

The Spread of National Qualifications Frameworks

*Tracing and Examining its Prospects in the
East African Region*

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IV

Abstract

A large number of states internationally have turned to National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) to enhance quality and relevance of their education and training sector. As limited research is conducted on such developments in Africa, this study draws the attention to East Africa, more specifically the member states of the East African Community (EAC). The study sets out to examine if the NQF policy has reached the region, explore how the policy is justified, and examines the prospects of fulfilling the expected benefits of the policy.

By using a mixed methods research design, with a quantitative content analysis of official documents and qualitative semi-structured interviews, the study reveals that all the studied EAC member states are planning and implementing qualifications frameworks. The study further revealed that an East African regional qualifications framework is emerging.

To examine how the states justify adoption of the NQF policy, a model of NQF developed by Allais (2010) with eleven typical rationales are applied to guide quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The operation show that East Africans states justify NQF in similar ways to existing NQFs, however some nuances are observed. An analysis of the prospects of achieving the benefits follows, where experience from established NQFs and contextual factors are seen as two factors that can indicate the prospects. The experience from other NQFs, show that qualifications frameworks are difficult to implement and achieving the goals of the policy are limited. The study further argues that some East African contextual factors may be a further threat to successful implementation of NQF in the region, where the analysis identifies challenges and some pitfalls to be avoided based on existing literature.

To further enhance understanding of why the policy has diffused to East Africa, an analysis of Carnoy's (1999) three reform types are compared to NQF concepts. The analysis suggests that the policy is attractive to states as it responds to mechanisms of globalization, which provides theoretical understanding of the underlying rationales states have for adopting NQF.

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Abbreviations

Cedefop	The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
EAC	East African Community
ETF	European Training Foundation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IUCEA	The Inter-University Council for East Africa
MHEST	Kenya Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology
MINEDUC	Rwanda Ministry of Education
MoE	Kenya Ministry of Education
MoES	Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports
MOEVT	Tanzanian Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
WDA	Rwanda Workforce Development Authority

1 Introduction

“In New Zealand the framework allows you to be transparent and to line all the qualifications up. You remove a lot of the confusion, so it becomes a lot clearer. I guess it’s a little bit like building a house, you need a plan otherwise you will build the windows in the wrong place. So the framework gives you that. It gives you a framework that all the qualifications can line up with and then it is very clear and everybody understands it. And it is also transferrable, you can compare it internationally, you can make sure that when a person says they have a qualification, they might be a nurse or a doctor, [...] when they travel around the world that will be recognized...”

Thornton, 2013, New Zealand Qualification Authority

The idea about developing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) emerged in the United Kingdom¹ in the late 1980s. It was triggered by the desire to make sense of the “jungle” of various qualifications and education paths in their existing vocational education system (Allais 2010:29-30). Within a decade, the idea of introducing qualifications frameworks had taken roots in Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, and South Africa, which were often referred to as the “early starters” (Young, Allais & Raffe 2009:3) or “1st generation NQFs” (Tuck 2007:1). Inspired by these pioneers, a handful of other states in Europe, Asia and Africa had adopted qualifications frameworks by the year 2000. A few years later the European Union saw possibilities of enlarging the ‘NQF model’ to a regional scope where its member states were encouraged to develop NQFs aligned to a regional design. Since then, significant international organizations have embraced the policy and recommend their member states to implement qualifications frameworks. Currently more than 140 states and a handful of regional organizations are at some stage of introducing or implementing qualifications frameworks, ranging from low income to high income states, as well as transition states. Its spread is expected to continue in the years to come (Young & Allais 2013; European Training Foundation [ETF], Cedefop & UNESCO UIL 2013:9; Tuck 2007:1).

The endeavor for skills development and policies that enhance quality and relevance of education has risen to the top priority among policy makers internationally. Increased competition among states in an interconnected world has further drawn the attention to education as a key factor in equipping people with appropriate skills (Carnoy 1999:13).

¹ Excluding Scotland

Technological advancement reduces the demand for unskilled labor and production can shift to areas of the world with favorable factors of production, leading to quick changes in the demand for skills. The traditional education model with long term workforce planning is seen as insufficient faced with the new reality patterns (Morrow & Torres 2007:92). Moreover, the existing education systems are often perceived as inflexible and characterized as consisting of a mosaic of providers incomprehensible for learners, employers and society at large (Allais 2010:56). A continued number of states turn to NQF in an attempt to target these challenges. The expectation is that the qualifications framework will, as Thornton (2013) argues, make a plan for organizing qualifications and make the system understandable, while simultaneously make the education system more flexible and facilitate a mobile workforce. Furthermore, implementers expect the framework to facilitate increased quality and improve the link between education and the economy. Thus, NQF has often been perceived by implementers as the ‘magic bullet’ or a ‘miracle cure’ to the challenges they face in the globalized world with increased interconnectedness and competitiveness (Young & Allais 2013:1).

Nevertheless, the implementation of NQF around the world has been no “walk in the park”. The reform has often led to disappointing results for its implementers (Allais 2010). Moreover, the implementation of the framework has in some places led to considerable contestation among the authorities that implement it and the established education providers (Raffe 2009:32). The hopes and expectations of the policy have in many states who implemented it been characterized as exaggerated and unrealistic to achieve (Young 2011; Raffe 2009:23). Such criticisms may lead one to question what is it with NQF that causes its continued spread, despite limited results and in some cases causes considerable conflicts?

Even after 25 years of NQF implementation with questionable results, more states seem to turn to NQFs. From its early start in Africa, where South Africa was a pioneer, NQF has spread to a number of other Sub-Saharan African states (Tuck 2007:1; Allais 2010:39; ETF, Cedefop & UNESCO UIL 2013:10; Chisholm 2007). As the implementation of NQF is continuing in Sub Saharan Africa, this thesis brings the attention to the East African region. Limited knowledge is available on NQFs spread to this part of Africa. Moreover as the intergovernmental organization in the region, East African Community (EAC), promotes cooperation on issues such as trade and security, it is plausible that the member states cooperate on issues such as education as well. Further, the EAC member states signed a free trade agreement allowing, among other things, free movement of workers (EAC 2010:10).

This gives reason to suggest that a regional qualifications framework may emerge in the East African region. Thus, this thesis sets out to answer the following:

Has the NQF policy reached East Africa? If so, how is the adoption of the policy justified in the region and what are the prospects of fulfilling the expected benefits of the reform?

As the research question indicates, this thesis consists of two main research operations. However, before engaging with these, a clear understanding of what a qualifications framework entails is necessary.

1.1 What is NQF?

Crucial to the understanding of NQF is to examine what the term “qualification” implies. According to the Oxford online dictionary (n.d.) a qualification is defined as “*a pass of an examination or an official completion of a course, especially one conferring status as a recognized practitioner of a profession or activity*”. The definition is helpful in showing the essential characteristic of a qualification when it in some way is formally certified. An additional nuance is given by Tuck’s (2007:2) definition of qualification. He understands it as “*a package of standards or units judged to be worthy of a formal recognition in a certificate.*” In this case, a qualification can be understood as a “package of standards or units” and not merely tied to an education program leading to a well-grounded historical profession or degree. As will be evident throughout this thesis, Tuck’s (2007:2) additional nuance on the term “qualification” is essential for understanding how the concept is understood in most qualifications frameworks.

A qualifications framework can be understood as a policy package with various tools, models, concepts and theories to reform according to national priorities for education, training and qualifications systems in a given context. More specifically a NQF consists of a framework of qualifications, where qualifications are classified and organized in a hierarchical system. The framework consists of levels, where qualifications are placed on these levels according to the complexity and advancement of a given qualification (ETF, Cedefop & UNESCO UIL 2010:9; OECD 2005:6). The levels often have a level descriptor which describes in broad terms what a holder of a given qualification pegged at a level can and is competent of doing (Allais 2010).

