12 million) and other wage workers whose payments are per piece, per hour, or commission-based (4 million), as well as own-account workers (12 million) and nonpaid family workers (3 million). Many daily wage workers are concentrated in construction and low-skilled services sectors. Even among wage earners, fewer than a quarter hold jobs working for private firms that provide benefits and access to social insurance (e.g., Social Security System or the Government Social Insurance System).

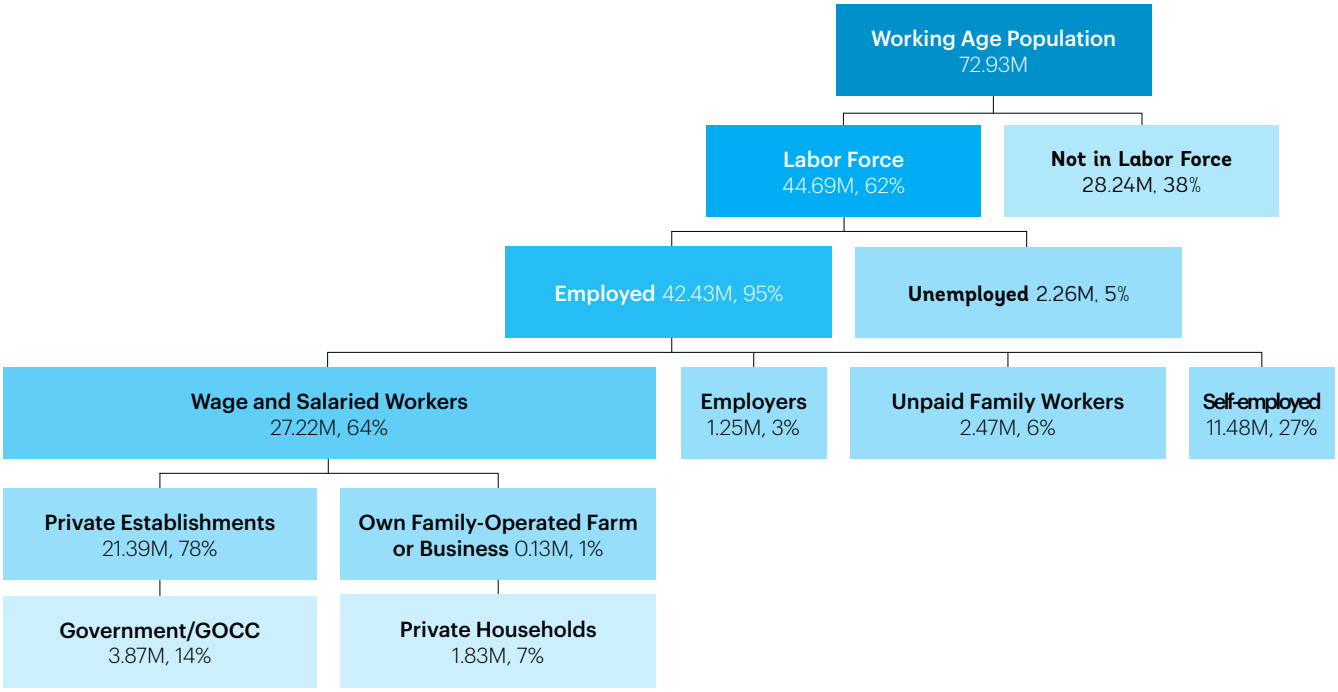
Figure 2.5 **Changes in Share of Jobs by Occupation and Skills Category (in percentage points), 2007 to 2017**

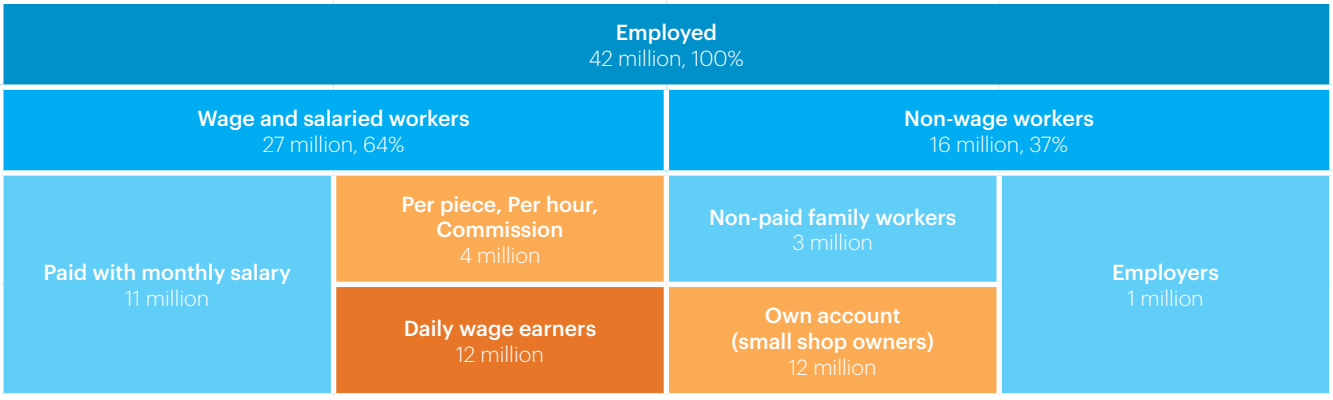


Source | World Bank 2019.

[5] Elementary occupations include the following subcategories: cleaners and helpers; agricultural, forestry and fishery laborers; laborers in mining, construction, manufacturing, and transport; food preparation assistants; street and related sales and services workers; refuse workers; and other elementary workers.

Figure 2.6 **Key Employment Indicators, 2019**





Source | Philippine Statistical Authority – July 2019 Labor Force Survey.

Unlike the typical development pattern for primary workers moving into industry jobs as the economy develops and workers' productivity improves, the Philippine low-skilled workers have moved to low-end informal service sectors. The Philippine pattern reflects stagnant workers' productivity with workers not sufficiently skilled to be absorbed in the industry sector but engaging in low productivity services. Indeed, a recent Integrated Survey on Labor and Employment (ISLE) conducted by the PSA found that one-third of employers' respondents reported that they could not hire employees due to lack of either experience, competency, or skills of job applicants; or professional license or skills certification.

Unfortunately, the expected productivity level of the future workforce in the country appears unpromising. The 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked Filipino students at the bottom of the chart for reading and second lowest for both science and mathematics among 79 participating countries. The PISA results also revealed that socioeconomic status accounts for 18 percent of the variance in reading comprehension in the country. This share among countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is about 12 percent, indicating that the association between learning and income poverty is more significant in the Philippines than in developed countries. The poor performance in the internationally renowned and standardized tests may increase difficulties for Filipino students and workers seeking to carry their technical qualifications or diplomas/degrees to other countries. Also, the lower secondary completion rate is below that of several ASEAN neighbors, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam,[6] whereas high school graduates are often not equipped with the necessary skills demanded by employers (Ortiz et al. 2018). While it is promising that the recent senior high school (SHS) program aims at cultivating capable graduates prepared for jumping into the labor market without a college degree, on the other hand, producing more graduates with a SHS education who lack employable skills would likely worsen the current skills mismatch and high youth unemployment issues in the Philippines.

The global trend of the increasing use of artificial intelligence and robotics, and the changing nature of work, urge to foster the workforce with high skills and non-routine cognitive skills. Elementary occupations, which comprised 26.7 percent of the employed in 2019, represented the largest occupational share in the Philippines. They are followed by service and sales workers (18.4 percent) and skilled agricultural, forestry, and fishery workers (11.8 percent). The PSA defines the work in this occupation group as involving the performance of simple and routine tasks, which may require the use of handheld tools and considerable physical effort. This includes unskilled labor, such as street vendors, construction site workers, cleaners, domestic helpers, and farmhands. The concentration in low-productivity activities presents a challenge, as most of these workers cannot easily be absorbed by high-end employers or have difficulty transitioning to other high-level jobs.

2.2 Education and Skills Policies

With increasing recognition of the importance of boosting worker productivity and mobility, the Government of the Philippines (GoP) has introduced considerable policy reforms in

[6] WDI database.

education and skills development. One of the most critical policy actions in this area in the last decade is the K-12 Law, enacted through Republic Act 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act). Through this reform, compulsory basic education was expanded from 10 years to one year of kindergarten and 12 years (through SHS Grades 11 and 12), supported with substantial increases in public education spending. The K-12 Law made the completion of kindergarten mandatory for enrollment in Grade 1. The enrollment rate of five-year-old in educational institutions increased from 57 percent in 2010 to 84 percent in 2017. At the primary level, enrollment improved even among children in the poorest income quintile (close to 100 percent for those up to age 12 and exceeding 80 percent for those up to age 16). In addition, in June 2016, the two-year SHS program was launched nationwide, admitting 1.5 million Grade 11 students for the first time. Since the program launched, the share of youth not in the labor force who cited schooling as their reason for not looking for work increased by about 9 percentage points (79 percent in 2019 from 70 percent in 2016). The surge in college-educated workers is expected to exert a strong demand for quality work in the labor market, particularly starting in 2022 when the first cohort of SHS graduates finishes tertiary education.

Formal education and TVET are provided by a trifocalized government structure, which consists of the DepEd for basic education, TESDA for TVET, and CHED for higher education (Table 2.1). Basic education, K-12, is provided through a large number of institutions. The completion rates for elementary education are high, indicating the achievement of near-universal primary education, but Junior High School (JHS) and SHS levels show room for enhancing completion rates. The formal TVET is delivered starting from SHS' technical-vocational livelihood (TVL) track and can be continued with enrolment in registered technical vocational institutes (TVI), each of which falls into the DepEd and TESDA jurisdiction. Similarly, the nonformal and informal TVET are governed by TESDA regulations while alternative learning systems are under the purview of the DepEd. With respect to higher education, both general and vocational tracks are provided through higher education institutions under CHED.

Various efforts have been made to increase public spending in skills development and tertiary education programs, expand access to such programs, and facilitate learning progression to improve workforce competencies. A series of landmark laws for skills development and higher education were enacted, contributing to three out of four SHS students, including those in TVL track planning, to proceed to higher education institutions (Ortiz et al. 2018). Some noteworthy legislations are as follows:

- **Ladderized Education Act [Republic Act 10647] of 2014 (and its IRR in 2015)** allows students to enter or exit technical education courses and shift to a college degree program, ensuring that no subject taken or credit incurred will be wasted. Transfers between education and training institutions and programs are enabled, because the PQF provides the ground for assessing and certifying the level of training and education and supports the development of education pathways and skills recognition of learners and workers.

Table 2.1 **Institutional Arrangements on the Philippines' Education and Training System for SY 2019-2020**

Sector (Governing Agencies)	Basic Education (K-12) (DepEd)						Technical Vocational Education (TESDA)	Higher Education (CHED)	
								General	Vocational
Providers	Elementary (Kindergarten + Grade 1-6)	Junior High School (Grade 7-10)	Senior High School****				Public / Private*	Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)	
			Academic	TVL	Sports	Arts & Design			
Number of students enrolled	K-G6 15,332,706 (G6 2,259,667)	Junior HS 8,503,650 (G10 1,824,699)	Grade 12 968,794	Grade 12 516,041	Grade 12 2,477	Grade 12 6,860	Public: 278,595 Private: 139,134 (Jan-Nov 2020)	796,576 (SY 2018-2019)	HEIs: 27,040 State universities and colleges: 9,092 Local colleges and universities: 2,282 (2020)
Completion rate (%)	96.6 percent (K-G6)	85.8 percent (JHS)	N/A				N/A	N/A	N/A
		76.7 percent (both junior and senior high schools)							
Number of institutions	44,916**	1,824***	10,581	7,358	120	247	Public: 429 Private: 3,977 (Jan-Nov 2020)	Public: 667 Private: 1,729 *Includes satellite campus	HEIs: 320 State colleges and universities: 55 Local colleges and universities: 6 *Includes satellite campus (2020)
Examples of non-formal programs	Programs under Alternative Learning Systems (ALS) Basic Literacy Program: 52,008 Elementary Level: 132,128 Secondary Level (up to Grade 10): 575,587						Community-based trainings	Extension programs; certificate courses; and Continuous Professional Development Programs (CPDs)	

Source Notes

CHED, DepEd, and TESDA.
* COVID-19 has affected the non-formal TVET education, with significant declines in the number of graduate students by 75 percent and 87 percent in each public and private Technical and Vocational Institutes (TVIs). Before the pandemic, 1,228,345 and 1,175,090 graduated from public and private TVIs in 2019, respectively.
** Additionally, there are two types elementary schools that are integrated with high school programs: (i) K to Grade 10 = 2,969 and (ii) K to Grade 12 = 3,394.
*** Additionally, there are 7,400 junior high schools combined with SHS programs.
**** There are 1,420 stand-alone SHS, which are responsible for its governing bodies and accrediting.

- **Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education, UniFAST [Republic Act 10687 of 2016]** facilitates affordable tertiary education by consolidating multiple programs and modalities of government-funded Student Financial Assistance Programs.

- **Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act**, also known as the Free Tuition Law [Republic Act 10931], passed in 2017, provides exemptions from tuition for eligible Filipino students in state or local universities or colleges and subsidies to needy students in private higher education institutions (HEIs).

- **Act Instituting a Philippine Labor Force Competencies Competitiveness Program and Free Access to Technical-Vocational Education and Training, or Tulong Trabaho Act [Republic Act 11230]**, passed in 2019, establishes a fund that provides free training fees and additional financial aid, such as transportation allowances for qualified beneficiaries enrolling in selected training programs.

- **Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) under the Rice Tariffication Law [Republic Act 11203]** aids farmers and farm workers registered in the system in attending training programs at field school.

Building on these reforms, the National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP) 2018-2022 was adopted, as approved by Executive Order 83 in June 2019. The NTESDP aims to produce work-ready, globally competitive green-economy workers with 21st-century skills to prepare the Philippine workforce for the challenges and opportunities posed by the fourth industrial revolution.[7] Anchored on the national plan, TESDA also published its TVET PH 4.0 Framework, which presents its recalibrated strategies to address Industrial Revolution 4.0 challenges (e.g., teaching a learner a skill set for a job that may not yet exist today).

2.3 Skills Qualifications Framework

Enhancing the productivity of the Filipino workforce requires a high-quality, effective labor and skills management system, which a well-functioning qualifications framework can help achieve. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines a Qualification Framework as the structure into which accredited qualifications are placed. This allows learners and workers, education and training service providers, employers, and government entities to gain information and a shared understanding of the broad equivalency of qualifications. A qualification framework is cognizant of various modalities of skills development (e.g., formal vs. informal education), different levels of skills even within seemingly similar occupation groups (e.g., nurse practitioner vs. registered nurse), different career tracks and governing and quality assurance entities (e.g., academic tracks under a ministry of education vs. vocational tracks under a skills development authority), and the need for mobility and transferability of skills across different tracks, education and training institutes, workplaces, and regions within the country and beyond borders. It also recognizes the increasing trends of lifelong learning and highlights the importance of measuring and accrediting learning outcomes.

[7] This term – fourth industrial revolution—was coined at the 2016 World Economic Forum, to highlight the impact and consequences of disruptive technologies.

Many countries currently implement the NQF, while the regional qualifications framework (RQF) is becoming increasingly common with the increases in labor mobility. Some countries (e.g., United Kingdom) have multiple qualification frameworks within the country, and a national system aims to provide coherent competency standards across different systems and promote transferability. RQFs facilitate workers' mobility across borders in the region. For instance, the European Qualifications Framework recognizes different education and training systems in each country and aims to provide a tool for comparability in the systems among member countries. Once a member country's NQF is referenced to an RQF, qualifications reflected in the national diplomas or certificates should be translated in other member countries. Due to a historical tie, many Polish migrant workers tend to work in Germany, and both countries' NQFs are referenced to the European Qualification Framework. Thus, the European Qualification Framework as a connector provides a comparison between two countries' qualification levels, as in Table 2.2.

Major building blocks for an NQF or RQF include (i) a policymaking entity with a coordinating body as a secretariat, (ii) technical councils or advisory boards, and (iii) a qualifications framework database or registry. The policymaking entity is responsible for developing, reviewing, updating, and endorsing the relevant qualification frameworks. Throughout the process, the entity is advised by technical councils and experts in various sectors and skills, and coordinates with multiple stakeholders, especially education and training service providers and accreditation authorities. It is also responsible for disseminating the information on the qualifications framework for wide utilization. The qualifications framework registry database is supposed to include education and training institutes, including higher education, credential-issuing expert groups in various sectors, and organizations of trades, which follow the NQF guidelines and standards. The database provides resources for end-users of the qualifications framework, such as learners, jobseekers, and employers. It could serve as a great source for statistics and monitoring related to skills demand, education and training services, and workers' mobility, and as a platform for information exchange among the network of stakeholders.

However, there is no one-size-fits-all system, and each country or economy adapts its framework according to its needs. Strong motivation comes from the need to reduce skills mismatches, to have mechanisms to prove and signal competencies beyond academic credentials, and to recognize skills beyond the schooling and training period toward lifelong learning.

The PQF, as the Philippines' NQF, along with the ongoing education and skills reforms, aims to promote individuals' lifelong learning and their ability to build and present skills credentials by recognizing the adoption of national standards and levels of learning outcomes of education. The PQF is a strong complementary initiative to the K-12 reform as it provides guidance to the skills credentials to the added grades. It should be able to provide a coherent framework for those who went through formal education systems, those who went through alternative learning systems, and those who move from a technical training institute to a university. Ladderized education, skills progression, and efforts to align with international qualifications are also part of the fundamental objectives of PQF. Notably, the referencing of PQF to ASEAN's Qualification Reference Framework (AQRF) could make it easier for Filipinos to enroll in schools or acquire jobs according to their level of skills and credentials in the ASEAN member countries,

thus facilitating academic transfers and employment in the regional labor market.

Table 2.2 **Referencing Poland's and Germany's National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) versus the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)**

Poland	EQF Levels	Germany
NQF Level 8 • Doctoral Diploma • Nonstatutory qualifications • Regulated qualifications • Postgraduate qualifications	**EQF Level 8**	**NQF Level 8** • Doctorate and equivalent artistic degree
NQF Level 7 • Second cycle of higher education diploma • Integrated first- and second-cycle diploma • Nonstatutory qualifications • Regulated qualifications • Post-graduate qualifications	**EQF Level 7**	**NQF Level 7** • Master's degrees and equivalent higher education qualifications ('Diploma' or 'Magister') • Strategic Professional (certified) • Advanced vocational training regulated by Vocational Training Act or Crafts and Trades Regulation Code
Levels 3 to 6 not shown here		
NQF Level 2 • Lower secondary school-leaving certificate • Certificate of professional competence in the profession • Nonstatutory qualifications • Primary school-leaving certificate (8 years)	**EQF Level 2**	**NQF Level 2** • Lower secondary school-leaving certificate • Vocational training preparation • Full-time vocational school for basic training
NQF Level 1 • Nonstatutory qualifications • Primary school-leaving certificate (6 years)	**EQF Level 1**	**NQF Level 1** • Vocational training preparation

Source The European Qualification Framework (https://europa.eu/europass/en/european-qualifications-framework-eqf).

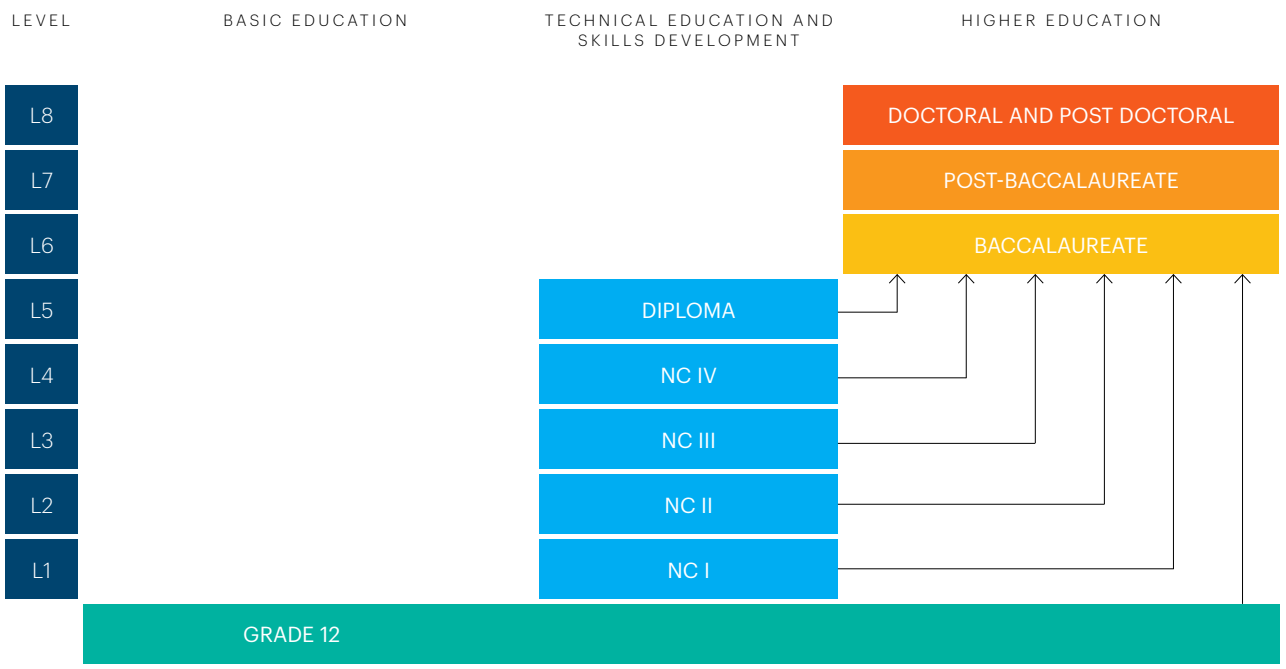
Chapter 3

Philippine Qualifications Framework Review

3.1 Overview of the PQF

The PQF Act states that the PQF describes the levels of educational qualifications and sets the standards for qualification outcomes. It is a quality assured national system for the development, recognition, and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skills, and values acquired in different ways and methods by learners and workers in the country. The PQF defines eight levels of qualification (Figure 3.1) differentiated by descriptors of expected learning outcomes in the three domains of (i) knowledge, skills and values, (ii) application, and (iii) degree of independence. PQF levels 1 to 5 correspond to National Certificates (NC) I-IV and Diploma under TESDA; and PQF Levels 6 to 8 correspond to higher education with degree programs. As discussed above, basic education up to grade 12 is under the oversight of DepEd, and the TESDA and CHED share responsibilities for delivering TVET and higher education. Based on the PQF and Ladderized Education Act, the learning outcomes and credentials (including nonformal and informal education and training) allow for easier transition and progression between TVET and higher education.

Figure 3.1 **The Architecture of PQF**



Source PQF-NCC Resolution No. 2014-03 adopted on December 11, 2014

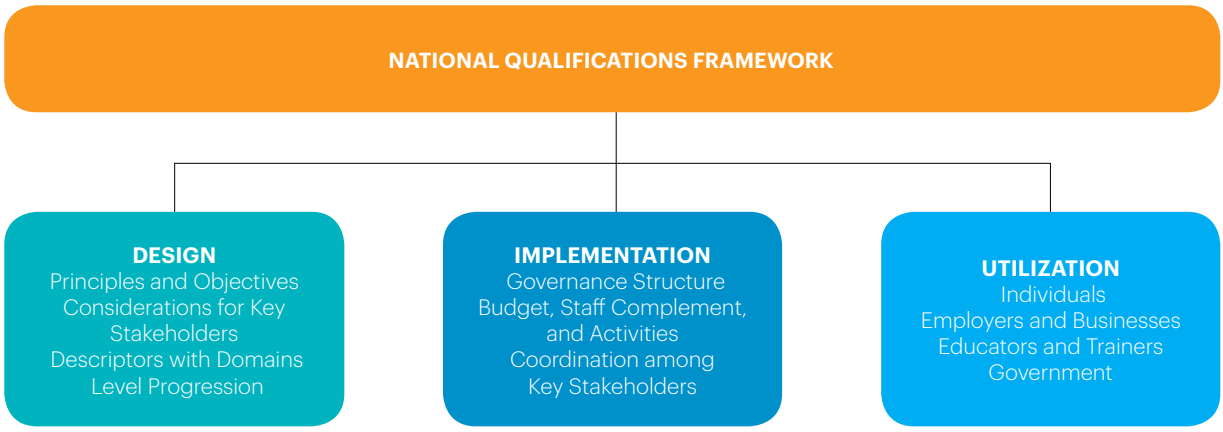
PFQ levels are supported by sub-systems of TESDA and CHED. TESDA is leading the implementation of the first five PQF levels. The existing qualifications, NC levels I through IV, are adapted from the Philippine TVET Qualifications Framework. They are integrated into the PQF, and a new TVET qualification, namely NC level V or Diploma, was added into the PQF as well. Moreover, CHED's subsystem covers degree programs corresponding to PQF Levels 6 to 8. Studies of the labor markets and employment generation as well as major development plans, including the PDP 2017-22 and NTESDP 2018-2022, provided adequate guidance on the development of the qualifications for relevance and appropriateness. Moreover, feedback on new qualification needs from industry associations, professional organizations, and trade and labor unions also played an important role in shaping PQF. For instance, the Comprehensive National Industrial Strategy and Inclusive Innovation-led Industrial Strategy in 2018 also informed the PQF in linking its qualifications to labor market needs, especially in the strategic industry sectors amid the changing world of work.

The two subsystems above "interface" in the provision of Diplomas at Level 5. Level 5 is "referred to as a Diploma in the TVET sector, and also is meant to cover the sub-baccalaureate level of the traditional associate baccalaureate and the Diploma level in TVET for the technologist."[8] The CHED designs the associate degree for Level 5, while the TESDA designs the diploma in the TVET sector for Level 5. Both agencies are collaborating to craft TVET and higher education qualifications in the credit transfer system. The PQF is intended to harmonize and promote seamless training and education qualification systems, incorporating higher level qualifications and PRC's regulated professions into the framework. CHED's adoption of the competency-based learning standards and outcomes-based approach in 2012 built a foundation on higher education aligned with the PQF.

Like other NQFs, the PQF can be assessed as successful if it is found to be satisfactory in all three dimensions of design, implementation, and utilization (Figure 3.2). An NQF should be designed to have clear principles and objectives in line with the governing law and policies; ensure the consistency of qualifications; provide transparency for individuals and employers with more broadly recognized learning forms; and clarify learning pathways and progression. The NQF can then be implemented efficiently and effectively by multiple implementing agencies when their roles, rules, and responsibilities are clearly defined. Enabling policies, adequate budget allocation, and a clear governance structure are important determinants for successful implementation. Ultimately, the active utilization of various stakeholders would be an important factor to measure the impact of an NQF. Individual workers, employers and businesses, and educators and trainers would use the framework only when they find it useful.

[8] AQRF Referencing Report of the Philippines (May 2019). p.44.

Figure 3.2 **Analytical Framework for PQF Review**



Source | World Bank

3.2 Design of the PQF

Overall Principle and Objectives

The key principle of PQF is its focus on learning outcomes and competency, with results reflected in performance at the workplace rather than inputs or modalities of skills development.[9] Thus the learning outcomes and competency should be recognized and transferable for learners and workers regardless of the learning input (e.g., number or duration of courses taken) or skills development modalities (e.g., prior learning through informal training or ALS) (Tuck 2007). Following this principle, the PQF level descriptors, which are essential elements to the NQF, were developed to describe the types and levels of education and TVET outcomes and guide qualification assessments. By facilitating progression among TVET, academic qualifications, and other modalities of skills development under a more interoperable and transferrable system, the PQF is designed to promote both horizontal and vertical pathways throughout an individual's career life. In particular, it is intended to help individuals progress from a TVET certification to a higher academic qualification, severing the notion of TVET being a second-class choice or a trap.

The PQF is adequate concerning its objectives in that it aims to meet the demands of major stakeholders, including the government, individuals, and employers. First, the PQF can support the quality of education and TVET by providing relevance, adequacy, and quality criteria and guiding results indicators and qualifications. Second, with these core functions, the PQF is designed to promote individuals' lifelong career development by allowing both vertical and horizontal pathways among different levels and types of qualifications. For employers, the PQF can serve as a guideline for their companies' human resource management, such as the recruitment, placement, and promotion of workers, as well as wage-setting and on-the-job training. Education and TVET institutions can anchor the PQF in providing high-quality education and training services as well by developing their curricula. Thus,

[9] The PQF's principle of "learning outcomes/competency-based, market-oriented and assessment-based" also shares the primary recommendations that other NQFs manifest. See AQRF Referencing Report of the Philippines (May 2019).

the PQF ultimately can serve as a catalyst for changes toward a more effective human resource development system in the Philippines, enhancing the linkages between education, especially higher education and TVET, and among education, TVET, and the labor market.

The stakeholders survey broadly affirms that the principles and objectives of the PQF are well formulated. A vast majority of the respondents (89 percent) agree that the PQF meets the fundamental purpose of qualification, retaining the relevance and effectiveness of knowledge, skills and values, application, and degree of independence. Concerning the purpose of the PQF, which drives education and training system reforms, 70 percent of the respondents agree that PQF promotes education and training system reforms toward achieving a lifelong learning society.

Level Descriptors with Domains

With respect to PQF's level descriptors, alignment with the principles is critical, as is each domain's clear articulation of the expected learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and qualification standards and a balanced progression from lower to upper levels across all domains (JET Education Services 2017, p. 19). Well-formulated level descriptors are then expected to perform five important functions, as follows (CEDEFOP 2018, pp. 9-10; JET Education Services 2017, p. 10):

- **Classifying and mapping different qualifications** – level descriptors indicate how diverse qualifications of different countries, subsystems, and institutions can be compared and related;[10]
- **Serving as a reference for reviewing and designing qualifications** – level descriptors can be used as a reference to review existing qualifications and design new ones;
- **Serving as a reference for quality assurance** – level descriptors can serve as a reference for cross-examining the quality of qualifications and bringing together disparate education and TVET systems and provisions within a single quality assurance framework;
- **Promoting lifelong learning** – level descriptors indicate how qualifications from different subsystems, including non-formal learning can be linked and promote individual's career development; and
- **Providing information about qualifications** – level descriptors provide information on the 'level and overall orientation of a qualification and its link to other qualifications' that help authorities and institutions check whether 'a qualification meets equivalence requirements.'

As shown in Table 3.1, PQF employs three domains of expected learning outcomes: (i) knowledge, skills and value, (ii) application, and (iii) degree of independence. It is important to have all three domains well-articulated and balanced together to understand the overall progression from lower to higher levels. If a level descriptor is designed in such a way that the progression through the levels of knowledge, skills, and values and application is relatively slow, whereas progression toward independence

[10] "The added value of NQFs depends on their ability to specify levels of learning outcomes" (CEDEFOP 2018, p. 5). The levels of the NQF serve as the reference to which qualifications can be mapped. "PQF levels denominate qualifications in terms of the application to work and/or professional activities of knowledge, skills and attitudes and the degree of independence allowed in the application" (AQRF Referencing Report of the Philippines, May 2019. p. 45).

of work advances more rapidly, the qualification framework is not appropriately designed to provide standards for assessing and granting qualifications. Also, if qualifications are not distinguishable between different levels, the design should be revisited.

Three-quarters of the respondents confirm that PQF is adequately designed in the level descriptors, but applicability in the field is not tested yet. The review finds that level descriptors address existing requirements of industries, academia, and government and thus are in line with the principle. They clearly distinguish between levels and three domains within the level. Also, the respondents assess that PQF level descriptors do reflect the changing needs of skills, knowledge, and application. However, they note that the feasibility of implementation and utilization of the level descriptors has yet to be seen. The review also found that it is essential to provide a more detailed definition and explanation on each of the level descriptors of the three domains with a clearer description of vertical linkages among the eight levels. Practitioners point out that awareness among implementers is low and note that a guide booklet or a manual would help to provide more detailed guidelines on how to interpret and translate level descriptors of the three domains into education and TVET curricula, qualification standards, and assessment tools with examples.

Table 3.1 **PQF Domains and Descriptors**

Level	Qualification Type	Knowledge, Skills, and Values	Application	Degree of Independence
Grade 12		Possess functional knowledge across a range of learning areas and technical skills in chosen career tracks with advanced competencies in communication; scientific, critical, and creative thinking; and the use of technologies. Have an understanding of right and wrong; an understanding of one's history and cultural heritage; and a deep respect for self, others and their culture, and the environment.	Apply functional knowledge, technical skills and values in academic and real-life situations through sound reasoning, informed decision-making, and the judicious use of resources.	Apply skills in varied situations with minimal supervision.
I	National Certificate I	Knowledge and skills that are manual or concrete or practical and/or operational in focus.	Applied in activities that are set in a limited range of highly familiar and predictable contexts; involve straightforward, routine issues which are addressed by following set rules, guidelines or procedures.	In conditions where there is very close support, guidance or supervision; minimum judgment or discretion is needed.
II	National Certificate II	Knowledge and skills that are manual, practical and/or operational in focus with a variety of options.	Applied in activities that are set in a range of familiar predictable context; involve routine issues that are identified and addressed by selecting from and	In conditions where there is substantial support, guidance

Level	Qualification Type	Knowledge, Skills, and Values	Application	Degree of Independence
			following a number of set rules, guidelines or procedures.	or supervision; limited judgment or discretion is needed.
III	National Certificate III	Knowledge and skills that are a balance of theoretical and/ or technical and practical. Work involves understanding the work process, contributing to problem solving, and making decisions to determine the process, equipment and materials to be used.	Applied in activities that are set in contexts with some unfamiliar or unpredictable aspects; involve routine and non-routine issues that are identified and addressed by interpreting and/ or applying established guidelines or procedures with some variations.	Application at this level may involve individual responsibility or autonomy, and/ or may involve some responsibility for others. Participation in teams, including team or group coordination, may be involved.
IV	National Certificate IV	Knowledge and skills that are mainly theoretical and/or abstract with significant depth in one or more areas; contributing to technical solutions of a non-routine or contingency nature; evaluation and analysis of current practices and the development of new criteria and procedures.	Applied in activities that are set in a range of contexts, most of which involve a number of unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects; involve largely non-routine issues that are addressed using guidelines or procedures that require interpretation and/or adaptation.	Work involves some leadership and guidance when organizing activities for self and others.
V	Diploma	Knowledge and skills that are mainly theoretical and/or abstract, with significant depth in some areas, together with wide-ranging, specialized technical, creative, and conceptual skills. Perform work activities demonstrating breadth, depth, and complexity in the planning and initiation of alternative approaches to skill and knowledge applications across a broad range of technical and/ or management requirements, evaluation and coordination.	Applied in activities that are supervisory, complex, and non-routine which require an extensive interpretation and/or adaptation/ innovation.	In conditions where there is broad guidance and direction, where judgment is required in planning and selecting appropriate equipment, services, and techniques for self and others. Undertake work involving participation in the development of strategic initiatives, as well as personal responsibility and autonomy in performing complex technical operations or organizing others.
VI	Baccalaureate Degree	Demonstrated broad and coherent knowledge and skills in their field of study for professional work and lifelong learning*	Applied in professional/ creative work or research in a specialized field of discipline and/or further study.	Substantial degree of independence and or/ in teams of related fields with minimal supervision.
VII	Post-Baccalaureate Program	Demonstrated advanced knowledge and skills in a specialized or multi-disciplinary field of study for professional practice, self-directed	Applied in professional/ creative work or research that requires self-direction and/or leadership in	High substantial degree of independence that involves the exercise of leadership and initiative,

Level	Qualification Type	Knowledge, Skills, and Values	Application	Degree of Independence
		research and/or lifelong learning*	specialized or multi-disciplinary professional work/research.	as individual work or in multi-disciplinary teams.
VIII	Doctoral Degree and Post-Doctoral Programs	Demonstrated highly advanced systematic knowledge and skills in a highly specialized and/or complex multi-disciplinary field of learning for complex research and/or professional practice and/or for the advancement of learning*	Applied for professional leadership for innovation, research and/or development management in a highly specialized or multi-disciplinary field.	Full independence in individual work and/or in teams of a multi-disciplinary nature or more complex setting, which demands leadership for research and creativity for strategic value added. Significant level of expertise-based autonomy and accountability.

based on PQF-NCC Resolution No. 2014-01 adapted on July 22, 2014.

Source | PQF website.

Level Progression

While each level descriptor for the first domain is well defined, the entire level progression lacks clear distinction and continuity. The review delves deeper into the appropriateness of level descriptors by each domain with a methodology used by JET Education Services (2017).[11] For the first domain, the review adopts a revised Bloom's taxonomy to assess knowledge and cognitive processing. Knowledge is disaggregated into factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge.[12] Table 3.2 presents how the knowledge requirements in the first domain of the PQF increase in complexity from lower to higher levels. Overall, each level descriptor captures the degree of complexity relatively well, demonstrating the changes of key concepts of knowledge in terms of (i) depth, breadth, and complexity and (ii) types and applications according to level. Although it is implausible to have an unambiguous progression across all levels by three domains, still some levels of each domain categorized into the same taxonomy dimension need to be more clearly distinguished. In that sense, it is not clear whether all eight levels of knowledge lie in a continuum with equal grades of distinction separating them[13] that can be easily identified and understood. Specifically, the distinctions between levels 1

[11] See JET Education Services (Jan. 2017) for the methodology used to assess Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) for the analytic review of level descriptors. The method was also used for the analysis of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level descriptors and NQF level descriptors of European countries (CEDEFOP 2018). Although the domains of the SADC RQF do not precisely match those of the PQF, the methodology used for the analysis of level descriptors of the SADC RQF can be adopted to analyze the PQF level descriptors. The first domain of the PQF corresponds to the knowledge domain, the second domain of the PQF corresponds to the skills domain, and the third domain of the PQF corresponds to the autonomy and responsibility domain of the SADC RQF.