Thus, a NQF is expected to give structure to existing and new qualifications according to learning outcomes, which is usually defined by a statement of what the learner is supposed to be able to know and do in order to possess a given qualification. Regardless of whether the learning has taken place in a classroom, through work experience, or through general life experience (Tuck 2007:v). The scope of a qualifications framework may be comprehensive in the sense that it deals with all learning achievements and pathways. However, some may be confined to a particular sector of learning as for instance adult education, vocational skills, higher education or others (OECD 2005:6). Commonly, all qualifications frameworks establish a basis for improving quality, accessibility and links between different fields of education and training. It further creates a system for national (and also international) recognition of skills acquired either in the formal or outside the formal education and training system (OECD 2005:6, Tuck 2007:2,13, Singh & Duvekot 2003:18). Thus an overall aim of introducing NQF is to reform the education, training and qualifications systems to make them more flexible, demand oriented, and to place the learner in the center (Tuck 2007:17; Raffé 2009:7,9; Allais 2010:16).

Introducing a qualifications framework is therefore seen as a tool in the existing qualifications system. A qualifications system includes all aspects of a state's activity that results in a qualification as defined above. Such mechanisms can be policies on qualifications, institutional arrangements, quality assurance, assessment and award processes and other instruments that link education to the labor market and the society at large. Thus, introducing a hierarchical framework of qualifications, with level descriptors and qualifications based on learning outcomes, can be understood as part of a broader qualifications system in a given state (OECD 2005:6).

1.2 Purpose of Study

In line with the research question presented above the purpose of this study is to first examine whether or not the NQF policy has reached the East African region. Having answered the first part of the research question, the thesis sets out to study how the policy is justified, and examine what the prospects are of fulfilling the expected benefits of the policy.

As qualifications frameworks are an international phenomenon and its diffusion is expected to continue, there is reason to expect that the policy is either considered or implemented in the

East African region. The states included in the term “East African region” are here Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda, as these are member states of the East African Community². As close to no research has been conducted on the spread of qualifications frameworks to East Africa, the first research operation of this study seeks to shed light on this knowledge gap.

As discussed above NQF show in general limited ability to achieve the goals they set. Therefore a critical analysis of how the policy is justified in East Africa may illuminate the challenges and opportunities of achieving the goals of the policy. As little research is conducted on NQFs in East Africa one may infer that the policy is not considered in the region. However, as argued above, it seems likely that the policy is being considered, but the limited research may suggest that the NQFs in the region are at an early stage of implementation. If this is the case, an analysis of the prospects of achieving the goals of the policy seems relevant as the study may identify challenges and pitfalls to be avoided.

In the study of evaluating the prospects of the policy, experience from the vast number of existing NQFs can give some direction for the qualifications frameworks in East Africa. A body of research and experience has been built as the NQF has spread. Tuck (2007:1) advises new NQF implementers to consider closely the experience of the more established NQFs, to identify feasible approaches and avoid pitfalls that others have done. Nonetheless, only considering experience overlooks the new context in which the policy is implemented. Contextual factors are seen crucial in this study for the prospects of successful implementation of NQF in East Africa. Such factors may pose challenges or provide opportunities to implement a qualifications framework design appropriate for the contextual environment (Raffe 2009:1). Contextual factors in combination with experience from earlier NQFs are therefore seen as elements that can give an indication of the prospects of realizing the expected benefits of NQF in East Africa.

Other factors such as internal dynamics between institutions, qualifications systems, and education providers and central authorities are crucial in whether NQF's promises are realized. However, an in-depth analysis of such dynamics of NQF in all the four East African states would exceed the scope of a master thesis. Moreover, the models and concepts of NQF discussed in this study, each deserves a case study on its plausible or actual impact. As there is little existing research and limited knowledge on NQFs in East Africa, this study is better

² Burundi is also a member of the EAC. The reason for excluding Burundi is explained in first section of Chapter 4, Methodology and Methods.

seen as a door opener to this process. Where the purpose is to map NQFs policy diffusion to the region and identify issues that have so far not been researched, and point to further in-depth studies on the policy's impact in the region.

1.3 Structure of Study

Having set the stage for this study above, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the East African context where general issues and NQF-specific contextual factors are presented. Chapter 3 sets out to give the analytical framework of the thesis. It consists of two main parts, first three reform types seen as triggered by certain mechanisms of globalization, and a model of NQF consisting of three key design elements and several typical rationales that states have for adopting NQF. Chapter 4 further presents the chosen research design, which consists of a mixed method concurrent triangulation design. It contains of a two-step quantitative content analysis of policy documents, followed by qualitative semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled respondents.

Chapter 5 explores if the NQF policy has reached East Africa by presenting the first step of the content analysis. It further explores whether or not NQF is getting a foothold in East Africa and examines the regional dimension of qualifications frameworks in the region. Chapter 6 presents how the East African states have justified their qualifications frameworks applying the second step of the content analysis, guided by the model of NQF. The identified rationales are further analyzed in terms of prospects of realizing the policy based on earlier experience and contextual factors. As the prospects seem overall limited the last section of the chapter compares global mechanisms to NQF concepts to give insight into why the policy is attractive to East African implementers. Finally, Chapter 7 sets out to summarize the study, and link the initial findings of this study, namely that NQF has reached East Africa, to surrounding trends. As the study's purpose is to be a door-opener to NQF developments in the region, several reflections to further research are presented. With this rough overview, it is appropriate to explore the East African context.

2 The East African Context

The aim of this chapter is to give a brief overview of contextual factors that has implications for the plausible adoption of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) in East Africa. These contextual factors may further give a better understanding of the findings and analysis that follows. It is worth stressing that Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda have their own unique history, political context, society structures and education sector characteristics which will not be dealt with extensively below. However the chapter will rather focus on some key aspects and regional trends that are relevant for a potential implementation of qualifications frameworks in the region.

2.1 Geographical Rationale

Apart from being located geographically close to each other hence Figure 2.1 below, the states are interconnected through the intergovernmental organization called the East African Community (EAC)³. The first attempt at regional cooperation among independent states in the East African region took place in 1967. However short lived, it represented an early beginning of what is today the EAC (Hazlewood 1979:40). The initial members of the intergovernmental organization that was established in 1999 were Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda, and in 2007 Rwanda and Burundi were admitted (African Union n.d.). EAC's main aim is to work for integration in different sectors of society between the member states in order to develop a prosperous and politically stable region. Despite many challenges in the regional integration project, EAC has succeeded in implementing a Common Market Protocol allowing goods, capital, as well as labor to move freely without national hindrances within the EAC (EAC 2010:10). Especially relevant to this study is that the Common Market Protocol allows free movement of people and labor without work permits and visas (Kingi 2010). This may further have implications for how skills and qualifications are organized in the region.

As discussed above other regional integration organizations with similar aims of labor mobility as the EAC, has introduced regional qualifications frameworks to facilitate the aim. This suggests that it is plausible that similar policy measures have been or are considered by the EAC as well. Thus it gives reason to include the regional entity of EAC into the further

³ Burundi is also member of East African Community. Justification for not considering Burundi will be explained in detail in the first section of Chapter 4, Methodology and Methods.

research, to explore whether the international NQF policy has been considered at a regional level in East Africa.

Figure 2.1 Map of East Africa



Source: Emri (2014)

2.2 Political and Economic Conditions

The states under study are perhaps most known for extensive poverty, political instability and internal conflicts such as the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, authoritarian trends in Uganda, internal conflicts and spillover effects from the Somalia situation into Kenya, and poverty in Tanzania. Although these issues are part of the conditions in the region, the states are experiencing high economic growth rates as well as considerable political stability (BBC 2013a; BBC 2013b, BBC 2013c; BBC 2014). However considerable nuances as to the degree of democracy and typically democratic freedoms such as political rights and civil liberties are also evident in the region. An index often used in this regard is the Freedom House Index, which categorizes world states into “free”, “partly free” and lastly “not free” (Freedom House 2014). Looking at the states in Table 2.1, one can observe that all states covered by this thesis were ranked as “partly free” with the exception of Rwanda which is ranked “not free” (Freedom House 2014).

In regards to the economic conditions in the region considerable developments are observed the last decade. According to the Kenyan economist Peter Karungu (2013) in an interview with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the average growth rates in the EAC states are currently at 6 % annually. Data from the World Bank confirms similar average rate, however it reveals that where growth has been stable or increasing in all the states, it has slowed in Uganda from a 7,3 % growth rate in 2009 to 3,4 % in 2013 (World Bank n.d.). Despite promising economic trends throughout the region, all the states are rated as ‘low income countries’ with a regional average of 56% of the East African population living below the international poverty line of \$1,25 a day (UNDP 2013:160). Moreover the 2013 Human Development Report (UNDP 2013) using its Human Development Index (HDI) rated all the four states in the lowest category of human development. This indicates that life expectancy, educational attainments, and economic income are generally low in the region. Table 2.1 below summarizes the broader social, economic and political conditions of the region discussed so far.

Table 2.1 East African ‘Freedom’, HDI and Income level

States	Freedom House 2014	HDI 2013	National income
Kenya	Partly free	Low Human Development	Low income
Uganda	Partly free	Low Human Development	Low income
Tanzania	Partly free	Low Human Development	Low income
Rwanda	Not free	Low Human Development	Low income

Information derived from Freedom House (2014) and UNDP (2013:170-173)

Moreover East Africa is characterized by a relatively low urban population with the highest proportion of 27 % in Tanzania, 24 % in Kenya, 19 % in Rwanda and only 16 % in Uganda. This implies that the vast majority, an average of 78% of East Africans live in rural areas where many rely on substance agriculture in the traditional economy (United Nations Statistics Division n.d.). Data on urban and non-agriculture employment is difficult to come by for East Africa (Xaba, Horn & Motala 2002:9), however in Uganda it is estimated that more than 60% are employed in the urban informal sector (UNESCO 2012:261). Moreover

the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (2012:260-261) suggests that an average of 70% of urban workers in Sub-Saharan Africa are self-employed or employed in medium, small or micro enterprises that operate in the informal sector. This suggests that the informal sector in Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda has similar characteristics. The limited opportunities for formal employment in the private and public sector in the region is according to the International Labour Organization (ILO 1995 in Xaba, Horn & Motala 2002:27), seen as a main factor that contributes to the existence of the informal sector. This indicates that one could characterize the labor markets in the region as “depressed labor markets” (Lauglo 2005:6). Another factor often seen as contributing to the existence of the informal sector and the large proportion of substance farmers is the overall low skill level in the region (UNESCO 2012:18,262; ILO 1995 in Xaba, Horn & Motala 2002:27). Thus what follows is an examination of the education sector in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda.

2.3 Regional Education Features

Like most states in Africa the East African states have imported models of primary, secondary, technical and vocational as well as higher education, inherited from their earlier colonizers (Crossley & Watson 2003:29). The education sector has not been developed based on cultural and societal features in the region, but rather from the society and culture of their earlier colonizer. One might further infer that the imported school models are not well contextualized to the demands of the economy and the labor market. Further, there are multiple providers of education. Apart from public schools, there are private schools catering mainly to the better off as well as a relatively large number other private provisions which are not for profit but run an operated by missionary organizations and churches or by other non-governmental organizations (Kenya MoE & MHEST⁴ 2012a:7; Tanzania MOEVT⁵ 2012b:29-30; Uganda MoES⁶ 2011:18-19).

Low ranking in the 2013 HDI indicates among other things low educational performance which again infers low overall skill levels in the region. However, as shown in Table 2.2, considerable nuances in education scores among the states, e.g. Kenya scoring far better than its neighbors on adult literacy levels, share of population with at least secondary education, and enrollment rate in secondary schooling. This may suggest that overall skill levels in

⁴ Kenya Ministry of Education and Kenya Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology

⁵ Tanzania Ministry of Education and Vocational Training

⁶ Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports

Kenya are higher than in the other three states. Table 2.2 also shows that a vast majority of East Africans have basic skills in literacy however a significant 24 % of the regional population is illiterate. Perhaps the most alarming issue revealed in table is the 80 % of the regional adult population has less than secondary education, which further implies a low skill level among the vast majority of the population leaving them without any formally certified professional/vocational qualification. Many people enter the world of work with low skills, which will have implications for their productivity and income generation and perhaps end up in poverty. Furthermore this lack of formal qualifications often leads to a work life in the informal sector or in the traditional economy (UNESCO 2012:18,262).

Table 2.2 Education HDI Indicators

States/HDI indicator	Adult Literacy level	Population with at least secondary	Primary Gross Enrollment Ratio	Secondary Gross Enrollment Ratio	Tertiary Gross Enrollment Ratio	Primary school dropout rate	HDI rating
Method	% ages 15 and older	% ages 25 and older	Gross Enrollment Ratio			% of primary school cohort	All HDI indicators
Kenya	87,4	41,9	113	60	4	27	145
Uganda	73,2	23,4	121	28	4,2	68	161
Tanzania	73,2	7,4	102	NA	2,1	18	152
Rwanda	71,0	7,7	143	32	5,5	63	167
Average	76,2	20,1	119,8	40	4,0	44	NA

The calculations presented here are based on numbers from UNDP (2013:170-173).

An aspect which may shed light on the low skill levels is the regional tendency of decreased gross enrollment from primary to secondary and tertiary education showed in Table 2.2. As the table shows it is measured by gross enrolment ratio, which implies the total enrollment to a certain level of education expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group that corresponds to the level of education. As one can observe all the states have a higher percentage than 100 on primary enrollment which is because of some candidates late entry, or grade repetition on primary level (UNESCO 2012:414). Nonetheless the average

gross enrollment ratio in the region is at 119 % in primary education whereas in secondary education it drops to 40% on average. Kenya has significantly higher secondary enrollment ratios which perhaps makes the average measure unfruitful as these ratios are at a staggering 28 and 32 in Uganda and Rwanda respectively. For tertiary levels of education one can observe that the average gross enrollment rate across the states is only 4 % (UNDP 2013:171-173). In short it seems secondary and tertiary education is reserved for the few in the region perhaps with the exception of secondary in Kenya. Nonetheless these trends shed light on the overall low skill levels in East Africa where many people leave school before they have acquired sufficient qualifications and skills which are beneficial for life and work.

Another factor that contributes to the low skill levels in the region are the relatively high dropout rates observed in Table 2.2. Despite the large percentages enrolled in primary education throughout the region, only an average of 66 % completes primary school. An average measure overlooks large differences as Uganda and Rwanda have significantly higher dropout rates than Kenya and even more so in Tanzania with the lowest 18 % dropout from primary school (UNDP 2013:170-173). These individuals leave school with few acquired skills and are likely to take low waged jobs, which according to UNESCO 2012 Global Monitoring Report (2012:197) either can be a stepping stone to acquire skills informally through work or a trap in poverty which is hard to escape. Either way, high dropout rates pose a challenge to the regions overall skill levels and indicates that the East African governments struggle to keep pupils in school.