[12] Factual knowledge means the basic elements students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in it; conceptual knowledge means interrelationships among the basic elements within a larger structure that enable them to function together; procedural knowledge means knowledge of how to do something, of methods of inquiry, and of criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques, and methods; and metacognitive knowledge means cognition in general as well as awareness of one's cognition.

[13] The magnitude of the progress of level descriptors from one level to the next needs to be clear enough to be distinguished.

Table 3.2 **Knowledge Dimension in the First Domain (Adopting a Revised Bloom's Taxonomy)**

PQF – Knowledge Dimension in the First Domain	Knowledge Dimension			
	Factual Knowledge	Conceptual Knowledge	Procedural Knowledge	Metacognitive Knowledge
Level 8				x
Level 7				x
Level 6			x	x
Level 5		x	x	
Level 4		x	x	
Level 3		x	x	
Level 2	x			
Level 1	x			

Note (i) factual knowledge: basic elements students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in it; (ii) conceptual knowledge: interrelationships among the basic elements within a larger structure that enable them to function together; (iii) procedural knowledge: how to do something, methods of inquiry, and criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques, and methods; (iv) metacognitive knowledge: knowledge of cognition in general as well as awareness of one's cognition.

Source JET Education Services 2017, p.29.

and 2 and between levels 3, 4, and 5 appear unclear. This implies that the PQF–NCC needs to develop guidelines on how the eight levels of knowledge can be differentiated from each other so that practitioners can accurately utilize the PQF descriptors for developing curricula and qualification standards.

Similarly, Table 3.3 illustrates how the level of the cognitive process dimension increases along lower to higher levels. The cognitive process is disaggregated into remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating[14] that correspond to various skills and values. Progression of the level increase is relatively well captured in the PQF, whereas there is a lack of distinction between levels 4, 5, and 6, as in the knowledge dimension.

For the application domain, this review adopts the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes (SOLO) method as in the JET Education Services (2017) (Table 3.4) (Biggs and Collis 1982). The SOLO levels capture the progression of the application level between PQF levels 1 and 5 well, but the differences between levels 5 and 8 are unclear. For example, levels 8 and 7, both require the competencies of leading and managing teams or work organization, describe 'professional leadership' and 'leadership' required, respectively, but those two terms are hard to distinguish. In addition, current application level descriptors that define learners' competency only based on their learning in schools or TVET institutions may fail to fully capture post-school employment situations (e.g., internship programs, apprenticeship programs,

[14] Remembering refers to retrieving, recognizing and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory; understanding refers to constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining; applying refers to carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing; analyzing refers to breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts related to one another and an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing; evaluating refers to making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing; and creating refers to elements together to form a coherent or functional whole, reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning or producing.

Table 3.3 **Cognitive Process Dimension in the First Domain (Adopting a Revised Bloom's Taxonomy)**

PQF – Cognitive Process Dimension in the First Domain	Cognitive Process Dimension					
	Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Level 8						x
Level 7						x
Level 6				x	x	
Level 5				x	x	
Level 4				x	x	
Level 3		x	x			
Level 2	x					
Level 1	x					

Note The six Cognitive Process Dimensions are (i) remembering: retrieving, recognizing and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory: (ii) understanding: constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining; (iii) applying: carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing; (iv) analyzing: breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts related to one another and an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing; (v) evaluating: making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing; (vi) creating: putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole, reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning or producing.

Source JET Education Services (2017), p.30.

Table 3.4 **Application Domain Adopting the Structure of Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO) Method**

PQF – Application Domain	SOLO Levels				
	Pre-structural	Uni-structural	Multi-structural	Relational	Extended abstract
Level 8					x
Level 7					x
Level 6					x
Level 5					x
Level 4				x	
Level 3				x	
Level 2			x		
Level 1		x			

Note The five SOLO levels are: (i) pre-structural (no relevance): fail, incompetent, misses the point; (ii) unit-structural (one relevant aspect): identify, name, follow simple procedure; (iii) multi-structural (several relevant independent aspects): combine, describe, enumerate, perform serial skills, list; (iv) relational (integration into a structure): analyze, apply, argue, compare/contrast, criticize, explain causes, relate, justify; and (v) extended abstract (generalization to a new domain): create, formulate, generate, hypothesize, reflect, theorize.

Source JET Education Services (2017), p. 32.

and practical training, along with recognition of prior learning and current competence). Thus, it is more appropriate to consider contexts in which students and workers apply knowledge and skills through a wide range of learning opportunities earned both in schools and workplaces so that the application of knowledge and skills is assessed appropriately.

For the independence-of-work domain, the Dreyfus model of skills acquisition is used to analyze the autonomy and responsibility domain. The Dreyfus model of skills acquisition assumes skills formation based on instruction and practice, categorizing learners into novices and those with competency, proficiency, expertise, and mastery. Table 3.5 shows that this domain appears to be relatively well developed, with a smooth increase in the complexity, breadth, and depth of the level of independence of work from levels 1 to 8. Still, there is room to be more straightforward between levels 1 and 2, between levels 3 and 4, between levels 5 and 6, and between levels 7 and 8. Levels 7 and 8 qualifications require 'leadership' that can influence the performance of a team or organization in line with the 'leadership' requirement in the domain of application.

Putting all these together, the PQF descriptors by three domains do not progress uniformly across all levels, raising a critical question: Is the current 8 level structure appropriate to distinguish the qualifications levels of the three domains? It might be arbitrary or artificial to have an eight-level structure in some domain(s) in the Philippines' labor market situation, considering actual demands for the three domains' competencies. In the current PQF design, if a university would develop a new college qualification, the academic curricula would need to meet the PQF level 6 descriptors in all three domains, requiring students also to have a qualification of level 5 in all three

Table 3.5 **Degree of Independence Domain, Following the Dreyfus Model of Skills Acquisition**

PQF- Degree of Independence Domain	Dreyfus Levels				
	Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert
Level 8					x
Level 7					x
Level 6				x	
Level 5				x	
Level 4		x	x		
Level 3		x			
Level 2	x				
Level 1	x				

Note The Dreyfuss model has five levels: (i) novice: has an incomplete understanding, approaches tasks mechanically and needs supervision to complete them; (ii) advanced beginner: has a working understanding, tends to see actions as a series of steps, can complete simpler tasks without supervision; (iii) competent: has a good working and background understanding, sees actions as least partly in context, able to complete work independently to a standard that is acceptable, though it may lack refinement; (iv) proficient: has a deep understanding, sees actions holistically, can achieve a high standard routinely; (v) expert: has an authoritative or deep holistic understanding, deals with routine matters intuitively, able to go beyond existing interpretations, achieves excellence with ease.

Source JET Education Services (2017), p.31.

dimensions. However, depending on the college course or program, that requirement may not be feasible. As will be further discussed below, feasibility needs to be investigated, and based on the field experience, there is room to revise and update the level descriptors.

The Status of Senior High School Qualification

The PQF recognizes the importance of completing basic education (Grade 12) as the foundation level. This means that it is critical to ensure that all SHS graduates do have a foundational level of knowledge, skills, and values and core competencies required to acquire at least the PQF level 1 qualification of the three domains, regardless of the tracks chosen. If SHS was not accountable for providing quality education, the foundation for PQF would be weak and unsustainable. As has been well recognized in the 2018 PISA results and other studies, the academic competence of 15-year old Filipino students has been assessed to be much lower than both the OECD average and the average of other Asian countries. This highlights that the quality of basic education, particularly SHS, needs to be enhanced. Related to the quality issue, some survey respondents expressed the need for qualified and well-trained SHS teachers as well as sufficient facilities and equipment, especially for resources related to TVL qualifications like automotive servicing and machining. It is thus necessary to examine whether the secondary school exit exam guarantees the competencies of graduates corresponding to the level descriptors.

There is a lack of clarity in the newly added SHS TVL track (Grades 11 and 12) in the PQF framework. Completion of the TVL programs provides a pathway to NCs I and II (equivalent to levels 1 and 2) with an option for the Baccalaureate course (PQF level 5) if desired, while other graduates are not assigned to any level of PQF. The strands included in the TVL track are agri-fishery arts, home economics, industrial arts, and information and communications technology (ICT), mostly following a TVET curriculum. Also, the notion of basic education as a foundation level in the PQF structure unintentionally excludes those individuals who have dropped out of school, if workers with NC levels 1 to 4 are at least Grade 12 completers. These observations may call for a more flexible application of the PQF levels. The DepEd responsible for basic education currently proposes to place the JHS certificate or SHS diploma at PQF levels 1 and 2, respectively.

Possible Consideration for Professional Qualifications in PQF Levels 6 to 8

The PQF levels are driven mainly by academic degrees, not fully reflecting professional qualifications that require years of experience or complexity of practice. Academic and professional qualifications are separate and academic degree programs alone would not capture professional qualification standards. While academic qualifications reflect one's knowledge and understanding of a theory and some ability to apply that knowledge independently, they do not adequately certify an individual's adaptability in real-life situations or a changing environment.

The current PQF design may overlook hands-on experience and qualifications, such as the professional occupations required for licensing. For example, to become a licensed architect in the Philippines, a graduate of a five-year Bachelor of Science (BS) in Architecture degree program needs to pass the Architectural Licensure Examination with experience of

practicing, equivalent to the Master of Art (MA) or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree levels. However, in the current PQF level structure, one remains a BS degree holder without recognizing the license or experience of practicing. Alternatively, the PQF levels 7 and 8 could consider including professional qualifications in addition to the MA and Ph.D. degrees. The advantage of including those would be for the PQF to be able to reflect the national training and education system of "the Philippines' Career Progressions and Specializations Programs" currently being prepared by the PRC, and vice versa, for establishing equivalency. Adding the professional track would also align well with other international standards. In Hong Kong, the Professional Diploma/Certificate and Advanced Diploma/Certificate are placed at levels 4 to 6 (Box 3.1). Singapore's Working Skills Qualifications (SWSQ) system, which comprises six levels of occupation-based qualifications, also accommodates professional and specialist jobs at the levels of Specialist Diploma and Graduate Certificate/Diploma.

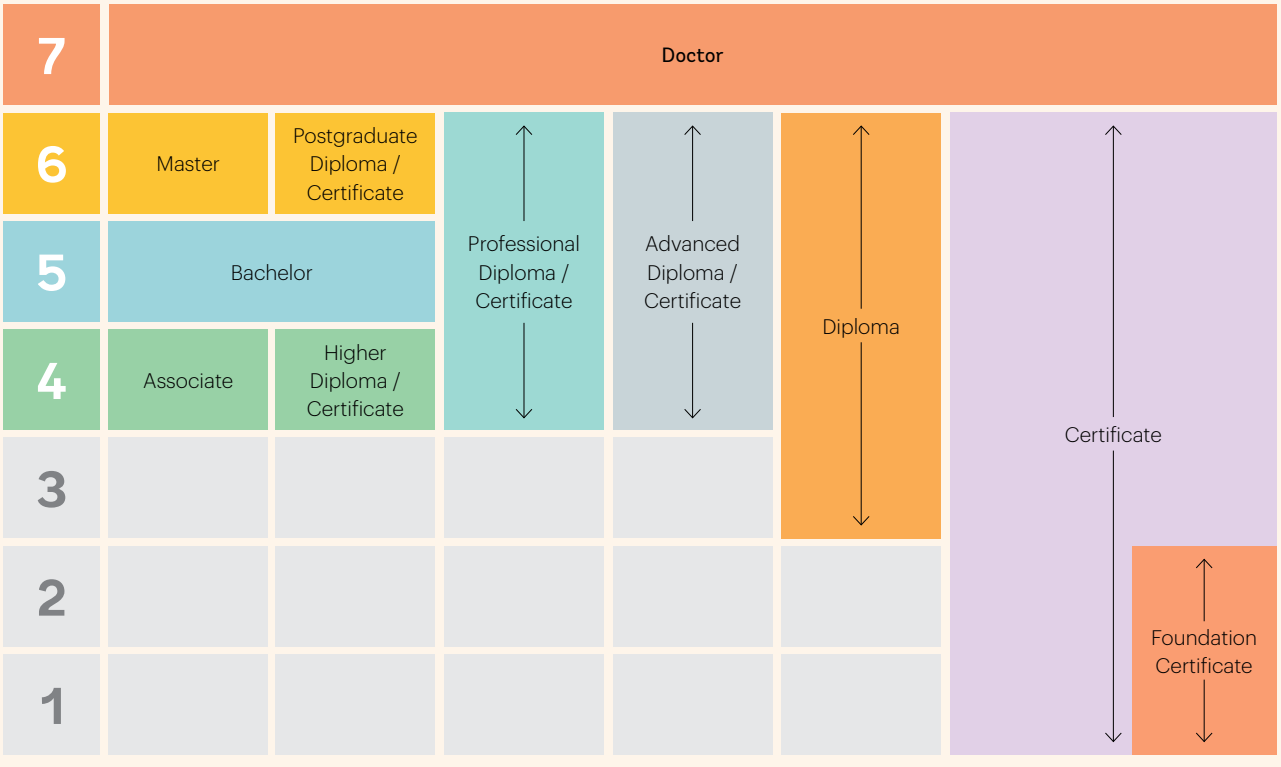
3.3 Implementation of the PQF

Governance Structure

The establishment of PQF-NCC, technical working Group (TWG) and working groups (WGs), and a permanent Secretariat constitute the overall structure of PQF governance. The PQF-NCC, composed of key agencies in education, skills, and workforce competency, is central to ensuring adequate design, implementation, and utilization of PQF. Given the multitude of education and training and quality assurance systems implemented by

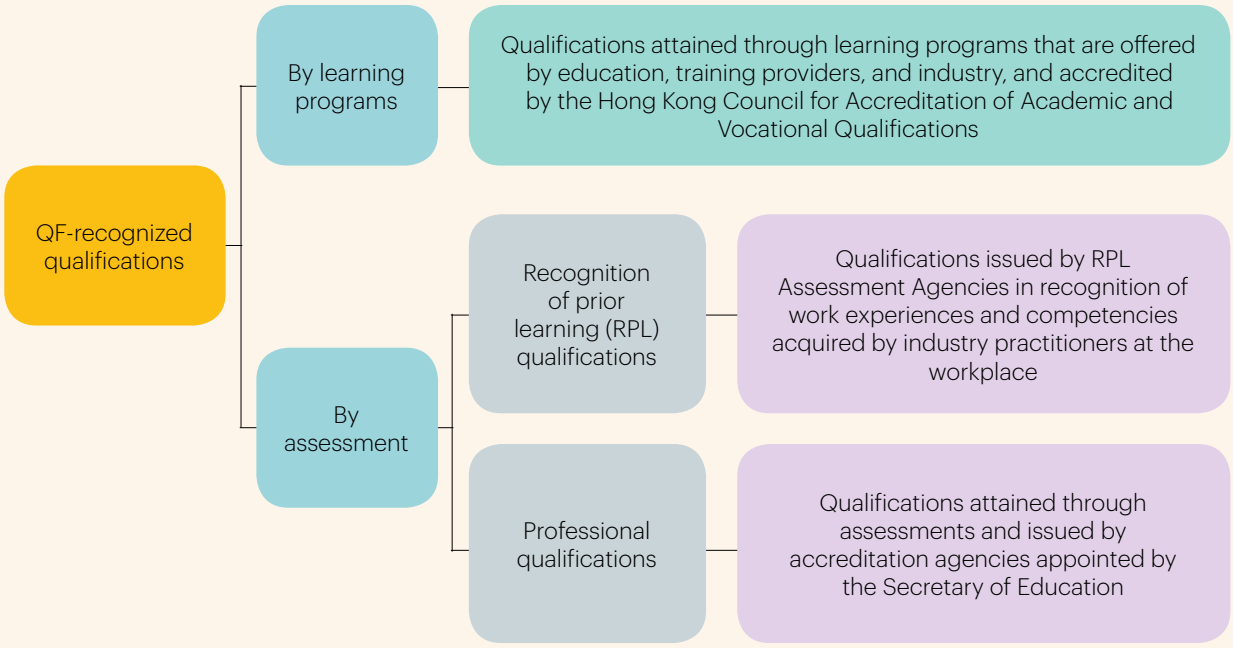
Box 3.1 **Recognition of Professional Qualifications under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF)**

Figure 3B.1 **Choice of Award Titles for Different Levels**



The HKQF is consisted of a seven-level hierarchy covering qualifications in the academic, vocational, and professional, as well as continuing education and training sectors. Professional qualifications have been recognized under the HKQF since 2018, along with learning programs and recognition of prior learning qualifications, as shown in Figure 3B.1. The rationale is to acknowledge the importance of the assessments that could be made available to the workforce for related professional qualifications.

Figure 3B.2 **Qualifications Framework–Recognized Qualifications Channels in the HKQF System**



Professional qualifications are attained through assessments and issued by accredited agencies that the Secretary of Education appoints (Figure 3B.2). Eligible organizations may apply to become assessment agencies for issuing professional qualifications under the HKQF. Currently, there are three agencies selected for professional qualifications assessment: Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants; Marine Department of the Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region; and Hong Kong Institute of Bankers.

To have their professional qualifications assessed, individuals need to meet all of the following criteria: (i) the requisite academic qualifications; (ii) prescribed years of industry or professional experience; and (iii) passing of a robust assessment in a written or practical format.

Source Hong Kong Qualifications Framework website.

individual agencies, the PQF-NCC's leadership is particularly critical to ensure a harmonized approach for the country's qualifications agenda. The powers and functions of the PQF-NCC are comprehensively covered in Section 5 of the PQF Act and its IRR (Box 3.2). Established in 2012, the PQF-NCC has made significant strides in strengthening the design of PQF, preparing for its implementation, coordinating among stakeholders, and raising awareness among potential users. TESDA, as the PQF-NCC's Interim Secretariat, has been leading and supporting the institutionalization of TWG and its WGs for PQF's implementation.

Despite a relatively clear set of roles and responsibilities, PQF-NCC's activities have been limited so far, mainly due to less clear rules on staff complement and budget to execute the PQF tasks and related rules

to manage the resources. For any entity to effectively accomplish its functions, it has to have a clear specification of roles and responsibilities. Along with that, it needs human resources, a budget to execute the tasks, and related rules to govern them. For PQF-NCC, a broad set of roles and responsibilities have already been defined, but specific rules related to both staff complement and budget execution fall short. The establishment of a permanent PQF-NCC Secretariat and the formation of the PQF-NCC and its WGs have not been fully completed. The delay is related to the lack of rules granting the practical authority of personnel administration (e.g., appointment and placement of staff) and guiding specific activities.