Needless to say this brief section overlooks many potentially important contextual features and as well as differences between the states' education sectors. However the aim has been to give a general overview of education and economic conditions as a setting for NQF-policies.

3 Analytical Framework

For policy studies such as this, Ball (2006:43) argues that a toolbox of diverse concepts and theories are needed for a fruitful analysis. Thus the purpose of this chapter is to lay out the concepts and theories applied which together form an analytical framework consisting of two parts for studying adoption of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) policies in East Africa. The first part will start off by discussing globalization and how it triggers certain education reform. Secondly a model of NQF is presented which facilitates data collection and comparison of NQF policies.

3.1 Education Policy in a Globalized World

Mechanisms of globalization is changing the world and thus also education. Steiner-Khamsi (2004:2) claims that globalization in education research often is used to explain and oversimplify complex issues to an extent where the concept itself loses analytical meaning. Relating this to national policy studies, one must avoid reducing globalization to an explanatory variable to show why states adopt the same policy (Dale 1999:49). Therefore globalization itself is insufficient to explain the vast number of states that adopt qualifications frameworks internationally. To enable analytical meaning of globalization, the concept is in this study broken down into smaller manageable analytical aspects (Waldow 2012:412), starting with mechanisms of globalization and followed by how these activate three broad policy types (Carnoy 1999:37). Providing this overview serves first as a general point of departure for understanding the education challenges states have in a global inter-connected world and secondly, for analyzing NQF as a policy response triggered by certain mechanisms of globalization.

Triggering these three reform types are changes in the global economy due to advances in technological infrastructure in telecommunication, information systems, microelectronics, and computer-based transportation (Carnoy 1999:13; Morrow & Torres 2007:92). These trends enables among other things labor and production to move internationally to places with favorable environments. Production can for instance move to places with more qualified and/or cheaper labor, favorable political conditions, access to better infrastructure and national resources, access to larger markets and friendlier tax environments (Morrow & Torres 2007:92). Since production can move and search for the most favorable conditions,

Carnoy (1999:13) argues it creates a global competitive environment where states seek to implement policies that attract investments and production (Carnoy 1999:13). These mechanisms of globalization inevitably have implications for the education systems all over the world (Dale 1999:51; Carnoy 1999:32), which traditionally have focused on producing a technically skilled, disciplined and reliable workforce aligned with national production patterns (Morrow & Torres 2007:92). Faced with these changes Carnoy (1999) identifies three reform types states tend to implement to adjust its education and training sector to these new realities. It is worth mentioning that these three types have more aspects to them than what is laid out here however what is presented is what is seen as relevant to NQF.

Faced with international competition and shifts in demand of skills, Carnoy (1999:37) suggests that states seek to adopt *competitive-driven* education reforms. The new environment requires people who can quickly adapt to new working environments with capacity to learn new required skills for a certain job. Thus education systems are challenged to become more flexible to accommodate these changing demands (Carnoy 1999:85). Furthermore skills such as problem solving and ability to work in teams in creative ways are highly valued (Morrow & Torres 2007:92). Thus competitive-driven reforms contain new ideas about organizing the production of knowledge, skills and qualifications (Carnoy 1999:37; Dale & Robertson 2012:25) to equip learners with appropriate skills (Morrow & Torres 2007:92; Carnoy 1999:34). High quality general education and broad-based and multi-skilled vocational training programs is expected to improve the quality and productivity of labor and education institutions (Carnoy 1999:27-38). To achieve these goals states tend to set minimum learning standards of educational achievements, thus setting requirements to education providers of what a learner should attain after finishing a course of level of education (Carnoy 1999:39).

Another education reform typology identified by Carnoy (1999:41) triggered by international competition are *finance-driven reforms*. Due to increased international competition, states seek to improve the domestic business climate and attract foreign investments by reducing government expenditure and balancing foreign accounts with domestic consumption. To achieve this states deregulate and privatize to improve the efficiency of resources allocated to education while simultaneously reducing public funds to education (Carnoy 1999:41-42). Thus governments accredit private university and secondary education providers which allows the government to reduce spending while at the same time securing a skilled workforce (Carnoy 1999:43).

While competitive- and finance-driven reforms aim at improving human capital (Robeyns 2006:73; Carnoy 1999:37) and macro-economic conditions (Carnoy 1999:41), the last reform namely *equity-driven reforms* seek to facilitate social mobility and social equalization (Carnoy 1999:37). It is claimed that globalization on the one hand lessen equity emphasis on education, yet mechanisms such as the Education for All initiative spearheaded by significant international organizations like the UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank⁷ stimulate equity policies. Common equity intended policies aim at ensuring equal access to quality education, targeted approaches to marginalized groups, special needs education, and training-for-work programs for low income groups (Carnoy 1999:45).

Following the logic of these theorists, the implementation of NQF could be understood as motivated by certain mechanisms of globalization. However, the theory presented here is far from sufficient to fully understand the rationale behind states' implementation of NQF. Below follows a model of NQF which consist of key design and series of identified rationales behind NQF adoption, which may provide further understanding to the implementation of NQF.

3.2 A Model on NQF

Considerable diversity exists in *designs* and *purposes* among NQFs internationally (Raffe 2009:24). Thus this section presents three key design elements of NQF and eleven identified typical rationales states have for adopting NQF, which together serve as a model in the analysis of East African NQFs. The NQF model derives from Raffe's (2009:24-25) early observations, and further developed and systematized by Allais (2010). It is developed from case studies of NQF implementation in 16 states, which at that time reflected the diversity among NQF implementers, with high, medium and low income states from Africa, Asia, Latin-America and Europe. As it captures the broad scope of NQF implementers the model may serve beneficial in the analysis of East African NQFs.

3.2.1 Key Design Features of NQF

The three key design feature of NQF is first a framework of qualifications, second level descriptors, and third learning outcomes. Including these design elements in the study serves

⁷ More on how the international community influences national policies see: Meyer, J.W., Boil, J. Thomas G.M., & Ramirez F.O (1997) World Society and the Nation-state. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 103 (No. 1), 144-181.

as a guide to identify diversity in designs among NQFs in East Africa (Raffe 2009:24). Moreover they may also serve as tools to examine whether what is being observed in East Africa actually are NQFs, as most NQFs consist of these three elements. However they should not be considered as strict criteria, rather as yardsticks to analyze the frameworks observed in East Africa.

The first key design feature is a *nationally accepted framework of network of qualifications* (Allais 2010:67). This aspect may vary where some frameworks seek to make a network among all qualifications in a given country, often referred to as overarching or comprehensive frameworks. On the other hand some frameworks are restricted to a certain sector, for instance frameworks for technical and vocational education and training, or only higher education (OECD 2005:6; Raffe 2009:23). A second feature is that qualifications frameworks tend to have a set of levels equipped with a *level descriptor* (OECD 2005:6; Young & Allais 2009:5). The level descriptor is a broad statement providing information about skills, competencies, abilities, possession and mastery of a knowledge area which then is supposed to apply to all qualifications which are placed in a certain level in the qualification framework (Allais 2010:68; ETF, Cedefop & UNESCO UIL 2013:9). Thus the level descriptors provide a hierarchical systematization and organization of qualifications which is expected to enable comparisons between qualifications, and further increase or create linkages and equivalences between different kinds of qualifications in the framework (Allais 2010:111; OECD 2005:6; European Training Foundation [ETF], Cedefop & UNESCO UIL 2013:9). Another purpose of the level descriptor is to serve as a ground for designing new qualifications (Allais 2010:68). Considerable diversity is evident among frameworks on how many levels they have (Raffe 2009:24) however most frameworks range from 8-12 levels (Young & Allais 2009:5)

The last key design feature of NQFs is *learning outcomes*, which is linked to a broader trend in education and training referred to as “the shift to learning outcomes” (Cedefop 2008). In contrast to focus on input factors such as the duration, location and particular pedagogical method underpinning a qualification, attention in learning outcomes is directed towards what a learner knows and able to do in order to possess a given qualification, whether the learning has taken place in a classroom, through work experience or through general life experience (Tuck 2007:v; Cedefop 2008). Whereas this trend is manifested in various ways in education systems, it is an embedded aspect of NQF which is specifically linked to many of the promises of the policy (Allais 2010:70; Young & Allais 2009:6), that will be discussed later.

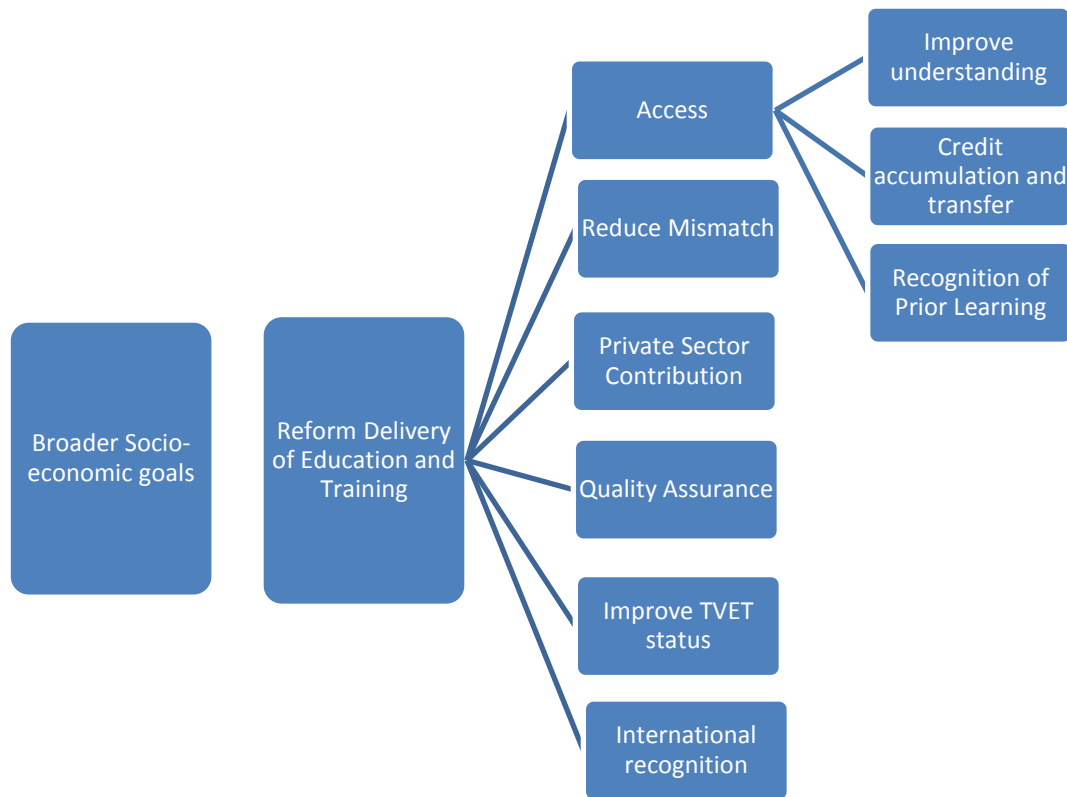
Whether or not there is an inherent link between learning outcomes and NQFs is debatable (Allais 2010:106). However as almost all existing qualifications frameworks internationally are based on learning outcomes (Allais 2010; Young, Allais & Raffe 2009:1-4; Coles 2006:8; Graham & Deij 2013:24), it suggests that learning outcomes are a central design feature to NQFs (Allais 2010:70).

3.2.2 Typical Rationales for NQF

To study how the East African states and the East African Community (EAC) justifies adoption of NQF, Allais's (2010) eleven identified typical rationales for why states adopt NQF will be applied. To enhance understanding of how these rationales relate to each other Figure 3.1 is developed derived from Allais's (2010) work. From the figure one can observe perhaps unsurprisingly that states seek to achieve *broader socio-economic goals* through NQF. These are often related to state specific events and features as well as state specific social and economic priorities, goals and objectives (Allais 2010:58-60; Tuck 2007:14).

To achieve these goals states justifies adoption of NQF to *reform delivery of education and training* making the sector more flexible, closer ties to demands of society and economy, and placing the learner in the center. The assumption underpinning the reform is that the existing system has a centrally specified curricula and delivery system, where qualifications are tied to specific institutions. This is perceived to be inflexible and not responsive to changes in society and the economy (Tuck 2007:17; Raffe 2009:7,9; Allais 2010:16). The foundation to achieve these goals is that qualifications are based on learning outcomes and linked to a framework of qualifications (Tuck 2007:51; Young 2013:23) as discussed above section 3.2.1 (Key Design Features of NQF). As Figure 3.1 show the remaining nine rationales are expected to contribute to these overall aims in mutually exclusive ways. Since this study seeks to study what the prospects are of achieving the benefits of NQF, the analysis will mainly focus on the nine typical rationales that lead to the overall aims of reforming the sector and achieve broader socio-economic goals as showed in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Typical Rationales for Adopting NQF



Information derived from Allais (2010:49-62).

As Figure 3.1 shows, three typical rationales are seen as leading to increased access to education, training and the labor market. The first of these three rationales is to *improve the understanding of qualifications systems*. The existing systems are viewed as complex, with a flora of providers offering duplicate and overlapping qualifications creating an incomprehensible system for learners, employers and society at large (Allais 2010:59). NQFs are believed to overcome this scenario by making qualifications *transparent*, by first linking qualifications together in a network or framework of qualifications. And secondly, learning outcomes of qualifications are believed to provide sufficient information to society and employers about what a person of a qualification knows and can do (Allais 2010:50,53-54; Coles 2006:6,40; Cedefop 2008:14; Tuck 2007:51).

The second rationale for adopting NQF is that the lack of comparability between qualifications in the existing system hinders *credit accumulation and transfer* between fields of learning (Allais 2010:53; Coles 2006:6). It is hoped by improving transparency of qualifications, NQF will help broaden such opportunities. Take away hindrances such as for instance when credits and qualifications are comparable a learner can shift education paths or advance in skills without retaking full courses (Coles 2006:14), thus increasing the mobility of the workforce (Allais 2010:53). For sector oriented frameworks the pathways facilitating credit accumulation and transfer will be sector specific, not pathways to the entire education system (Allais 2010:54).

Enabling *recognition of prior learning* (Allais 2010:54) is the third identified rationale states have for adopting NQFs. Qualifications based on learning outcomes are in principle indifferent on how a given qualification is acquired. Thus qualifications frameworks can serve as a basis for recognizing competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired outside formalized education and training systems (Coles 2006:8; Tuck 2007:vi). Allowing such practices is expected to reduce the strain on the education and training sector since people can formalize skills or knowledge they already have, without completing formal courses or programs. Another efficiency argument for such recognition is that it will better inform employers what skills potential employees have, avoiding waste of skills in the economy. A last argument favoring recognition practices is based on the assumption that it will reduce inequality by giving low skilled individuals alternative access routes to achieve qualifications (Allais 2010:54).