The composition and membership of PQF-NCC have not been formed as specified under Section 5 of the PQF Act (and Section 9 of its IRR). In particular, the inclusion of representatives from the economic and industrial sectors has to be sorted out given the requirement of their inclusion. The GoP has been working closely with the private sector through the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and other employer associations. Sectors that require vocational skills, such as construction, information technology – business process management (IT-BPM), food processing, and supply chain, have contributed to developing and refining the SHS curriculum to align with industry requirements. However, implementing PQF has not been the highest priority for the industry sector. Some industry representatives in the key informant interviews mentioned other demanding priorities and challenges, including labor regulations and practices such as ENDO (i.e., "end of contract" or hiring of workers based on short-term contracts below six months to avoid payment of social benefits and fees which come with regularizing workers), the viability of TVET, and relations with labor unions, among others. Similarly, Section 6 of the PQF Act (and IRR Sections 20-22) addresses each WG's functions and lead agency (Table 3.6), but the process of constituting all WGs has yet to be completed.

Budget, Staff Complement, and Activities

The operationalization of the PQF Act requires a concrete and coordinated financing plan by the CHED, TESDA, and DepEd. The PQF Act

Box 3.2 **Powers and Functions of the PQF-NCC**

- Harmonize qualification levels across basic, technical-vocational, and higher education;
- Align education standards and learning outcomes with the level descriptors contained in the PQF;
- Promote the PQF and its elements, including the principles, key features, definitions or terminologies, structure, and governance arrangements, and provide information and guidelines on the implementation of the PQF;
- Rationalize the quality assurance mechanisms in Philippine education;
- Develop and recognize pathways and equivalencies;
- Maintain a national registry of qualifications to ensure the international alignment of the PQF with the qualification frameworks of other countries or regions;
- Create technical working groups in support of the development and implementation of the PQF;
- Represent the country in international fora or negotiations in line with qualifications agreements or arrangements; to review and update the PQF;
- Submit to the Office of the President, the Senate of the Philippines, and the House of Representatives an updated report on the progress and accomplishments in relation to the PQF; and
- Perform such other functions that may be related to the implementation of the PQF.

Source Section 5 of the PQF Act

and its IRR provide the legal foundation for the PQF financing, but to date no budget has been allocated for PQF-NCC and its TWG and WGs. Indeed, the Act does not prescribe budget allocation or execution for the PQF-NCC and the TWGs regarding PQF implementation. The law specifies that an "amount necessary for the initial implementation of the PQF Act shall be sourced from the current budgets of the CHED, TESDA, and DepEd. Thereafter the funds necessary for the continuous implementation of the Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act." It is up to each individual agency, coordinating through the PQF-NCC, to

Table 3.6 **PQF-NCC Working Groups**

Working Group	Lead Agency	Functions
Qualification Register	TESDA	• Provides information to employers, trainers and trainees on education and training opportunities, licensure and assessment, and certification services in professional and skilled qualifications; • Maintains/updates the database of professional and skilled qualifications; • Provides regular, timely data/information to the Technical Secretariat; • Coordinates/harmonizes agency databases on the registry of qualifications
Quality Assurance	CHED	• Develops PQF quality procedures manuals • Facilitates the conduct of evaluation and compliance audits/reviews vis-à-vis set standards; • Provides recommendations to the NCC based on the results of the evaluation
Pathways and Equivalencies	CHED	• Establishes equivalency pathways and equivalency system for seamless education transfer and/or progression between education levels corresponding to the PQF levels; • Develops a National System of Credit Transfer; • Facilitates the enhancement and adoption of the Ladderized Education Program consistent with the PQF
Information and Guidelines	DepEd*	• Develops information, education and communication (IEC) materials to promote and advocate PQF; • Formulates guidelines, circulars and policy issuances for the approval of the NCC
International Alignment	PRC	• Conducts research/studies for comparability/benchmarking of Philippine qualifications with other countries and regional/international groupings; • Coordinates with professional organizations in the pursuit of mutual recognition arrangements/ agreements
Government-Industry-Education Sector	DOLE and TESDA	• Facilitate coordination and linkages among government, industry, and the education sector and academic/research community on cross-cutting issues toward making PQF responsive and relevant to the broader economy and society
Lifelong Learning	DepEd and TESDA	• Initiate research studies, consultations, and pilot programs for the recognition of lifelong learning within the PQF; • Compile and disseminate information on lifelong learning through databases, conferences, and symposia.

Note

PQF Act (Section 6) and its IRR (Rule IV Sections 20-21) specify these seven WGs with their functions and composition. Section 6 of the PQF Act states the establishment of the PQF-NCC WGs to "pursue the implementation of the PQF." Section 20 of the IRR of the PQF Act enumerates the seven WGs, namely: Qualification Register, Quality Assurance, Pathways and Equivalencies, Information and Guidelines, International Alignment, Government-Industry-Education Sector, and Lifelong Learning. According to Section 21 of the IRR, the WGs shall consist of "designated representatives of the respective members of the PQF-NCC and other relevant stakeholders and experts and each WG shall be chaired by a member-agency as designated by the PQF-NCC." Section 22 of the IRR states that "the WGs shall develop their respective workplans and targets aligned to their mandates and prepare the corresponding budget for approval and inclusion in the overall budget for PQF implementation."

* Currently, the DepEd sits as the interim head of the WG, the permanent head is still to be identified once the PQF Permanent Secretariat has been established.

set aside a task team and budget and to initiate PQF-specific activities. Planning concrete action items with medium- to long-term goals for the PQF and securing the funds will likely help accelerate the operationalization of the PQF, including carrying out activities for awareness campaigns, capacity-building workshops, and curriculum revisions. The endowment fund that HKQF adopted could be a solution, where a dedicated QF Fund was established to support the sustainable development and implementation of QF in 2014.[15]

Specific activities, budget, and staff complement for PQF should be devoted for the PQF-NCC and its Secretariat. Although the PQF Act states the functions of the PQF-NCC, there are no specific rules and regulations on the activities of the PQF-NCC related to those functions and their budget, and there is no comprehensive strategic plan. The consequence is that representatives of each agency in the PQF-NCC, TWGs and WGs work for the PQF agenda in addition to their regular workload and assignments in their own agencies. The situation is the same for TESDA, which plays a role as an Interim Secretariat for the PQF-NCC. The review confirms that it is critical to establish a separate Permanent Secretariat for the PQF-NCC, as stated in Sections 19 and 24 of the IRR of the PQF Act, with members equipped with the expertise in the PQF agenda to support the PQF-NCC and with authority to execute the budget.

WGs, intended to facilitate the operation and development of rules and regulations governing the budget and activities for specific technical areas of PQF, are not fully functional as envisaged. The WG's activities so far tend to heavily rely on the respective chairs' discretion without clear workplan or guidelines. While lead WG lead agencies have been identified, the composition of members of each WG should be agreed on, including which of them will provide the information on budget requirements.

Stakeholder Coordination and Collaboration

To effectively implement the PQF, it is essential to have well-performing collaboration and coordination mechanisms among the PQF-NCC WGs and key agencies. While the importance and potential of a PQF governance system to contribute to coordination and cooperation among key stakeholders are well recognized, other areas need to be strengthened (Box 3.3). For example, an essential function of the PQF is to promote vertical pathways from TVET institutions to universities and linkage mechanisms from Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to NCs and even to a university degree, and this requires that coordination be institutionalized by law, rules, and regulations among TESDA and CHED. The linkages across different education and training systems and the mechanisms to carry forward recognition and credits all need to be enhanced.

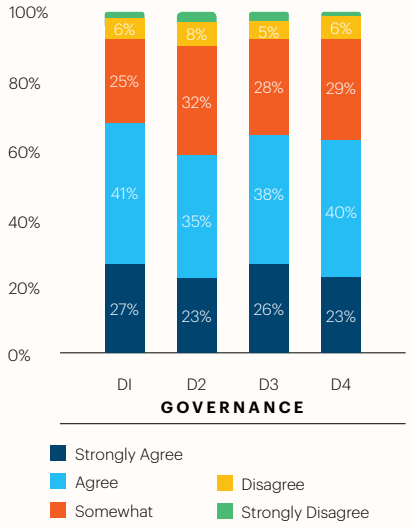
The Philippines can explore the option of establishing permanent independent governance or secretariat to effectively manage the PQF to ensure close coordination in implementing the PQF among key stakeholders. There is no single solution, and it is not uncommon to face this coordination difficulty between qualifications across sectors and between the agencies responsible for these qualifications. Most Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies do indeed have multiple agencies responsible for the accreditation, award, and quality assurance

[15] The QF Fund of US$1 billion was initially established, and in 2018, an additional US$12 billion was further allocated.

of qualifications, with an increasing effort to achieve alignment of qualifications (APEC 2009). Malaysia's governance system to manage the Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF) appears to be similar to that of the Philippines in its intention and functions, with significant maturity. In contrast, the Australian system reflects its policy trials of implementing its qualification through a single entity -- the Department of Education, Skills and Employment -- without an independent NQF agency. However, the recent review of Australia's system highlighted the need for a governance body (Box 3.4). Hong Kong, in addition to its Qualification Framework Secretariat, appears to rely heavily on the private sector through Industry Training Advisory Committees. These committees consist of representatives of the training sector,

Box 3.3 **PQF Survey Results – Facilitating Interactions Among Stakeholders**

Do you agree that the PQF facilitates interactions among stakeholders?



Survey Statements Soliciting Agreement/Disagreement (Section D)

D.1. – "The PQF governance system has played a crucial role in engaging stakeholders in designing programs and qualifications, promoting lifelong learning and social mobility (pathways) through communication, collaboration and coordination across education, TVET and industry, and increasing the sectoral initiatives."

D.2. – "The PQF governance system has played a crucial role in increasing public awareness of the usefulness of the of the PQF for their career development, as well as other stakeholders such as education and TVET providers."

D.3. – "The PQF governance system has played a crucial role in promoting the reform of the education and training systems in terms of quality, relevance, access, efficiency, and equity, and consequently enhancing the competitiveness of the Philippines education and training system."

D.4. – "The PQF governance system has played a crucial role in efficiently carrying responsibilities of the PQF National Coordinating Council and Technical Committee (institutional arrangement) in order to ensure quality assurance of the PQF as well as operation."

Summary of Results

Close to 70 percent agree (including 27 percent who strongly agree) that the current PQF governance system is conducive to promoting collaboration and coordination across all stakeholders. "Encouraging a common understanding of the importance of the PQF among key stakeholders" and "institutionalizing coordination mechanisms" are regarded as important contributing factors. Respondents also agree that PQF governance system is appropriate to improve the country's education and training systems.

However, there is room to strengthen the PQF-NCC and WGs to ensure PQF's operations and quality assurance. Respondents highlighted the need for strong collaboration among industry, government, and academia as well as enhanced public awareness. Financial support, and more active and institutionalized coordination are mentioned as critical factors.

Note The survey results should be interpreted with caution. Some respondents answered the status check questions in a different way (e.g., what the PQF ought to be as an ideal NQF).

[16] The Hong Kong Qualifications Framework: A Platform for Lifelong Learning (2017), Qualifications Framework Secretariat.

industry, professional groups, and regulatory bodies of the relevant industries. In total, 21 of these committees have been formed, covering more than 53 percent of the total workforce in Hong Kong.[16] They play a significant role in the implementation and development of Specification of Competency Standards on the training needs and staff development, and the establishment of RPL mechanisms for respective industries.[17]

3.4 Utilization of the PQF

A well-functioning qualifications system should be fully utilized for all key users – government, education and training service providers and trainees, and employers and workers -- of the PQF (Figure 3.3). First, the role of government is critical in the cycle of the design and implementation of PQF, monitoring and evaluation of the utilization and impacts of the PQF on other actors, and updates and revisions of PQF for an adaptive system. With this system in place, the GoP can utilize the PQF for the country's human resource development instrument to maintain and enhance the competitiveness of the current and future workforce.

Second, education and training service providers can bring their services up to the quality required by the PQF and thus industry and support learners to achieve learning outcomes at or above the required standards.

Box 3.4 **Establishing an Independent NQF Body**

The creation of the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), enacted in 2007, is considered one of the success factors of the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF)'s design and implementation. MQF, also benchmarked against the AQRF, is administered by the MQA in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Human Resources. The Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act of 2007 not only specifies the legal foundations of establishment, functions, and powers of the agency but also details its budgets and appointment of staff. According to the 2007 Act, MQA is responsible for accreditation and quality assurance of TVET and higher education qualifications to recognize and articulate qualifications and maintain the Malaysian Qualifications register. Accreditation is not compulsory, per the 2007 Act, but became mandatory by subsequent regulations and policies (e.g., the Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2017), thus ensuring compliance with MQF.

The recent review of the Australian Qualifications Framework* (AQF) also offers useful insights. Since the disbandment of the AQF Council in 2014, the AQF has had no formal governance arrangements. Currently, its implementation is delivered through the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment in consultation with the states and territories. The AQF review team has recommended that an AQF governance body may need to be established to ensure the effective implementation of AQF, with representation from the government, schools, VET institutes, higher education, industry, and professional bodies. The review team has also recommended granting the body the authority to convene and oversee technical working groups to undertake specialist tasks. In addition to the implementation of agreed AQF reforms, a governance body was encouraged to do the following: (i) liaise with higher education, VET and school standards bodies and regulators about matters related to the AQF; (ii) monitor developments in education and training as well as the economy and their implications for the AQF, including shorter-form credentials and general capabilities; (iii) advise on the addition or removal of qualification types in the AQF; and (iv) make recommendations and oversee additional reforms where necessary.**

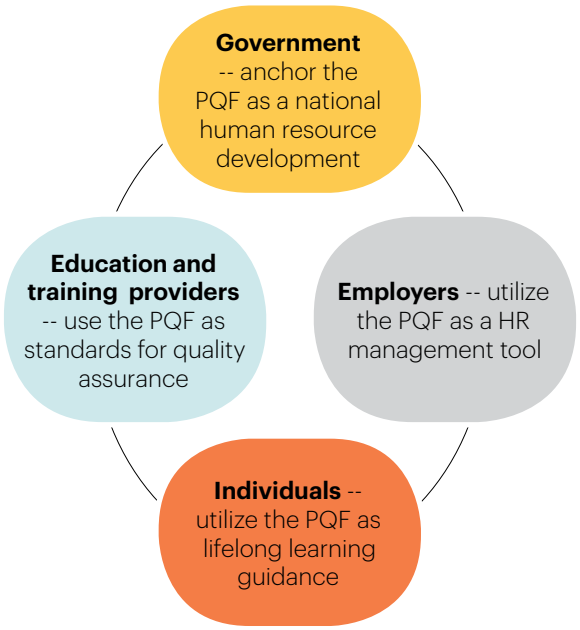
Note

*The review was conducted in 2019 to ensure the AQF to meet the needs of students, employers, education providers, and the wider community, and the Government accepted all the recommendations.
**Review of the Australian Qualifications Framework (2019), p. 89.
Sources: Malaysian Qualifications Agency website; Australian Department of Education and Training (2019).

[17] Hong Kong Qualifications Framework website: https://www.hkqf.gov.hk/en/home/index.html

For wide utilization of PQF, education and training providers should be able to interpret and translate the PQF level descriptors into curriculum, assessment tools, qualification standards, and career guidance programs for advising horizontal/vertical pathways through the PQF scheme within the life-long learning framework.

Figure 3.3 **Stakeholders for Utilization**



Source | World Bank

Third, employers can utilize the PQF scheme as a personnel management tool for companies' human resource development activities. These include recruitment, placement, promotion, provision of in-service training, and wage determination. Finally, individuals, including current workers, jobseekers, and students, can use the PQF scheme to pursue continuous career development and to show their achievements within the lifelong learning framework. The Korean National Competency Standards (NCS) provide insights into connecting skills demands, curriculum, and qualification standards through detailed implementation mechanisms and utilization framework (Box 3.5).

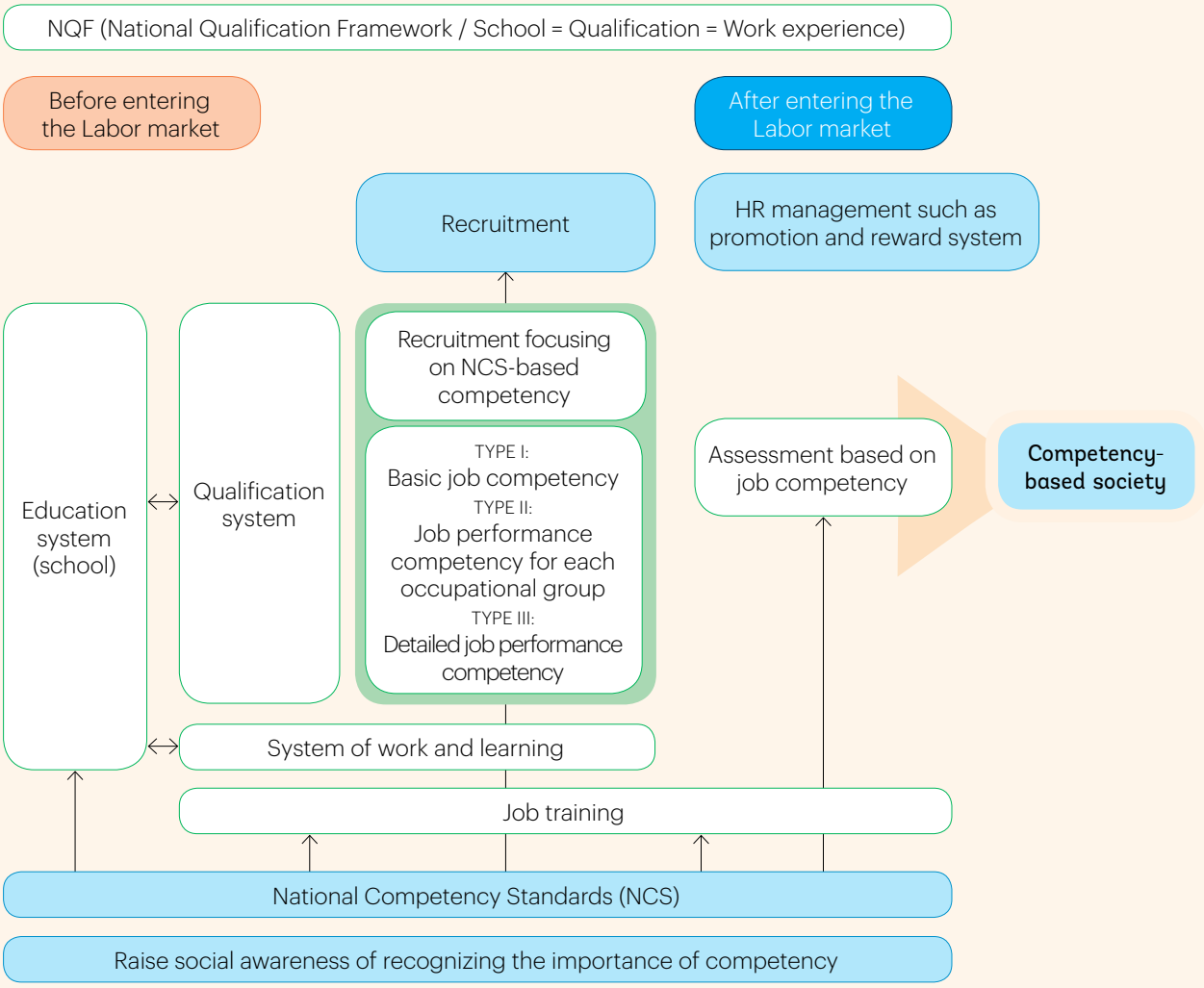
The review found a broad consensus on the well-designed PQF principles and structure but weak implementation and low utilization of PQF largely given its early stage. The stakeholders survey shows that a vast majority of the respondents (89 percent) broadly agree that the PQF meets the fundamental purpose of qualification, retaining the relevance and effectiveness of knowledge, skills, values, and applications (Box 3.6). On the purpose of the PQF that drives education and training system reforms, 70 percent of the respondents agree

Box 3.5 **Korean National Qualifications and National Competency Standards (NCS)**

The NCS constitutes a critical part of Korea's NQF, aiming to systematize the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform jobs at various levels and across different industries (Figure 3B.3). The NQF in Korea is a level-based system that provides equivalencies and linkages between educational attainment and vocational training and qualifications prior to labor market entry, and job competency post labor market entry. The standards, specified in NCS, are intended to guide reforms of the vocational education and training and qualification systems to meet industries' needs and encourage competency-based human resource management (such as hiring, promotion, wage, etc.) among companies. To date, NCS is leading to a shift in the curriculum of high schools, colleges, and public and private vocational training institutions, with an emphasis on a competency-based society.