Combining the rationales of making qualifications more understandable by making them transparent, thus enabling credit accumulation, transfer possibilities, and recognition of prior learning hoped to allow learners to enter and re-enter education and training more easily. As these three rationales are expected to create a more flexible education system, states hope that it will increase *access* opportunities to fields of education and labor markets (Allais 2010:55). As NQFs enables more access routes to education, it is often seen as a tool to facilitate lifelong learning (Singh & Duvekot 2013:12).

The fifth rationale states have for adopting NQF is to *reduce mismatch between education and the needs of the labor market* (Young & Allais 2009:7). It is often assumed that the content of the existing education system is irrelevant and/or outdated and thus does not address the current learners' and employers' needs (Allais 2010:53). The mismatch is often seen as

caused by lack of involvement from stakeholders. Therefore, private sector and employers are often invited to participate in improving and/or design new qualifications with better links to the labor market and the needs of the economy (Allais 2010:53; Tuck 2007:13). As private sector and employers are included in these processes states often expect increased financial *private sector contribution* to the public education sector (Allais 2010:57), which accounts for the sixth rationale states have for adopting NQF. This rationale has an additional aspect as NQF in principle is indifferent about who and how a given qualification is obtained, some states hope that implementation of NQF will facilitate and ease the process of allowing more private education providers (Young 2005:57).

The seventh rationale states often refer to while adopting NQF is to reform *quality assurance systems and laying out new regulatory, assessment and certification mechanisms and processes* (Allais 2010:55; Tuck 2007:13; Raffe 2009:29; Graham & Deji 2013:21). Quality assurance in the existing system is often characterized by numerous of government agencies and ministries with overlapping responsibilities in the qualifications system. Thus NQFs seek to change this system by creating a quality assurance function external to education and training providers. This function will then evaluate qualifications against learning outcomes and standards set in the qualifications framework (Allais 2010:55; Graham & Deji 2013:25). NQFs are thus expected to create confidence and trust in qualifications since quality assurance of education and training program are conducted external to the institutions providing the qualifications (Allais 2010:55; Tuck 2007:29). As will be discussed later, there are different approaches to such external quality assurance mechanisms.

Many states are concerned with the low status of TVET, workplace-based and skills qualifications and thus hope that NQFs can assist to *improve the status* for such qualifications (Allais 2010:57; Tuck 2007:17). Through making such qualifications more transparent it is hoped that it will provide understanding of what bearer of such qualifications are competent of doing. Moreover placing such qualifications in the qualifications framework one is able to equivalence such qualifications to more desired qualifications, which in turn is expected to raise esteem and thus attract competent candidates (Allais 2010:57).

The last identified typical rationale for adopting NQF is related to *labor mobility and international recognition of qualifications* (Allais 2010:58). Through transparent qualifications and a framework of qualifications NQF is expected serve as a foundation for

equivalence of national and international qualifications thus enabling mobility of skilled persons across national borders and qualification domains (Allais 2010:58).

3.3 Summary

Having provided the toolbox of analytical concepts and theories as Ball (2006:43) suggested, they will provide the theoretical framework of this study. The first part of this chapter aimed at placing the NQF within a globalized context. As will be discussed later NQF contains elements which can be categorized into Carnoy's (1999) three reform types, which suggests that NQF responds to certain mechanisms of globalization, which arguably makes the policy attractive for policy makers in a globalized world. The second part provided a NQF model developed by Allais (2010) of three key design elements and eleven typical rationales states have for adopting NQF. The purpose of the NQF model is to provide a theoretical framework for the collection and analyzing of data. The next chapter presents the methodological framework of this study, where the NQF model presented in this chapter will be applied.

4 Methodology and Methods

In this chapter the methodological framework for data collection will be elaborated to find out if the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) policy has spread to East Africa, and how the policy is justified. To sufficiently address the research problem a mixed method approach with parallel data collection is conducted, often referred to as a concurrent triangulation design (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011:77). In line with this research approach a consideration of quantitative and qualitative research instruments is appropriate. The chapter will thus first elaborate a two stepped quantitative content analysis, followed by details about the qualitative approach consisting of a literature review and semi-structured interviews. The reason for a mixed method research design is that neither of these alone would provide adequate data for the research question. Moreover the approach may enable triangulation of the two datasets thus providing a more holistic understanding and picture (Creswell & Plano Clark 2011:8,21,77) of the NQF policy's entrance to East Africa.

Choosing such a research design challenges the traditional perception of the mutually exclusive approaches of qualitative and quantitative methods in social science. Quantitative research in its pure form is deductive and holds a deterministic view on human nature where the aim is to reveal objective realities and thus develop law-like models of human behavior and society (Bryman 2008:140 and Burrell & Morgan 1992). Qualitative on the other hand has an inductive approach where the focus is to provide rich data which is used to interpret human behavior and develop theories (Bryman 2008:366 and Burrell & Morgan 1992). For this research, Chapter 3 (Analytical Framework) stipulated theories that form the foundation for the research that follows, and thus one can argue that the approach is deductive. Nevertheless, the overall research design does not hold a deterministic view of state behavior, in a way that it predicts certain behaviors. More likely this study will observe general patterns of NQF diffusion where theories may assist to systematize and interpret findings, rather than to predict certain state behaviors. A careful evaluation of contextual elements and qualitative interviews may also present nuances to the general patterns and the theories applied in this study. Therefore it is believed that qualitative and quantitative approaches together serve the purpose of addressing the research purpose and question of this thesis.

The study is a case study of NQF policies in East Africa, where units of analysis are East African states. As elaborated in the Chapter 2 (The East African Context), the states Kenya,

Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda are units of analysis purposively selected based on their regional interdependence and membership to the East African Community (EAC). It is worth mentioning that Burundi is also a member of the EAC but is not included because its official languages of Kirundi and French (Ndayipfukamiye 1994:79) are not mastered by the researcher. EAC itself is however included, serving as the 5th unit of study in the analysis. As explored in Chapter 1 (Introduction), other regional integration groupings or processes like the European Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have or consider regional qualifications frameworks, thus giving reason to examine whether EAC is exploring similar policy options.

Given the research design, documents are an important data source especially for the quantitative approach. Before going into the specifics of research instruments, considerations of criteria determining the quality of information from documents studied might be fruitful.

4.1 Studying Official Documents

The benefit of using documents as a source of information in social science research is that they contain potentially interesting information produced for other purposes than research. Moreover documents “... are simply ‘out there’ waiting to be assembled and analyzed” if available to scholars (Bryman 2012:543). Documents analyzed in this study are purposively sampled policy documents from Ministry of Education⁸ in the five state units and the EAC Secretariat. Following Bryman’s (2012:549) classification of documents, the policies analyzed here fall into the category of “official documents derived from the state”. The reason for looking at policy documents in this regard is that such documents contain information about policy priorities for states, thus providing a fruitful point of departure to explore whether NQF as a policy option has been considered by East African states. However, using documents as a source of data requires special care with the quality of the documents analyzed. What follows is an assessment of the policy documents analyzed in this thesis according to four criteria suggested by Scott (1990, as cited in Bryman 2012:544) spelled out in Table 4.1.

⁸ In Kenya the education sector is covered by Ministry of Education and Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology. Documents are sampled from both and merged in the processing of data.

Table 4.1 Criteria for Assessing Quality of Documents

Authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents genuine • Reliable origin
Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents clear and comprehensible for the researcher
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents free from error and distortion
Representativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documents typical of its kind

Source: Derived from Scott in Bryman (2012:544,550)

Applying these criteria to the policy documents used in this research one can certainly first argue that these documents are *authentic*, simply because they are government documents (Bryman 2012:550). Derived from the official websites of ministries of education and other relevant institutions as well as documents shared from key informants further ensure the authenticity of the documents. Considering *meaning*, the analyzed documents have resulted in findings which will be elaborated in the following chapter thus accounting for this criterion.