More specifically, the NCS aims to create a model to establish a jobs-competency assessment system in connection with recruitment, promotion, and reward in the labor market. For instance, NCS guides both workers and employers at the recruitment stage, so skills mismatches are minimized. NCS learning modules are developed by sector and occupation of select industries and are utilized by post-secondary schools and technical colleges. Further, the NCS is being used to train and recruit incumbents by disseminating competency-based recruitment models to private companies and public institutions.

Figure 3B.3 **Korean NQF and National Competency Standards**



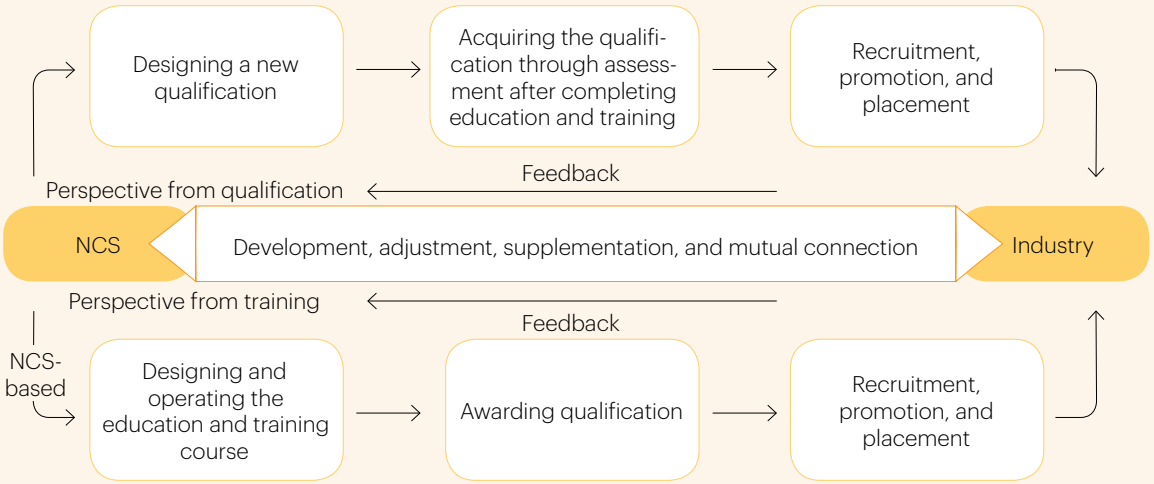
Source Human Resource Development (HRD) Service of Korea.

The NCS systematically classifies and standardizes the competencies required to perform a job based on the job performance model. The competencies defined by NCS can be divided into key competencies and job performance competencies, defined as follows:

- Key competencies are fundamental to performing all the tasks of one's job.
- Job performance competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to perform a specific job, and they adhere to the system of the main category (fields with similar skills referring to Korean Employment Classification); middle category (fields with similar skills, industries, and career development paths within the same major categories); subclass (similar skills within the same middle category); and subdivided category (detailed occupation). The subdivision consists of several competencies according to level. Level 1 is the level at which an individual performs tasks under specific instructions and supervision, whereas Level 8 is the level at which authority and responsibilities are assigned to the organization and the business as a whole.

The principles and process of NCS – development, adjustment, supplementation, and mutual connection – are based on the efforts to maintain the industry and labor-market relevance of skills development (Figure 3B.4). To reinforce work-educational training-qualification linkage and lay the foundation for a competency-oriented society, HRD Korea, the primary agency responsible for NCS, continues to develop and improve national competency standards in accordance with technological changes in the industrial field and demand for new personnel. The feedback mechanism ensures that industry needs can be promptly reflected in VET and qualification systems.

Figure 3B.4 **Mechanisms for Industry Feedback**



Source Human Resource Development (HRD) Service of Korea.

Utilization

- **Various Korean organizations and public institutions have recruited employees based on NCS.** As of 2017, all public institutions (a total of 321) had adopted competency-oriented recruiting in Korea. Based on this, the government began to promote policies to reform the domestic qualifications system and operate 61 course-based qualifications.
- **NCS has been utilized for reforming vocational training contents suitable for industry needs.** Along with these changes in the industry and required qualifications, the specialized high schools, colleges, and vocational training institutes have revised the curriculum based and learning modules based on NCS. Three specialized high schools completed pilot trials with positive results, such as an increase in the average employment rate from 33.2 to 63.4 percent. The NCS-based education and training curriculum was expanded to 100 colleges in 2017 from 79 schools in 2015.
- **Three groups of users notably benefit from the NCS, including industry, TVET service providers, and qualification/accreditation agencies.**

Figure 3B.5 **Utilization of the Korean NCS**

Industry and employers
- Standarizing recruitment and personnel management based on industry needs
- Supporting career development
- Developing job description

Education and training providers
- Developing vocational education and training courses
- Developing teaching plans and materials like textbooks
- Developing training standards

Qualification and accreditation agencies
- Managing qualifications by creating, consolidating, and abolishing qualification
- Developing and revising qualification tests
- Developing qualification exams and evaluation methods

Coordination with stakeholders

- For promising industries and emerging occupations, about 50 new NCS have been developed per year since 2015 to keep up with any paradigm shift in industries.
- Industry Skills Councils have been established as institutions responsible for developing and improving NCS. Companies, schools, and experts participating in the Councils review and update NCS on a regular basis.

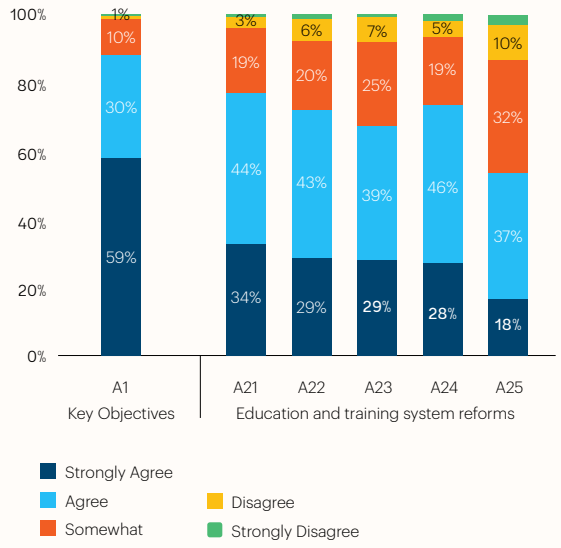
Source Ministry of Employment and Labor (MoEL), Human Resources Development Service of Korea (HRD), and NCS Website (https://www.ncs.go.kr/index.do)

that PQF promotes education and training system reforms toward achieving a life-long learning society. At the same time, however, respondents highlight that it is too early to evaluate the feasibility of the principles and purposes of the PQF, given its nascent stage of implementation and relatively low awareness and utilization of end-users.

Compared to the broad objective, however, when it delved deeper into each subtopic, the assessment was not as positive concerning the role and purpose of PQF in supporting the overall education and training systems. Specifically, as detailed in Box 3.6, the survey asked whether PQF has helped (i) education and training service providers deliver knowledge, skills, and values demanded by the labor market and required by the PQF; (ii) seamless integration and linkages among education, training, and

Box 3.6 **Survey Results – Key Objectives of PQF**

Do you agree that the PQF serves the key objectives and drives broader education and training system reforms (in percent)



Survey Statements Soliciting Agreement/ Disagreement (Section A)

A.1. – "The PQF meets the fundamental purpose of qualification. In other words, the PQF plays a crucial role in retaining the relevance and effectiveness of qualifications so that qualifications can respond to current and emerging industry skill needs and new job roles in terms of knowledge, skills and values and applications. In the PQF, employers expect that qualifications guarantee the job competencies of graduates, while employees expect their qualifications are well recognized and rewarded in the labor market."

A.2.1. – "The PQF has supported the design and delivery of education and training in the Philippines by providing a basis to set qualification levels for specific education and training programs. Education and training providers have tried to equip learners and trainees with knowledge, skills, and values demanded by the labor market, which is documented in the PQF."

A.2.2. – "The PQF has promoted systematic integration of education and training, and close linkages among education, training, and then the labor market."

A.2.3. – "The PQF has played a role in providing people, especially those with a lower level of qualifications, with more education and training opportunities, and improving their qualification levels."

A.2.4. – "The PQF has recognized learning gained outside formal education and training – including STEP (community-based informal short training), other short-term training by government agencies, research-oriented qualifications (credit recognition), or work-based experiences."

A.2.5. – "The PQF has promoted credit accumulation (leading to formal qualifications) and transfer across the PQF qualifications."

Note The survey results should be interpreted with caution. Some respondents answered the status check questions in a different way (i.e., how the PQF is or ought to be as an ideal NQF).

then labor markets; (iii) individuals receive more skills development opportunities; (iv) recognize learning gained outside formal education; and (v) accumulate credits and transfer vertically and horizontally. Assessment responses on these topics were not as positive. In particular, respondents highlighted a limitation of PQF in utilization, namely that it falls short of supporting individual workers and learners to obtain more training opportunities and move credits freely.

To date, there have indeed been few actual cases where the PQF level descriptors affect implementation in a significant way. Potential cases for PQF utilization include: the curricula of HEIs are developed and revised to meet the PQF level descriptors of the three domains and ensure that qualifications are hierarchically linked to each other; graduates from TVET institutions with the PQF level 5 qualification are transferred to universities through the Philippine Credit Transfer System (PCTS), which is based on the PQF level descriptors (qualification standards); and graduates from universities with different degrees (BS, MA, or Ph.D.) under the new framework enter the labor market and employers provide their assessment against the PQF's three domains. Key informant interview results indicate that people whose job is to design and deliver quality-assured education and TVET programs do not clearly understand the meaning of the PQF level descriptors and how to apply them to curriculum revision or design.

Low Level PQF Awareness

An APEC 2009 survey has drawn attention to the most frequently cited constraints – understanding and accepting the NQF across these various agencies and sector authorities (APEC 2009). At the same time, the survey highlights that the success of a policy depends on how a more comprehensive range of stakeholders and beneficiaries are aware of the policy's objectives and usefulness and utilize it to a greater extent. Thus, it is urgent to raise the level of stakeholder's and beneficiaries' awareness of the PQF and make key actors able/prepared to do what they are required to do by providing the PQF handbook, guidelines, and manuals and by providing capacity-building workshops.

The public awareness of the PQF is low, with few awareness-raising campaigns for the direct stakeholders and beneficiaries to increase understanding and acceptance of the PQF. Individually, the five PQF-NCC member agencies have advocated the PQF within their targeted staff of organizations, beneficiaries, and stakeholders. For example, the PRC held virtual public awareness programs and continues to plan more programs for professionals. The DOLE has also engaged with relevant stakeholders for promotion through various dissemination events (e.g., Tripartite Executive Committee meetings, a symposium at the University of the Philippines School of Labor and Industrial Relations, and capacity development activities for regional officers). However, these efforts have been mostly ad-hoc without strategic and convergent action plans to enhance public awareness of the PQF nationwide (Box 3.7).

PQF Dissemination Activities

The low level of public awareness suggests that there is room for the government's efforts to intensify the PQF knowledge and information dissemination. The key informant interviews revealed that major stakeholders could not take specific actions to implement the PQF scheme due to little knowledge on the practical ways to make use of PQF among the public. Handbooks,

Box 3.7 **Insights from key informant interviews – Public Awareness on PQF**

TVIs: TVIs are aware of the introduction of the PQF, but it is not very clear how to interpret the level descriptors of the PQF and translate them into TVET curricula. Few guidelines have been provided for the rules and regulations of each actor and the implementation of the PQF.

TVET Trainees: These trainees do not know much about what the PQF is and what it can do for individuals (e.g., trainees, students, or workers).

HEIs: The level of awareness among those at HEIs is low. The interview reveals that HEIs appear to perceive that the PQF is more for TVET sectors. Universities are not sufficiently informed of the PQF, and no official guidelines or documents on how to apply the PQF to HEIs was provided by CHED.

PRC: Little is known about the relevance of PQF for licensed professionals. For linkages of PQF and professional qualifications and potential career guidance on the professional track, awareness of PQF among professionals and regulatory boards should be enhanced.

Note The results of the key informant interviews should be interpreted with caution as interviewee responded in a group setting and their answers can be influenced by the opinions expressed by others in the group.

guidelines, or operations manuals on PQF for faculty members, education and TVET trainers, and administrators have not been produced and distributed yet. Such guidelines would be critical to help users understand how to interpret and transform the PQF level descriptors into the curriculum and vertical and horizontal career paths. The operations manual would guide relevant agencies and training providers on designing and implementing awareness campaigns and capacity-building activities. Such materials can go into detail on each topic of the WG. PQF-NCC and TWG, in collaboration with related agencies and organizations, could develop these materials to increase potential beneficiaries' awareness and understanding of the PQF (e.g., what it is, what it can do their education and training, jobs, and future career development, and how to utilize it).

Employers' Readiness

Collaboration with the private sector is a key success factor in the education and skills development agenda, and PQF is not an exception. Employers' awareness and understanding of the objectives, content, and utility of the PQF is a prerequisite for their adoption of PQF and the use of qualifications of workers for their company's human resource management. For example, the PQF can help employers better understand the competencies of workers with clear level descriptors. Employers can use qualifications in the PQF as acceptable evaluation standards for recruitment, placement, wage determination, in-service training, and promotion. While some industry leaders keen on education and training may be familiar with the PQF, particularly in the area of quality assurance, the overall usefulness of PQF has not been convincingly presented to the private sector. However, employers and industry associations in the review expressed the view that they are unclear about the design and benefits of PQF. It is also hard for employers to actively utilize the PQF since operational and technical tools and documentation have not been prepared yet.

Revisions of Training Regulations and Academic Curricula According to PQF

Efforts to align or revise the existing curriculum and qualification standards or develop new ones according to the PQF level descriptors have been limited. The PQF's reflection of

the labor market skills needs and qualification standards is intended to guide the development of curriculum and TRs, which should be aligned with PQF level descriptors. This is a major change from an input-based practice of education and training to an outcome-based approach. However, the review suggested that education and training service providers await practical guidelines from the PQF-NCC. Some have expressed difficulty in adapting the currently used tool (e.g., the Level Alignment Matrix in universities) to the PQF level descriptors-based one (e.g., arrange learning outcomes of BS, MA, and Ph.D. programs according to the three domains by level) (Box 3.8).

Box 3.8 **Insights from key informant interviews – Revising Curriculum and Training Regulations**

- TESDA employs the Level Alignment Matrix process for developing training regulations (TRs) and ensures that the regulations are well aligned in the PQF. The priority of developing/updating TRs was given to PQF Levels 3, 4, and 5 because of high demand from the industry, but the extent to which the adaptation was made to date was not as substantive as required for full implementation of PQF.
- PQF Levels 1 to 4 are designed based on the TVET QF, and the current TRs are relatively well aligned with the contents of the level descriptors of the PQF. However, TRs for PQF Level 5 are not yet developed, and decisions from the TESDA board are anticipated.
- For developing the curriculum of HEIs, CHED provides guidelines as follows: (i) CHED Memorandum Orders; (ii) Executive Orders (by President) and IRR (appropriate promulgation body); and (iii) Policies, Standards, and Guidelines (PSGs) providing sample performance indicators and assessment standards for major discipline areas. In addition, the CHED is revising the PSGs with the introduction of K-12 reform. A large share of the undergraduate PSGs has been revised, and the revision of PSGs for graduate programs is currently underway. In the process of revising the PSGs, CHED has conducted awareness-enhancing events and efforts, but it is unclear how these processes accommodate specific reference to the PQF Levels 6 to 8.
- HEIs are recommended to develop their curriculum at an institutional level, with the condition that each HEI should guarantee the quality of education. HEIs, therefore, could focus on outcome-based education, including a set of skills, competency, values, and knowledge, which could be easily referenced with PQF. The lessons learned from the development and implementation of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) to ensure the quality and level of program outputs can inform similar efforts by PQF.
- The DepEd ensures that all key learning areas and key stage standards of Basic Education adhere to the outcomes-based design of the AQRF, acting as a top-level reference point for policies in furthering the use of learning outcomes.

Note The results of the key informant interviews should be interpreted with caution as interviewee responded in a group setting and their answers can be influenced by the opinions expressed by others in the group.

Chapter 4

Policy Discussions and Recommendations

4.1 Refining the PQF Design

Vertical Progression

The appropriateness and feasibility of the eight-level descriptors should ultimately be evaluated in the field. The review found the overall design of the level descriptors clear but identified a few areas for further strengthening. Given the nascent stage of implementation, the review was unable to assess the practical feasibility and usefulness of the scheme. The PQF-NCC, with the support of WGs for 'Quality Assurance' and 'Qualification Register,' should promote the application of PQF to education, TVET, and qualification assessment. It should also check the appropriateness of the eight-level structure in terms of whether it incorporates all different types and levels of competencies required by industry and whether it would be reasonable to apply the eight-level structure to all three domains uniformly. Also necessary to check are (i) the magnitude of the progress of level descriptors and (ii) their applicability to aligning, revising, or developing curriculum and qualification standards, and the appropriateness of applying the three domains of each level together (i.e., only if all the level descriptors of the three domains are met, qualification can be acknowledged).

To this end, it is essential to conduct pilot projects before full-scale implementation. The pilot cases could focus on specific qualifications levels, sectors, or groups of stakeholders to inform how flexibly and efficiently PQF could be utilized. A more flexible structure of the PQF applicable to both formal and non-formal skills development modalities will tremendously help promote an individual's lifelong learning and career development. In these pilot projects, the two points raised earlier -- applicability of adding professional qualifications to the PQF Levels 6 and 8 and the appropriateness of setting SHS as a foundation level of the PQF – can also be revisited and reassessed. Specifically, the inclusion of professional qualifications in the PQF would require in-depth discussion among PRC and CHED on what grounds professional qualifications are equivalent to MA or Ph.D. degrees. Based on the revised PQF to reflect professional areas, the NCC may produce a manual on assessing the extent to which professional qualifications match level descriptors.