Assessing the *credibility* criteria of documents refers to documents being free from error and distortion. Reports might be subject to bias by authors or the agency in charge of the report. However, as argued by Bryman (2012:550) a bias of official documents is interesting and a subject to further analysis in its own right, which may also apply in this study as an example of qualitative analysis of documents. Moreover with respect to policy and strategy documents, assessment of credibility may include caution against treating these texts as a depiction of what is actually implemented in reality (Bryman 2012:550). Hence policies and strategies will only have the connotation deserved, namely as statements of what the respective government wants, plans and intends to do on adaptation of NQF.

Considering *representativeness* of official documents, Bryman (2012:550) claims that such documents are unique in their function. Meanwhile there is reason to argue that policy and strategic documents which are being analyzed here, are representative in the sense that most

governments have such documents indicating policy aims and plans. Moreover representativeness may also refer to exhaustive access of the entire population of relevant documents (Bryman 2012:306,551). In regards to this research documents have been selected based on availability on official websites. This could have considerable implications on representativeness since not all relevant documents may have been uploaded on the respective websites. In an attempt to overcome this potential drawback in the data set, key informants have been asked to share relevant documents, if any. Of these shared documents not available online, none had been approved and were thus not yet considered as official policy. However, the combination of the systematic approach of selecting available documents online as well as asking key informants to share documents, may have had positive effects on the *representativeness* of the documents to be analyzed.

With this brief discussion of the four criteria for determining quality in the light of the policy documents used as sources of data in this thesis, it is time to consider the first part of the mixed method research design.

4.2 Collecting and Applying Quantitative Data

The aim of the quantitative part of the research is to ascertain whether the NQF policy diffusion has reached East Africa, and if considered or implemented, to identify how the policy is justified in the region. To operationalize this, a two-stepped quantitative content analysis is conducted on the policy documents sampled from Ministries of Education, the EAC Secretariat, and forwarded documents from informants. In short one can understand a content analysis as a systematic analysis of documents with the intention of quantifying content based of predefined categories (Bryman 2012:290). As the research design contains of a two-stepped content analysis details about each of them is appropriate.

The first step of the content analysis serves first as a screening process of sampled documents and to see if NQF related issues are traceable in East African official education policy documents, thus giving some insight to the research question. For this purpose a coding schedule (Appendix 1) was developed where all sampled documents (Bryman 2012:298-299) were listed according to which state, year of publishing, title of document and perhaps most importantly a dichotomy of whether there was any reference to NQF at all in the document. The number of times the word is mentioned is not of particular interest in this research -

unlike some other studies (Bryman 2012:295). Nevertheless, the coding follows the same logic of developing search words and identifies them in the analyzed content (Bryman 2012:295). Only searching and coding the abbreviation NQF proved insufficient, thus “national qualifications framework”, “qualification”, “framework⁹”, “NQF” or identified abbreviation for the respective NQFs in the states proved beneficial in operationalizing the concept in the documents.

Using these search words to determine if NQF can be traced in East African policy documents strengthens the replicability of the dataset, since the search words can be used to replicate the study with same results (Bryman 2012:304). However only using these search words would overlook a hypothetical scenario where a policy document refers to NQF without the intention of adopting it in the state. Thus, to account for such plausible scenarios and ensure the validity of data, the documents identified with reference to NQF, were further operationalized with an interpretive value “positive” and “negative”. Content in documents referring to adoption, planning, development, implement and further strengthening of the NQF in the country were labeled “positive” and oppositely content referring to refrain from NQF adoption were labeled “negative”¹⁰. Using this data set to determine if NQF has reached East Africa alone would clearly be insufficient and thus threaten the validity of the research. Nevertheless, the approach has efficiently screened documents dealing with NQF thus rejecting irrelevant documents for the second step of the content analysis.

The second step of the content analysis focuses therefore only on documents with reference to NQF either positive or negative. Documents are analyzed for reasons to either not adopt or adopt NQF in the respective state. Documents with positive reference to NQF are analyzed on two dimensions, first using the three key design elements and secondly according to the typical rationales for NQF adoption presented in Chapter 3 (Analytical Framework). Simple search words will not sufficiently capture these subjects and themes (Bryman 2012:297), thus an extensive coding manual is developed Appendix 2, to operationalize the three key design elements and the typical rationales for NQF. Each of these concepts is given a code, which are entered into a coding schedule Appendix 3 (Bryman 2012:299, 304). The reason for doing this is to secure what Bryman (2008:150) refers to as inter-observer consistency, where

⁹ “Framework” can refer to other concepts as well. However “framework” was often used to refer to the NQF, when the NQF concept was already established in texts. Alone the terms does not sufficiently refer to NQF thus necessary to contextualize the term in the respective texts.

¹⁰ The terms are purely technical and must not be confused with attitudes or values assigned towards NQF by the researcher

subjective judgment not conducted in a consistent and systematic matter can threaten the reliability and quality of the data produced.

As recognized by Allais (2010:67) classification of essential design features can be a rather challenging task, since states have different configurations of the education and training system and uses different terminologies to determine the scope of their qualifications frameworks. The purpose of the methodology laid out here is not present a miracle cure to these challenges and give rock solid data on East African NQF designs. Rather, the aim is to firstly examine if and how NQF key design features are considered in policy documents and possibly to determine whether these NQFs are similar in design to already existing frameworks internationally. The classification of the typical rationales of NQF is also a complex matter since policy documents do not refer explicitly to the categories of reasons (Allais 2010:49-62). Moreover a content analysis requires mutually exclusive categories (Bryman 2012:303). Thus a coding manual Appendix 2 is developed with an operationalization of the nine mutually exclusive rationales presented in Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3, summarized in Table 4.2 below. These nine rationales provides a clear point of departure for a systematic interpretive coding as showed in Appendix 3 of themes and subjects securing reliability of data (Bryman 2008:150).

Table 4.2 Mutually Exclusive Rationales for Adopting NQF

1	Improving understanding of qualifications system
2	Credit accumulation and transfer
3	Recognition of prior learning
4	Reducing mismatch between education and labor market
5	Increase private sector contribution
6	Quality assurance systems
7	Improve TVET status
8	International recognition and labor mobility
9	Broader goals

A content analysis of this sort is beneficial for the research purpose mainly since it provides systematic and summarized data from a large amount of documents. Considering the research questions for this thesis, the approach address whether or not the NQF policy has reached East Africa and it also provides data for the formal justifications East African states and the EAC

have for adopting the policy. Furthermore the systematic character of the approach makes the data transparent and reduces the chances of researcher bias which make replication studies feasible (Bryman 2012:289, 304). Nonetheless, the approach insufficiently addresses if states have acted upon the policy documents and it also gives limited insight into why the NQF policy has spread to this part of the world. Therefore a qualitative approach to the research question is appropriate.

4.3 Collecting and Applying Qualitative Data

The second method applied in this mixed method research design is the qualitative approach. This approach gives more insight into the spread of NQF to East Africa, as well as providing data that can be applied for triangulation purposes. Two approaches stand out as appropriate for this purpose namely a brief *qualitative literature review* and *qualitative interviews*.

As briefly mentioned above, the content analysis does not give sufficient insight into the NQF policy process in the units of analysis. Thus the aim of a literature review is to contextualize the quantitative findings and examine if states have acted upon the policies labeled with a positive value to NQF and to explore the policy process of NQF in the units. Literature sources with such information are scarce due to the limited research and knowledge on the topic, however national reports, information from international organizations, government websites and news articles are searched for this purpose.