The extent to which the current level descriptors capture non-cognitive or socioemotional skills should be further investigated. The need to address non-cognitive skills in education is becoming more important. Many firms recognize workers' lack of socioemotional skills as a significant constraint to competitiveness and try to provide training programs to address them (Acosta 2017). These skills, such as interpersonal and communication skills, work ethics, teamwork, and decision-making competency, have been increasingly incorporated into training curricula, raising the need for a qualification framework to recognize them. The Malaysian qualifications framework, for instance, broadens its social policy objectives

to place a greater emphasis on intercultural awareness, ethics, and entrepreneurship, which reflects a more socially conscious set of learning outcomes in the level descriptors.

Horizontal and Vertical Mobility

For open pathways across different training tracks or careers, it is integral to have a well-articulated credit transfer system based on clear standards and qualifications. The PCTS for individuals who attempt to acquire additional qualifications for their career development can be further strengthened based on PQF. When the GoP enacted the Ladderized Education Act to institutionalize the ladderized interface between TVET and higher education in 2014, the PCTS had not been still fully developed and applied. Policy measures to officially recognize prior learning and grant qualifications also have not materialized yet. Due to these reasons, students and trainees who switched from vocational to academic tracks to universities had limited means to transfer credits, as only a small number of universities adopted the Expanded Tertiary Equivalency and Accreditation Program.

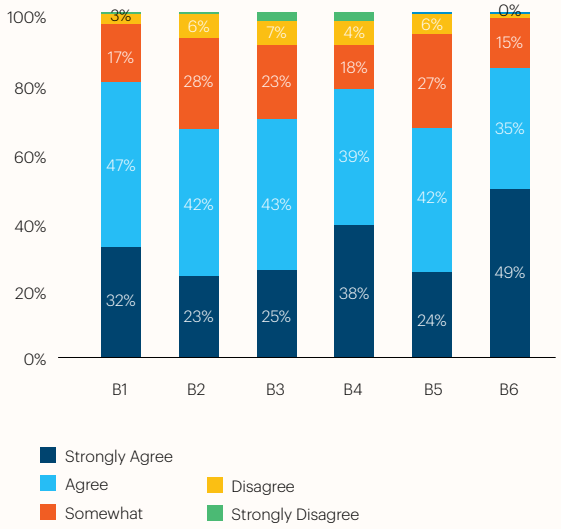
In 2017, to develop the PCTS, the TESDA and CHED jointly implemented pilot programs in a few selected areas, whose outcomes and lessons should yet be reflected in the actual PCTS development. The collaboration was facilitated by the forging of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two entities, and selected areas included human resources, IT, hospitality, agricultural engineering, dentistry, and electronics. Despite the policy efforts to bridge TVET and higher education, however, to date, little progress in this pilot has been achieved. This illustrates the difficulty in linking the two different jurisdictions of skills development, which in turn highlights even further the importance of PQF as a connector.

The survey results (Box 4.1) confirm that the horizontal and vertical linkages of TVET-related qualifications to academic and professional qualifications should be further strengthened. A large majority of respondents agree that PQF promotes lifelong learning (statement B6) by facilitating continued professional development career progression (B4) with PQF's clear design on qualifications (B1). In contrast, a significantly lower share of respondents agrees that PQF has played an important role in integrating qualifications for TVET into a comprehensive qualification framework (B2), casting doubts on PQF's support for workers' mobility (B5). Respondents highlighted the need for the credit transfer between TVET and academic education and ladderization, and further stressed the importance of cross-agency coordination.

The PQF-NCC, supported by the WG on 'Pathways and Equivalencies' and related government agencies, should complete

Box 4.1 **Survey Results – Promoting Skills Transferability**

Do you agree that the PQF is established in coherent and integrative qualification systems (in percent)



Survey Statements Soliciting Agreement/ Disagreement (Section B)

B.1. – "The PQF is well designed to (i) distinguish between levels and thus qualification types, so the PQF provides transparency on learning the learners expect to acquire and on the qualifications the learners expect to hold; (ii) address existing requirements of the community, industry, government, and academia; and also (iii) reflect changing needs of skills, knowledge, and application in light of economic and societal transformation."

B.2. – "The PQF has played a crucial role in integrating qualifications for TVET into a comprehensive qualification framework (and thus promoting transfer between TVET track and academic track)."

B.3. – "The PQF positioned senior high school education (SHS) as a foundation level. The PQF contributed to making sure that SHS fulfills its role in preparing youth for TVET and/or higher education."

B.4. – "The PQF promotes Continuing Professional Development and Career Progression & Specialization, including upskilling, re-skilling, and cross-skilling."

B.5. – "The PQF has aided learner mobility (pathways) vertically between hierarchical qualification levels and horizontally between different types of qualifications."

B.6. – "The PQF reflects the importance of lifelong learning."

Note The survey results should be interpreted with caution. Some respondents answered the status check questions differently (i.e., how the PQF is or ought to be as an ideal NQF) given that some components of the PQF have not implemented yet.

the design of the PCTS and promote its implementation as a key tool for horizontal and vertical pathways. This is what the PQF is intended to achieve, that is, facilitating the lifelong learning of Filipinos and providing a sustainable supply of good quality labor. Thus, the PCTS aims to guide decision makers in how to recognize the results of prior learning and non-formal online short-term training and link them to NCs and TVET to university programs. 'Multi-directional pathways' include both horizontal and vertical paths. The horizontal pathway consists of the transfers from TVL to academic high schools and vice versa or between mechanics and ICT programs. In the case of the vertical pathway, any SHS track graduate should be able to transfer to the university. Such an open-pathways scheme requires a system assessing and acknowledging the equivalency of (i) credits acquired in the TVL program and those of academic HS qualifications; and (ii) TVL and educational HS qualification as a requirement for applying for university.

4.2 Strengthening Institutional Arrangements and Capacity

The initial leadership in the design, implementation, and utilization of PQF heavily relies on the PQF-NCC, Secretariat, TWG, and WGs, which should be further strengthened. The PQF-NCC is encouraged to expand and complete its membership composition by selecting one representative from the economy and another one from the industry sector to adequately reflect skills on the demand side and to perform all functions stated in the PQF Act and IRR. Such complete composition of the PQF-NCC would promote active communication and collaboration with the industry and economy sectors and exerts practical leadership with technical support from the member agencies.

Likewise, with the leadership of the PQF-NCC, all WGs need to complete their constitution by inviting representative(s) from industry and expert(s) and by performing all functions stated in Sections 20 and 21 of the PQF Act and its IRR. The completed WGs should be able to commence concrete activities (e.g., coordination, consultation, data management, and monitoring and evaluation) to carry out their mandated functions by issuing rules (e.g., Standard Operating Procedures) and developing implementation plans.

The PQF-NCC should establish a Permanent Secretariat to strengthen inter-agency coordination and cooperation. The secretariat will need to be the PQF-NCC's main interface with relevant agencies, TWG, WGs, and education and training institutes, among others. For the secretariat to be functional with a clear governance and accountability mechanism, the chairperson of the PQF-NCC should need authority over the personnel management and finance of the secretariat. For the implementation of PQF, the PQF-NCC and its secretariat should secure the necessary budget allocated to the TWG and each of the WGs to prepare the foundation for the PQF implementation and continue to operate the PQF scheme in a sustainable manner.

In addition to cementing these core set-ups, ensuring capacity-building for relevant stakeholders and enhancing awareness on PQF would be critical. The PQF-NCC, in collaboration with each agency, should design and launch targeted awareness-raising exercises, starting strategically from key implementers. For instance, career guidance counselors at schools and training institutes, HR professionals and officers in the private sector, recruiters and job matching facilitators, and Public Employment Service Office (PESO) managers in local government units could be the priority groups that the government focuses on raising capacity and awareness of the PQF. Enhanced awareness of PQF among all agencies and stakeholders related to education, training, and workforce development can create great synergies. The larger the number of potential beneficiaries and users of the PQF scheme, the larger benefits and usefulness the PQF could bring.

Further, the PQF-NCC, supported by the WGs on 'Information and Guidelines' and 'Government-Industry-Education Sector,' should provide concrete guidelines and operations manuals for PQF implementers. The manuals can include general knowledge and practice on PQF with a focus on matching the contents of curriculum and TRs with qualification standards. Specifically, the manuals should cover (i) how to interpret and translate the PQF level descriptors into TRs, curricula in JHS, SHS, and PSGs; (ii) how to revise assessment tools according to the revised curricula and

TRs; and (iii) how to check and assign the existing qualifications into one of the eight levels. In addition, the manuals should include ways of assessing the equivalency of different qualifications in academic and TVET tracks, making equivalency courses, and allowing transfers between education and training sectors and between these sectors and the labor market through open pathways. It is advisable for industries or occupations to make industry-specific level descriptors by qualifications level and translate them into TRs. Moreover, agency-specific manuals could be further developed to guide how PQF indeed helps with day-to-day tasks.

4.3 Ensuring Quality Assurance

NQFs set the standards, but accreditation of qualifications against the standards relies on having an assessment system.[18] Together they ensure quality assurance in achieving greater coherence and transparency in skills assessment and accreditation. Under the NQF, the functions of quality assurance can be conducted by an independent agency responsible for the NQF or can be distributed to agencies overseeing education and training across the sectors. They range from qualifications authorities and government departments to independent bodies, such as sector-specific commissions and councils, and professional associations in some cases. In an example from Hong Kong, all qualifications or learning programs that desire to be recognized under the Qualifications Framework should be accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications along with eight self-accrediting universities before being registered into the Qualifications Register.

The Philippines needs to integrate the three existing quality assurance systems separately managed by TESDA, CHED, and PRC and align them with the PQF. TESDA ensures quality assurance for PQF Levels 1-4, CHED for Levels 6 to 8, TESDA and CHED for Level 5, and PRC for professional qualifications. In order to promote vertical and horizontal mobility of skills, all quality assurance systems should be equally trusted and recognized, and to this end, all these qualification systems should strictly be aligned with PQF descriptors and qualification standards. If training providers issue qualifications when the student has not achieved the learning indicated by the descriptors, then employers and higher education admissions will not value the qualifications or use them in their selection processes. Hence, a qualification framework is only as robust as the quality assurance system supporting it.[19] In addition, the accreditation records and qualifications should be registered in the PQF database.

The results of the survey and key informant interviews suggest that the role of PQF in maintaining quality assurance is widely upheld. Three-quarters of the survey participants agree that the PQF plays a role in promoting the quality assurance of education and TVET programs. Out of those who agree with the role of PQF's quality assurance, the following (showing the percent who agree) are considered success factors: utilization of the PQF as standards for quality assurance (83 percent); recognition of the PQF levels and level descriptors (74 percent); and adequacy in PQF contents (70 percent). However, a significantly smaller share of respondents agrees that PQF promotes quality assurance for shorter form credentials, diverse qualifications, or quickly updated systems. As

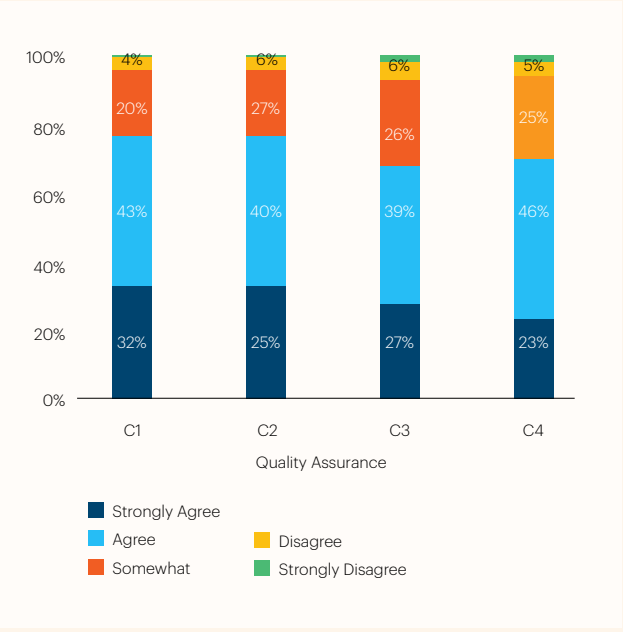
[18] Bateman, Keating, Burke, Coles & Vickers 2012
[19] Mapping Qualifications Frameworks across APEC Economies (2009), APEC Human Resources Development Working Group

quality assurance standards, "utilization and recognition of the PQF qualification levels and descriptors" are regarded as the respondents' most critical factors. (See Box 4.2)

Given the multiple qualification and accreditation systems, efforts for quality assurance through strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities, active utilization of the PQF database (registry), and promotion of WG on "quality assurance" would be important. The PQF-NCC, supported by the WG on 'Quality Assurance,' should develop coherent guidelines on quality assurance that can be commonly applied to education and TVET managed by DepEd, TESDA, and CHED. Current individual quality assurance practices and systems, managed separately by three education agencies, could be applied more flexibly to nonstandard forms of education and training (e.g., short-term training and credentials) within the PQF level descriptors for the intended purpose of ensuring quality. If the PQF incorporates professional qualifications

Box 4.2 **Survey Results – Promoting Quality Assurance**

Do you agree that the PQF promotes quality assurance process? (in percent)



Survey Statements Soliciting Agreement/ Disagreement (Section C)

C.1. – "The PQF has played a crucial role in promoting the quality assurance of higher education institutions (HEIs) and TVET institutions, HEIs and TVET programs, and corresponding qualifications."

C.2. – "The PQF has played a crucial role in promoting the quality assurance of shorter form credentials and thus recognizing shorter form credentials for credit into the PQF qualifications."

C.3. – "The PQF has played a crucial role in promoting transparency of diverse qualifications so that learners, workers, professionals, employers and the society can trust the qualification."

C.4. – "The PQF system has kept (or is ready to keep) the PQF updated through formal processes of qualification addition and removal hinged on changes in economy and industrial needs."

Inputs from Key Informant Interviews on Quality Assurance

- Key agencies are aware of the quality assurance in the process of referencing to the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, establishing the qualification standards, program accredits, and assessment criteria.
- Employer groups argue that the quality assurance of three agencies should be stricter in applying criteria, standards and regulations, and performance recognition systems (e.g., TESDA's STAR system) can be incorporated and further strengthened.

- DepEd currently ensures the quality of the basic education through (i) Basic Education Exit Assessment and (ii) summative and formative evaluation by teachers.
- CHED relies on multiple layers of quality assurance, involving technical experts, industry, and key stakeholders to draw the guidelines. The technical panels are composed of representatives from the academe, industry, and international experts to reflect the changes, especially under the COVID. In a collaboration of private accreditation associations, international accreditation, industry accreditation system, the CHED assesses and recognizes both public and private universities.
- Higher education institutions (HEIs) also confirm that CHED has a system for checking whether HEIs follow specific standards, and even autonomous HEIs must follow the PSG. However, few updates have been made in the recognition criteria after introducing the PQF, indicating further needs for quality assurance.
- TVI respondents explain that TESDA is responsible for the quality assurance of TVET institutions and programs. Any TVET institution is required to register its programs to TESDA, specifically curriculum developed based on TRs, trainer's qualification, facilities, and learning materials. TESDA conducts a compliance audit yearly for the first two years and then a technical audit. Trainees are required to take national certificate assessments. TESDA STAR Award is another example of the TESDA's quality assurance tools, which are given to TVIs that meet minimum standards or above. For TVET trainers, Trainer Qualification Framework and National TVET Trainers' Certificate should be made coherent.

Note The results of the key informant interviews should be interpreted with caution as interviewee responded in a group setting and their answers can be influenced by the opinions expressed by others in the group.

in Levels 6 to 7, PRC is also desired to follow the standardized guidelines on quality assurance.

Further, M&E should be more explicitly emphasized as part of quality assurance systems that ensure that the outcomes of education and training services can be reviewed more systematically. The M&E activities may include auditing providers' processes and outcomes, including student learning and employment outcomes as well as student and user satisfaction levels.[20] The current PQF review did not find robust M&E mechanisms and activities yet, as PQF implementation is in a nascent stage. The pilot test proposed earlier should include key M&E activities such as the establishment of the PQF qualifications database and registrar.

20 Qualifications frameworks and quality assurance of education and training (Feb 2013), p.5.

Chapter 5

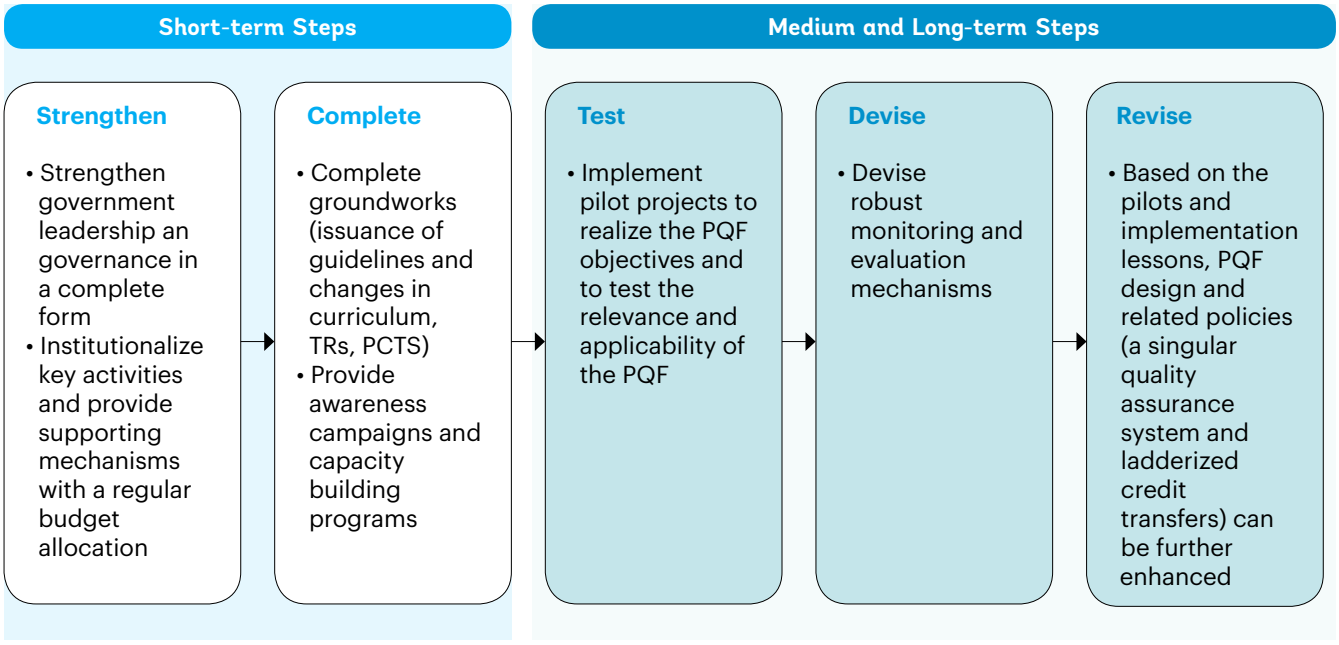
Conclusions

The PQF is based on solid architecture and is well-aligned with good international practices. The overall objective and key features of the PQF are well appreciated. The PQF, along with other education and training reforms, could be a catalyst for enhancing skills development, improving recognition of qualifications, and eventually building a more competent workforce. Setting coherent standards for each level of education and training, regardless of skills development modalities, sectors, tracks, or regions, is anticipated to promote individuals' lifelong learning and occupational and geographical mobility of workers and skills. The referencing of PQF with the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) is also encouraging given the considerable volume of OFWs.

Nonetheless, several areas should be strengthened for better PQF implementation and eventual widescale utilization among various stakeholders. A set of actions are proposed to kick-start the PQF implementation and ensure its maturity (Figure 5.1). The first two should be carried out in the short-term as prerequisite activities for initiating PQF implementation. The latter three are the medium to long-term agenda along the cycle of PQF operation.

First, PQF leadership and governance structure should be strengthened, along with clear accountability. As a high-level policy-making body, the PQF-NCC should be strengthened in a complete form (as specified in Section 5 of the PQF Act) and establish a separate Permanent

Figure 5.1 **Suggested Next Steps for Full Operationalization of PQF**



Source World Bank

Secretariat (as specified in Section 19 of the PQF Act's IRR). By doing so, the PQF-NCC can exert strategic and practical leadership in policies and regulations related to the implementation and utilization of PQF with technical support from the Secretariat. At the implementation level, the PQF-NCC WGs can also be strengthened in a complete form (as specified in Rule IV Sections 20 and 21 of PQF Act's IRR). By inviting relevant stakeholders, such as economic and industry experts as regular members, the WGs will be able to take specific action plans, initiate research and consultations, inform policies and strategies, create and maintain data management systems, and conduct M&E activities. For the PQF-NCC TWG and the various WGs to fulfill their mandated activities, it is important to secure a regular annual budget for planned activities.

Second, capacity-building among key stakeholders by setting up clear implementation guidelines, training, and awareness enhancing activities should be part of the PQF-NCC's priority activities. The review identified that neither practical guidelines, nor a handbook or manual, for PQF implementation aligned with its Act and IRR had been completed. This significantly limits the implementers' ability to understand (i) how to interpret and translate the PQF level descriptors into curriculum, qualification standards, and assessment tools, and (ii) how to make equivalency courses and promote transfers between education and training sectors and between these sectors and the labor market through open pathways. In particular, policy guidelines related to the PCTS to guide the recognition of the results of prior learning and non-formal online short-term training for NCs and TVET to university programs have yet to be developed. Moreover, awareness among key stakeholders and potential beneficiaries of the PQF and its benefits could be further enhanced. Once students, trainees, workers, trainers, recruiters, and employers recognize the objectives, usefulness, and labor market value of the PQF scheme, they will take into account the PQF when making their education, training, and career development plans and decisions.

Third, pilot tests in areas applicable to the PQF design and structure should be conducted to enhance the applicability and relevance of the PQF. The review highlighted that the relevance and applicability of the PQF, especially in priority sectors and programs (specified in Sections 8 and 11 of the PQF Act and Sections 6 and 11 of the IRR) has not been tested. The magnitude of the progress of level descriptors may not be fully aligned with existing curriculum and qualification standards. More specifically, for PQF levels 6 to 8, a column on professional qualifications standards for professional expertise acquired through practice in the field can be added. Also, clarifying the status of TVL track graduates of SHS in relation to NC1 to 2 would be needed. The current qualification system that acknowledges the achievement of a level only when all three domains of each level are met may warrant revisiting.

Fourth, a single quality assurance system should be established to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the PQF. Currently, quality assurance systems for basic education, TVET, higher education, and professional qualifications are all separate. However, linkages of these different quality assurance systems with different levels and tracks according to the PQF descriptors would be needed. This way, the quality of education and training can be coherently monitored and evaluated regardless of the level and service of education and training providers. Defining a clear results chain and indicators for each input, activities, outputs, and outcomes for regular measurements should

follow.

Finally, the implications of COVID-19 on overall education and training systems and on the PQF should be investigated. COVID-19 has been testing the adaptability and flexibility of the country's systems. From the delivery perspective, it is required to develop new learning tools in response to the pandemic situation (e.g., more flexible learning methods like short online modules) and consider how to appropriately reference and recognize micro credentials to PQF levels. With respect to demand for skills, the pandemic highlighted the importance of digital skills as well as medical, health care, public health policy, and hygiene areas. At the same time, as many OFWs return to the Philippines, retraining and reintegrating the returned workforce into the domestic labor market is crucial.

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Annex 1

Methodologies Employed for Analysis on PQF Domains

Annex 1.1	**Knowledge Dimension in the First Domain (Adopting a Revised Bloom's Taxonomy)**

	PQF – Knowledge Dimension in the First Domain	**Knowledge Dimension**			
		Factual Knowledge	Conceptual Knowledge	Procedural Knowledge	Metacognitive Knowledge
8	Demonstrated highly advanced systematic knowledge and skills in highly specialized and/or complex multi-disciplinary field of learning for complex research and/or professional practice and/or for the advancement of learning				x
7	Demonstrated advanced knowledge and skills in a specialized or multidisciplinary field of study for professional practice, self-directed research and/or lifelong learning				x
6	Demonstrated broad and coherent knowledge and skills in their field of study for professional work and lifelong learning			x	x
5	Knowledge and skills that are mainly theoretical and/or abstract with significant depth in some areas together with wide-ranging, specialized technical, creative and conceptual skills. Perform work activities demonstrating breadth, depth, and complexity in the planning and initiation of alternative approaches to skill and knowledge applications across a broad range of technical and/or management requirements, evaluation and coordination.		x	x	
4	Knowledge and skills that are mainly theoretical and/or abstract with significant depth in one or more areas, contributing to technical solutions of a nonroutine or contingency nature; evaluation and analysis of current practices and the development of new criteria and procedures		x	x	
3	Knowledge and skills that are a balance of theoretical and/or technical and practical. Work involves understanding the work process, contributing to problem solving, and making decisions to determine the process, equipment, and materials to be used		x	x	
2	Knowledge and skills that are manual, practical and/or operational in focus with a variety of options	x			
1	Knowledge and skills that are manual or concrete or practical and/or operational in focus	x			

Note (i) factual knowledge: basic elements students must know to be acquainted with a discipline or solve problems in it; (ii) conceptual knowledge: interrelationships among the basic elements within a larger structure that enable them to function together; (iii) procedural knowledge: how to do something, methods of inquiry, and criteria for using skills, algorithms, techniques, and methods; (iv) metacognitive knowledge: knowledge of cognition in general as well as awareness of one's cognition.

Source JET Education Services 2017, p.29.

Annex 1.2 **Cognitive Process Dimension in the First Domain (Adopting a Revised Bloom's Taxonomy)**

	PQF – Cognitive Process Dimension in the First Domain	Cognitive Process Dimension					
		Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
8	Demonstrated highly advanced systematic knowledge and skills in highly specialized and/or complex multidisciplinary field of learning for complex research and/ or professional practice and/or for the advancement of learning						x
7	Demonstrated advanced knowledge and skills in a specialized or multidisciplinary field of study for professional practice, self-directed research and/or lifelong learning						x
6	Demonstrated broad and coherent knowledge and skills in their field of study for professional work and lifelong learning				x	x	
5	Knowledge and skill that are mainly theoretical and/or abstract with significant depth in some areas, together with wide-ranging, specialized technical, creative and conceptual skills. Perform work activities demonstrating breadth, depth, and complexity in the planning and initiation of alternative approaches to skill and knowledge applications across a broad range of technical and/ or management requirements, evaluation and coordination.				x	x	
4	Knowledge and skills that are mainly theoretical and/or abstract with significant depth in one or more areas; contributing to technical solutions of a nonroutine or contingency nature; evaluation and analysis of current practices and the development of new criteria and procedures.				x	x	
3	Knowledge and skills that are a balance of theoretical and/or technical and practical. Work involves understanding the work process, contributing to problem solving, and making decisions to determine the process, equipment and materials to be used.		x	x			
2	Knowledge and skills that are manual, practical and/or operational in focus with a variety of options.	x					
1	Knowledge and skills that are manual or concrete or practical and/or operational in focus.	x					

Note The six Cognitive Process Dimensions are (i) remembering: retrieving, recognizing and recalling relevant knowledge from long-term memory: (ii) understanding: constructing meaning from oral, written, and graphic messages through interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining; (iii) applying: carrying out or using a procedure through executing, or implementing; (iv) analyzing: breaking material into constituent parts, determining how the parts related to one another and an overall structure or purpose through differentiating, organizing, and attributing; (v) evaluating: making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing; (vi) creating: putting elements together to form a coherent or functional whole, reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning or producing.

Source JET Education Services (2017), p.30.

Annex 1.3 **Application Domain Adopting the Structure of Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO) Method**

	PQF – Application Domain	SOLO Levels				
		Pre-structural	Uni-structural	Multi-structural	Relational	Extended abstract
8	Applied to professional leadership for innovation, research and/or development management in highly specialized or multi-disciplinary field					x
7	Applied to professional/creative work or research that requires self-direction and/or leadership in a specialized or multidisciplinary professional work/ research					x
6	Applied to professional/creative work or research in a specialized field of discipline and/or further study					x
5	Applied to activities that are supervisory, complex and non-routine which require an extensive interpretation and/or adaptation/ innovation					x
4	Applied to activities that are set in a range of contexts, most of which involve a number of unfamiliar and/or unpredictable aspects; involve largely nonroutine issues addressed using guidelines or procedures that require interpretation and/or adaptation				x	
3	Applied to activities that are set in contexts with some unfamiliar or unpredictable aspects; involve routine and nonroutine issues identified and addressed by interpreting and/or applying established guidelines or procedures with some variations				x	
2	Applied in activities that are set in a range of familiar predictable context; involve routine issues			x		
1	Applied in activities that are set in a limited range of highly familiar and predictable contexts; involve straightforward, routine issues which are addressed by following set rules, guidelines or procedures		x			

Note The five SOLO levels are: (i) pre-structural (no relevance): fail, incompetent, misses the point; (ii) unit-structural (one relevant aspect): identify, name, follow simple procedure; (iii) multi-structural (several relevant independent aspects): combine, describe, enumerate, perform serial skills, list; (iv) relational (integration into a structure): analyze, apply, argue, compare/ contrast, criticize, explain causes, relate, justify; and (v) extended abstract (generalization to a new domain): create, formulate, generate, hypothesize, reflect, theorize.

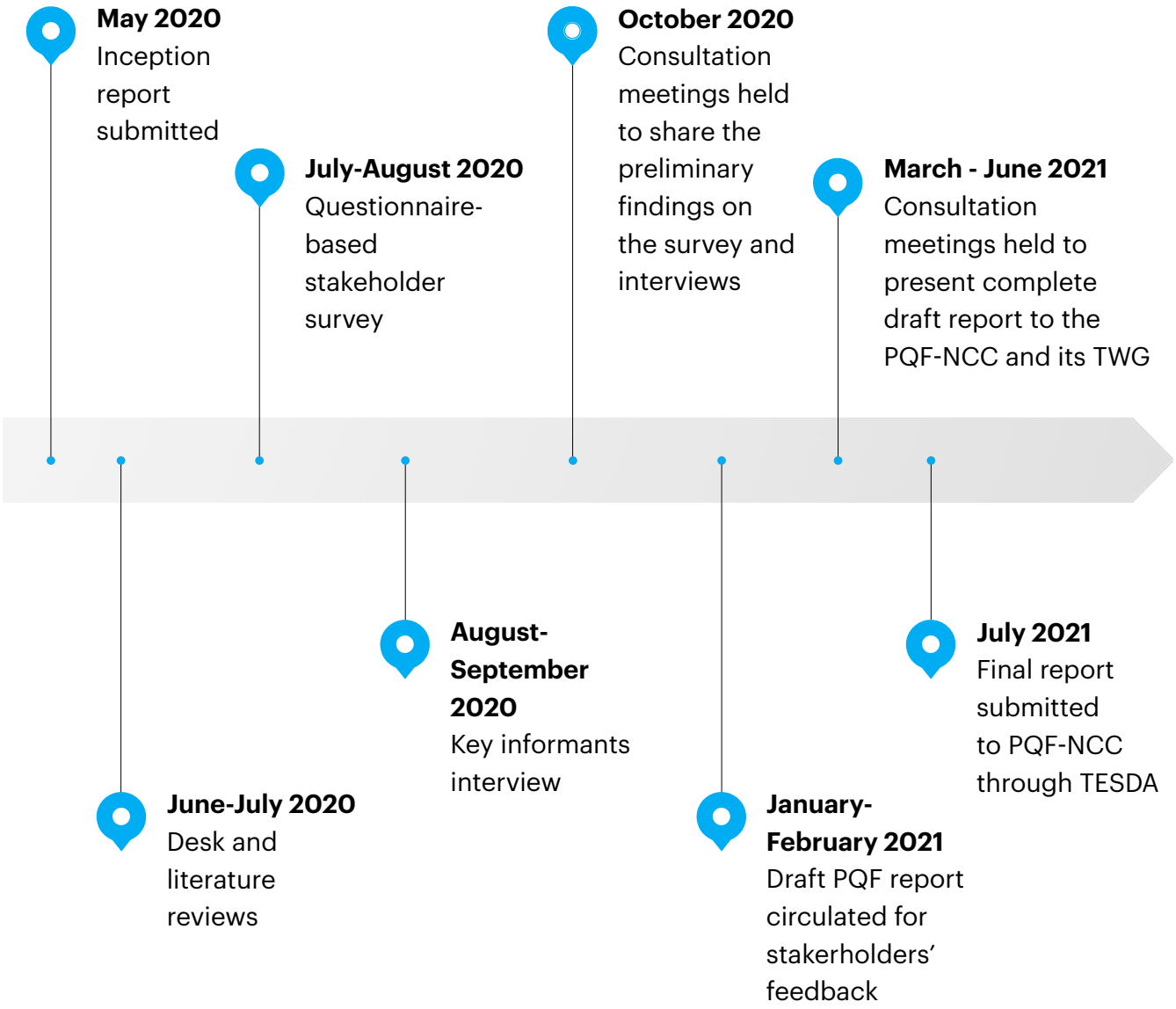
Source JET Education Services (2017), p.30.

Annex 1.4 **Degree of Independence Domain, Following the Dreyfus Model of Skills Acquisition**

	PQF- Degree of Independence Domain	Dreyfus Levels				
		Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert
8	Full independence in individual work and/or in terms of multi-disciplinary and more complex setting that demands leadership for research and creativity for strategic value added. Significant level of expertise-based autonomy and accountability.					x
7	Highly substantial degree of independence that involves exercise of leadership and initiative individual work or in teams of multi-disciplinary field.					x
6	Substantial degree of independence and or/in teams of related fields with minimal supervision.				x	
5	In conditions where there is broad guidance and direction, where judgment is required in planning and selecting appropriate equipment, services and techniques for self and other. Undertake work involving participation in the development of strategic initiatives, as well as personal responsibility and autonomy in performing complex technical operations or organizing others.				x	
4	Work involve some leadership and guidance when organizing activities of self and others.		x	x		
3	Application at this level may involve individual responsibility or autonomy, and/or may involve some responsibility for others. Participation in teams including team or group coordination may be involved		x			
2	In conditions where there is substantial support, guidance or supervision; limited judgment or discretion is needed	x				
1	In conditions where there is very close support, guidance or supervision; minimum judgment or discretion is needed.	x				

Annex 2

Project Milestones



Annex 3

List of Key Informant Interviewees

The review team conducted key informant interviews by each stakeholder group. The study could not have been made possible without significant inputs from representatives. The following key informants provided valuable suggestions and feedback on the PQF

- To get clear pictures of the current status of the PQF and its implementation within the context of the Philippine economy, labor market skill needs, and the K to 12 Reform;
- To identify critical issues related to the design and implementation of the PQF; and
- To gather opinions on how to improve the PQF.

Stakeholder Group	Name	Position and Organization
Government		
DepEd	Nepomuceno A. Malaluan	Undersecretary and Chief of Staff
	Jesus Lorenzo R. Mateo	Undersecretary for Planning, Human Resources, and Organizational Development
	G.H. S. Ambat	Assistant Secretary for ALS
	Margarita C. Ballesteros	Director for International Cooperation
	Jennifer Lopez	Director, Education Program Supervisor Officer in Charge, Bureau of Human Resources and Organization Development
	Nicholas Capulong	OIC Regional Director, DepEd Regional Office III
	John Siena	Director, National Educators' Academy
	Nelia Benito	Director, Bureau of Education Assessment
	Wilfredo Cabral	OIC Regional Director, DepEd National Capital Region (NCR)
TESDA	Rosanna A. Urdaneta	Deputy Director General for Policies and Planning
	Imelda B. Taganas	Executive Director, Qualifications and Standards Office
	Maria Susan P. Dela Rama	Executive Director, Certification Office
	Florencio F. Sunico, Jr.	Regional Director, NCR
	Vincent Aljon A. Cifra	Regional Director, Region 1
DOLE	Dominique R. Tutay	Assistant Secretary
	Patricia P. Hornilla	Deputy Executive Director, National Wages and Productivity Commission
	Paulina Kim C. Pacete	Institute for Labor Studies
	John Emmanuel Villanueva	Institute for Labor Studies
PRC	Dr. Jose Y. Cueto	Commissioner
	Arch. Yolanda D. Reyes	Commissioner
	Dr. Melinda Garcia	Member, Professional Regulatory Board of Dentistry / Member, PQF-TWG
	Engr. Jericho T. Borja	Member, Professional Regulatory Board of Mechanical Engineering
	Marie Cecile P. Fernando	OIC, Qualifications and Registration Division
CHED	Att. Lily Freida M. Milla	OIC, Deputy Executive Director IV
	Dr. Buenaventura D. Macatangay	Chief, Programs Development Division (PDD), Office of Programs and Standards Development Division (OPSD)

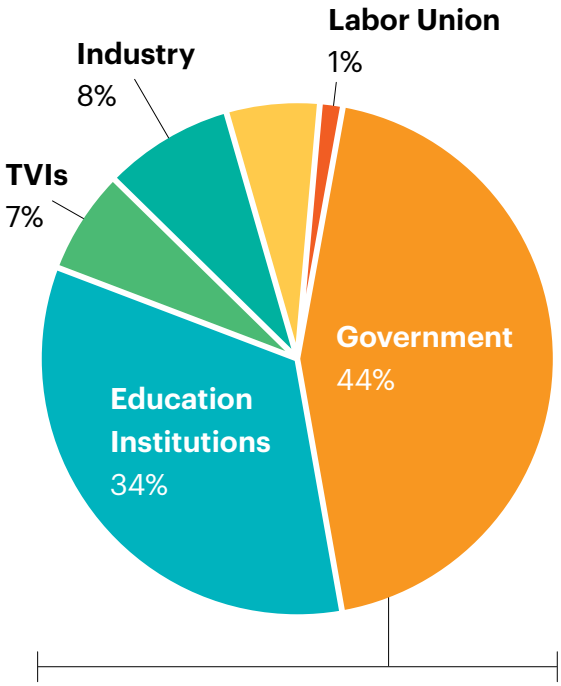
	Aline G. Magalong	Supervising Education Program Specialist, OPSD
Private Sector		
	Irene M. Isaac	Former PQF-NCC Head of Secretariat and TESDA Director-General, now member of the National Reference Committee and the AQRF
	Philip Purnell	Manager, SEAMEO INNOTECH
Employer Associations/Industry Groups		
	Antonio L. Sayo	Chairman of Intellectual Property, Employers Confederation of the Philippines,
	Allen Rufo	Vice President for Corporate Affairs, Toyota Motor Philippines Corporation, Member, Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc.
	Christina G. Aquino	Chair, Tourism Industry Board Foundation
HEIs		
	Dr. Ester Garcia	President, University of the East
	France Jopillo Sumang	Faculty, Asia Pacific College
	Dr. Gerardo Largoza	Director, Quality Assurance, De La Salle University
	Dr. John Kliatchko	Chair, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Santo Tomas
TVIs		
	Edicio dela Torre	Former TESDA Director-General, President, Education for Life Foundation
	Marc Celis	Deputy Director, Don Bosco One TVET Philippines
	Marjorie Mendenilla	Executive Director, TechVoc Schools Association of the Philippines, Inc. (TVSA)
Labor Unions		
	Isidro Antonio Asper	Senior Vice President for External Affairs, Federation of Free Workers
	Shirley Vicoy-Yorong	National Director for Economic Services, Associated Labor Unions – Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP)
TVET Trainees		
	Maria Elisa Camara	TESDA Women Center, Bartending NC II and Barista NC II
	Elaine Jasa	TESDA Women Center, Bartending NC II and Barista NC II
	Brian Del Castillo	TESDA Women Center, Bartending NC II and Barista NC II
	Arlene Luna	TESDA Women Center, Bartending NC II and Barista NC II
	Leir Obapial	Antipolo Institute of Technology (AiTECH), Technical Drafting NC II
	James Henry E. Lambonao	AiTECH, Technical Drafting NC II
	Leeannie Jade A. San Andres	AiTECH, Technical Drafting NC II
	Nelsie Marie D. Manahan	AiTECH, Technical Drafting NC II

Note The results of the KII should be interpreted with caution as interviewees responded in a group setting and their answers could be influenced by the opinions expressed by others in the group.

Annex 4

Profile of the Survey Participants

A questionnaire-based quantitative survey was conducted from July to August 2020 to understand stakeholders' awareness, knowledge, and acceptance of the PQF. In total, 232 stakeholders reported the survey, and about 26 percent of the respondents had at least some experience of the PQF by participating in the PQF forum or consultation meetings.



PRC	58
TESDA	12
DOLE	10
DepEd	10
CHED	5
Others (DOST, DOH, DTI, MARINA)	7
Higher Education Institution	47
COE	30
Secondary School	1
TVIs	15
Industry	19
NGOs	4
Labor Union	3
TOTAL	231

Annex 5

PQF Survey Questionnaire

Please read each question carefully and mark the number under the one answer that most closely fits your opinion.

Scores				
(1)	**(2)**	**(3)**	**(4)**	**(5)**
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Nor disagree or agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Part A.1. Purposes of the PQF – Ensuring the fundamental purposes of qualification

A.1.1. The PQF meets the fundamental purpose of qualification. In other words, the PQF plays a crucial role in retaining the relevance and effectiveness of qualifications so that qualifications can respond to current and emerging industry skill needs and new job roles in terms of knowledge, skills and values and applications. In the PQF, employers expect that qualifications guarantee the job competencies of graduates, while employees expect their qualifications are well recognized and rewarded in the labor market.

A.1.1.1 If you agree, what factors do you think have contributed to enhancing and retaining the relevance and effectiveness of qualifications?

A.1.1.2 If you disagree, what are the main reasons for your judgment? Why has the PQF not worked as intended and what needs to be done?

* To answer A.1.1.1. and A.1.1.2, several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. Institutional framework designed to promote close working relationship between employers, qualification authority (i.e. TESDA, HEIs, professional organizations) and education & training providers to develop qualification standards, curriculum, and TRs based on industry skill needs and new job roles
3. Government's administrative, technical and financial support
4. Understanding & recognition of the importance of the PQF in securing quality labor by stakeholders (e.g. government/ government agencies, employers, industry associations, professional organizations, HEIs, TVET providers, workers, and general public)
5. Capacity of key stakeholders (e.g. government/government agencies, employers, industry associations, professional organizations, HEIs, TVET providers) for identifying and analyzing the changes in skill needs, designing curriculum and TRs, and approving and implementing new qualifications and framework
6. Others: _____

Part A.2. Purposes of the PQF – Driving broader education and training system reforms towards the LLL society

A.2.1. The PQF has supported the design and delivery of education and training in the Philippines by providing a basis to set qualification levels for specific education and training programs. Education and training providers have tried to equip learners and trainees with knowledge, skills, and values demanded by the labor market, which is documented in the PQF.

A.2.1.1. If you agree with A.2.1., what factors do you think have contributed?

A.2.1.2. If you disagree with A.2.1., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer A.2.1.1. and A.2.1.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. Understanding of the contents of the PQF (e.g. qualification levels and level descriptors) and recognition of its importance by education and training providers (e.g. DepEd, TESDA, CHED, schools, TVET institutions, and HEIs)
3. Capacity of education and training providers to identify knowledge, skills, and values demanded by labor market, develop curriculum and TRs according to the PQF qualification levels and level descriptors, and deliver them
4. Others: _____

A.2.2. The PQF has promoted systematic integration of education and training, and close linkages among education, training, and then the labor market. By doing A.2.1., education and training systems have begun to work to complement each other for meeting the labor market skill needs.

A.2.2.1. If you agree with A.2.2., what factors do you think have contributed?

A.2.2.2. If you disagree with A.2.2., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer A.2.2.1. and A.2.2.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. Understanding of the contents of the PQF (e.g. qualification levels and level descriptors) and the role of the PQF in connecting education qualifications and TVET qualifications
3. Institutional / legal framework that makes it work to link education and TVET qualifications horizontally and vertically (e.g. person with NQ5 in TVET can go to NQ6 in HE program(i.e. BA), person with NQ7 in HE(i.e. Master's program) can transfer to other NQ7 in HE program)
4. The level of people's awareness of the Philippine Credit Transfer System
5. Others: _____

A.2.3. The PQF has played a role in providing people, especially those with a lower level of qualifications, with more education and training opportunities, and improving their qualification levels.

A.2.3.1. If you agree with A.2.3., what factors do you think have contributed?

A.2.3.2. If you disagree with A.2.3., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer A.2.3.1. and A.2.3.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. Understanding of the contents of the PQF (e.g. qualification levels and level descriptors) and the role of the PQF in connecting credits earned by the Recognition of Prior Learning and education and TVET qualifications
3. Institutional / legal framework that makes it work to link credits earned by the RPL and education and TVET qualifications
4. The level of people's awareness of the RPL and Philippine Credit Transfer Systems
5. Others: _____

A.2.4. The PQF has recognized learning gained outside formal education and training – including STEP (community-based informal short training), other short-term training by government agencies, research-oriented qualifications (credit recognition), or work-based experiences.

A.2.4.1. If you agree with A.2.4., what factors do you think have contributed?

A.2.4.2. If you disagree with A.2.4., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer A.2.4.1. and A.2.4.2., several factors like presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to

the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each items.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. Accreditation of non-formal education and training programs for credit by DepEd, TESDA, CHED, PRC, the Civil Aviation and Authority of the Philippines(CAAP) and Maritime Industry Authority(MARINA)
3. The Philippine Credit Transfer System that uses articulation, credit transfer and recognition of prior learning as the mechanisms to determine equivalencies between learning outcomes and to award credit for the purpose of progression through the PQF level
4. The Philippine TVET Competency Assessment and Certification System(PTCACS)
5. Others: _____

A.2.5. The PQF has promoted credit accumulation (leading to formal qualifications) and transfer across the PQF qualifications.

A.2.5.1. If you agree with A.2.5., what factors do you think have contributed?

A.2.5.2. If you disagree with A.2.5., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer A.2.5.1. and A.2.5.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. People's understanding of the contents of the PQF (e.g. qualification levels and level descriptors) and the role of the PQF in connecting credits earned by the Recognition of Prior Learning and education and TVET qualifications
3. Institutional / legal framework that makes it work to link credits earned and education and TVET qualifications
4. People's awareness and understanding of the Philippine Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
5. Others: _____

Part B. Purposes of the PQF – Ensuring the fundamental purposes of qualification

B.1. The PQF aligns eight-levels qualifications with the corresponding level descriptors, including complexity of learning outcomes. In other words, the PQF is well designed to (i) distinguish between levels and thus qualification types, so the PQF provides transparency on learning the learners expect to acquire and on the qualifications the learners expect to hold; (ii) address existing requirements of the community, industry, government, and academia; and also (iii) reflect changing needs of skills, knowledge, and application in light of economic and societal transformation.

B.1.1. If you agree with B.1., what factors do you think have contributed?

B.1.2. If you disagree with B.1., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the 8 level alignment not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer B.1.1. and B.1.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Clear definition of the PQF qualification levels and descriptors
2. Logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
3. Institutional system by which key actors like industry, DepEd, DOLE, CHED, PRC can actively participate in the formulation of the PQF qualification levels and descriptors
4. Others: _____

B.2. The PQF has played a crucial role in integrating qualifications for TVET into a comprehensive qualification framework (and thus promoting transfer between TVET track and academic track).

B.2.1. If you agree with B.2., what factors do you think have contributed?

B.2.2. If you disagree with B.2., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer B.2.1. and B.2.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents of the PQF qualification levels and descriptors that cover both TVET and academic qualifications
2. Logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors that links TVET qualifications and academic qualifications horizontally and vertically
3. Recognition of permeability of different types and levels of qualifications by society
4. Others: _____

B.3. The PQF positioned senior high school education (SHS) as a foundation level. The PQF contributed to making sure that SHS fulfills its role in preparing youth for TVET and/or higher education.

B.3.1. If you agree with B.3., what factors do you think have contributed?

B.3.2. If you disagree with B.3., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer B.3.1. and B.3.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Clear definition of the PQF qualification levels and descriptors, especially level 1 and its descriptors
2. Logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
3. Others: _____

B.4. The PQF promotes Continuing Professional Development and Career Progression & Specialization, including upskilling, re-skilling, and cross-skilling.

B.4.1. If you agree with B.4., what factors do you think have contributed?

B.4.2. If you disagree with B.4., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer B.4.1. and B.4.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. People's understanding of the contents of the PQF (e.g. qualification levels and level descriptors) and the role of the PQF in connecting credits and qualifications earned during the professional life
3. Institutional / legal framework that makes it work to link credits and qualifications earned to higher levels of (professional) qualifications
4. People's awareness and understanding of the Philippine Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
5. Others: _____

B.5. The PQF has aided learner mobility (pathways) vertically between hierarchical qualification levels and horizontally between different types of qualifications (within and between education and training sectors).

B.5.1. If you agree with B.5., what factors do you think have contributed?

B.5.2. If you disagree with B.5., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer B.5.1. and B.5.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents of the PQF qualification levels and descriptors that cover both TVET and academic qualifications
2. Logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors that links TVET qualifications and academic qualifications horizontally and vertically
3. Recognition of permeability of different types and levels of qualifications by society
4. Institutional / legal framework that makes it work to link education and TVET qualifications horizontally and vertically (e.g. person with NQ5 in TVET can go to NQ6 in HE program(i.e. BA), person with NQ7 in HE(i.e. Master's program) can transfer to other NQ7 in HE program)
5. The level of people's awareness of the Philippine Credit Transfer System
6. Others: _____

B.6. The PQF reflects the importance of lifelong learning.

B.6.1. If you agree with B.6., what factors do you think have contributed?

B.6.2. If you disagree with B.6., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer B.6.1. and B.6.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. People's understanding of the contents of the PQF (e.g. qualification levels and level descriptors) and the role of the PQF in connecting credits and qualifications earned during their working lives
3. Institutional / legal framework that makes it work to link credits and qualifications earned to higher levels of qualifications
4. People's awareness and understanding of the Philippine Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
5. Others: _____

Part C. Quality Assurance – Promoting quality assurance process

C.1. The PQF has played a crucial role in promoting the quality assurance of higher education institutions (HEIs) and TVET institutions, HEIs and TVET programs, and corresponding qualifications.

C.1.1. If you agree with C.1., what factors do you think have contributed?

C.1.2. If you disagree with C.1., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer C.1.1. and C.1.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. Utilization of the PQF qualification levels and level descriptors as standards for quality assurance
3. Recognition of the PQF qualifications level and level descriptors by society
4. People's awareness and acceptance of the Philippine Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
5. Others: _____

C.2. The PQF has played a crucial role in promoting the quality assurance of shorter form credentials and thus recognizing shorter form credentials for credit into the PQF qualifications.

C.2.1. If you agree with C.2., what factors do you think have contributed?

C.2.2. If you disagree with C.2., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer C.2.1. and C.2.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents (coverage) and logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors
2. Utilization of the PQF qualification levels and level descriptors as standards for quality assurance
3. Recognition of the PQF qualifications level and level descriptors by society
4. Others: _____

C.3. The PQF has played a crucial role in promoting transparency of diverse qualifications so that learners, workers, professionals, employers and the society can trust the qualification (i.e. through activities such as the provision of the benchmarks or quality criteria that needs to meet in order to be accredited in the PQF or a user-friendly register system).

C.3.1. If you agree with C.3., what factors do you think have contributed?

C.3.2. If you disagree with C.3., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?
* To answer C.3.1. and C.3.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Adequacy in contents of the PQF qualification levels and descriptors that cover both TVET and academic qualifications
2. Logical hierarchy of the PQF qualifications levels and descriptors that links TVET qualifications and academic qualifications horizontally and vertically
3. Recognition of permeability of different types and levels of qualifications by society
4. Institutional / legal framework that makes it work to link education and TVET qualifications horizontally and vertically (e.g. person with NQ5 in TVET can go to NQ6 in HE program(i.e. BA), person with NQ7 in HE(i.e. Master's program) can transfer to other NQ7 in HE program)
5. The level of people's awareness of the Philippine Credit Transfer System
6. Others: _____

C.4. The PQF system has kept (or is ready to keep) the PQF updated through formal processes of qualification addition and removal hinged on changes in economy and industrial needs.

C.4.1. If you agree with C.4., what factors do you think have contributed?

C.4.2. If you disagree with C.4., what are the main reasons for your judgment? why has the PQF not worked as intended? and what needs to be done?

* To answer C.4.1. and C.4.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Awareness of the importance of timely revision of the PQF qualification levels and level descriptors according to changes in skill demands
2. Capacity of key actors (e.g. employers, TESDA, CHED, PRC, DepED, ...) to catch changes in skill demands and reflect them in curriculum and TRs
3. Legal and financial supporting mechanisms for timely adjustment of the PQF
4. Others: _____

Part D. Governance – facilitating interactions among stakeholders (i.e. TESDA, CHED, DOLE, DepEd, Higher Education Institutions, TVET providers, and Industry)

D.1. The PQF governance system has played a crucial role in engaging stakeholders in designing programs and qualifications, promoting lifelong learning and social mobility (pathways) through communication, collaboration and coordination across education, TVET and industry, and increasing the sectoral initiatives.

D.1.1. If you agree with D.1., what factors do you think have contributed?

D.1.2. If you disagree with D.1., what are the main reasons for your judgment? and what needs to be done?

* To answer D.1.1. and D.1.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Awareness / understanding of the importance of the PQF in promoting effective HRD and thus national economic development by key stakeholders
2. Capacity of key stakeholders (e.g. DepEd, TESDA, CHED, PRC, DOLE, industry representative organizations, ...) to formulate and implement the PQF system
3. Legal framework and financial supporting system for implementing the PQF
4. Institutionalized coordination mechanism(s) among stakeholders on matters of the PQF formulation and implementation
5. Others: _____

D.2. The PQF governance system has played a crucial role in increasing public awareness of the usefulness of the PQF for their career development, as well as other stakeholders such as education and TVET providers.

D.2.1. If you agree with D.2., what factors do you think have contributed?

D.2.2. If you disagree with D.2., what are the main reasons for your judgment? and what needs to be done?

* To answer D.2.1. and D.2.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Campaigns by stakeholders (e.g. DepEd, TESDA, CHED, PRC, DOLE, industry representative organizations, ...) on the importance of the PQF and how to use it
2. Capacity of key stakeholders to increase general public's and stakeholders' awareness and utilization of the PQF
3. Legal framework and financial supporting system for implementing the PQF
4. Institutionalized coordination mechanism(s) among stakeholders
5. Others: _____

D.3. The PQF governance system has played a crucial role in promoting the reform of the education and training systems in terms of quality, relevance, access, efficiency, and equity, and consequently enhancing the competitiveness of the Philippines education and training system.

D.3.1. If you agree with D.3., what factors do you think have contributed?

D.3.2. If you disagree with D.3., what are the main reasons for your judgment? and what needs to be done?

* To answer D.3.1. and D.3.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Awareness / understanding of the importance of the PQF in promoting effective HRD and thus national economic development by key stakeholders
2. Capacity of key stakeholders (e.g. DepEd, TESDA, CHED, PRC, DOLE, industry representative organizations, ...) to formulate and implement the PQF system
3. Legal framework and financial supporting system for implementing the PQF
4. Institutionalized coordination mechanism(s) among stakeholders on designing and implementing the reform of education and training
5. Others: _____

D.4. The PQF governance system has played a crucial role in efficiently carrying responsibilities of the PQF NCC and Technical Committee (institutional arrangement) in order to ensure quality assurance of the PQF as well as operation.

D.4.1. If you agree with D.4., what factors do you think have contributed?

D.4.2. If you disagree with D.4., what are the main reasons for your judgment? and what needs to be done?

To answer D.4.1. and D.4.2., several factors including ones presented below can be considered. Please rank them

according to the level of significance and add your detailed explanation and opinions for each item.

1. Awareness / understanding of the importance of the PQF in promoting effective HRD and thus national economic development by key stakeholders
2. Capacity of key stakeholders (e.g. DepEd, TESDA, CHED, PRC, DOLE, industry representative organizations, ...) to formulate and implement the PQF system
3. Legal framework and financial supporting system for implementing the PQF
4. Institutionalized coordination mechanism(s) among stakeholders on matters of the PQF formulation and implementation
5. Others: _____

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