Interviewing in social science comes in many shapes where *semi-structured interview* serve as an intermediate approach between structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews, commonly used in quantitative survey research, provide close-ended questions specifically tied to research concepts and hypothesis (Bryman 2012:209-211,470). Unstructured interviews have fewer and open-ended questions giving considerable freedom to respondents with the aim of providing rich insight and nuances on a phenomenon (Bryman 2012:471). Using semi-structured interviews in this research with open-ended questions draws benefits from both interview approaches, where interviewees can provide detail and depth where at the same time an interview guide (Bryman 2012:472) ensures the research relevance.

Having established semi-structured interviews as a qualitative research instrument, thoughts on sampling of informants is appropriate. Two main groups of informants are identified; the

first is East African NQF professionals and the secondly international NQF professionals. The rationale for including East African NQF professionals is to obtain insight on the current NQF status in the respective states and the EAC, explore additional reasons and external influence on policy adoption. Including international NQF professionals in the study was done to identify reasons and implications of the international spread of NQF generally and specifically in East Africa. Purposive sampling of the East African NQF professionals led to limited results due to the scant research and unclear picture of the NQF sector in the region. To complement, snowball sampling (Bryman 2012:424) was applied to first identify and contact relevant directorates and authorities in the EAC secretariat and the four states with NQF responsibilities and then to rely on their expertise to direct my inquiry to the relevant persons. Both the purposive and snowball sampling are strategic approaches in the sense that they seek to identify informants with knowledge, experience and insight on the topic studied (Bryman 2012:418, 424). A total of 7 respondents from about 25 contacted, have contributed with valuable insight to the study. With respect to anonymity the informants are assigned a code as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Overview of Respondents and Assigned Codes

National NQF Professionals	Kenya	Informant K1
	Uganda	Informant U1
	Tanzania	Informant T1
	Tanzania	Informant T1
International NQF Professionals	International organization	Informant I1
	African Organization	Informant I2
	International Consultant	Informant I3

When relevant informants, national and international NQF professionals had been identified, as suggested by Bryman (2012:217) relations were established via e-mails with a short personal description of the researcher, the research purpose and why an interview with the informant was of interest for the study. In line with the semi-structured interview approach an interview guide was developed and attached as Appendix 4 (Bryman 2012:472). Informants were promised anonymity and given the option of a recorded telephone interview or

responding to the interview guide via e-mail. Both approaches were used. An alternative approach might have been to call informants directly. However such an approach would risk catching informants by surprise or at an inconvenient time. To create a comforting atmosphere between the interviewees and the researcher (Bryman 2012:217-218), soft e-mail communication before engaging in the complex research matters was thought to be more favorable.

4.4 Reflections on Reliability, Validity and Research Challenges

The nature of social science research calls for consideration of reliability and validity of research design and instruments. While the two concepts are embedded and recognized in quantitative research (Bryman 2008:149), there has been considerable scholarly debate about the appropriateness of validity and reliability in qualitative research (Kleven 2008, Brock-Utne 1996, Bryman 2008:376-377). The aim here is neither to choose side in this debate nor to lay out their different accounts, but rather to assess the quality and potential shortcomings of the chosen research design. Thus reliability and validity, however debated, will below serve as assessment guidance both for the quantitative and qualitative method applied.

One could argue that quantifying policy documents to trace NQF patterns has great face validity (Leedy & Ormrod 2013:89) in the sense that such documents generally state government priorities, thus a fruitful point of departure to search for NQF policies. However a potential weakness of this approach is the subjective judgment of design features and typical rationales of NQF adoption. However, it is of the researcher's perception that although subjective interpretation was needed to conduct coding, the data produced in this paper live up to inter-observer consistency.

Perhaps the largest threat to validity and reliability in this research lies in the sampling of informants in the qualitative part. Considerable efforts were invested in identifying relevant informants and reaching them. Despite these efforts informants from Rwanda and the EAC are unfortunately missing. Since this research is a desk review, inquiries to informants were sent via e-mail which are perhaps easier to overlook than if the researcher had been on the ground meeting informants face-to-face. However with limited time and other resources a field visit was unfortunately not feasible.

A plausible explanation for the lack of informants could also be that they simply did not want to share information. When asked to forward confidential information, informant I2 working in an independent African organization shared a document with the following comment: “[Name of organization] believes in transparency but unfortunately this belief is not shared throughout the southern and east African region in which we work.” A less dramatic explanation for the missing informants could also be all those sought as informants were high ranking government officials or professors with much responsibility and many pressing tasks, making it hard for them to find the time needed for interviews. It is nonetheless worth stressing that a number of national NQF professionals were reached and shared valuable insight to the NQF processes in the respective states.

5 Is NQF Getting a Foothold in East Africa?

This chapter sets out to examine the first part of the research question, namely whether the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) policy has reached East Africa. Furthermore, it seeks to give an insight into how the policy is adopted and uses the three key design elements presented in Chapter 3 (Analytical Framework) to examine how the four East African states and the East African Community (EAC) designs their qualifications frameworks. To address these issues this chapter presents the findings from the first step of the two-stepped content analysis, followed by information from the semi-structured interviews and available literature.

5.1 NQF Reached East Africa?

To explore whether the NQF policy has reached East Africa a quantitative content analysis was conducted of 39 sampled documents from Ministries of Education in the respective states as well as documents shared by informants. 23 of the documents were identified as relevant to this study as they contained information about qualifications frameworks, thus the remaining 16 are excluded from the further analysis. Table 5.1 below shows how the 23 documents are diversified from which units they originate from and type of document, which implies that the numbers in the sheet refers to how many documents were identified in a given category. As discussed in Chapter 4 (Methodology and Methods) simply identifying whether documents made reference to NQF or not runs the risk of providing false data, thus Table 5.1 in the “mention of NQF” refers to the their interpretive value of NQF. The table shows that all these 23 documents make positive reference to NQF, which implies that they refer to one or several of the following: adopt, plan, develop, implement or strengthen a qualifications framework. To determine whether the NQF policy has reached East Africa, the nine documents in the “strategy/plan” category in Table 5.1 are of particular interest, as these stipulate broader education sector plans and strategies indicating the government’s priorities in the sector. Such documents were sampled from all state units and the EAC with positive NQF reference. Thus, it appears that NQF policies have reached these states in the East African region.

Table 5.1 Number of Document from State Units and the EAC According to Document Type and Interpretive Value

Document types	Number of documents corresponding to document types						Mention of NQF	
	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	EAC	Total	Positive	Negative
	Legal/ policy	3	0	0	2	0		
Strategy/ Plan	1	1	3	2	2	9	9	0
Sessional paper/ statement	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	0
Report/ Review	1	1	1	1	0	4	4	0
Unpublished shared by informants	0	0	1	0	2	3	3	0
Total number of documents	6	3	5	5	4	23	23	0

5.1.1 Current Status of NQF in East Africa

As the findings in Table 5.1 indicate NQF has reached East Africa. However applying the credibility criteria for content analysis of official documents, Bryman (2012:550) argues caution against treating such data as depiction of what is actually implemented in reality. Thus in the analysis that follows qualitative methods are applied to examine whether the positive mentions of NQF in policy documents are acted upon. The three key design elements of NQFs presented in Chapter 3 (Analytical Framework) namely; a framework of qualifications, level descriptors, and learning outcomes, can serve as yardsticks for defining what a NQF is (Allais 2010:70), therefore serving as a fruitful guide for the analysis that follows.

As will be argued the frameworks in the region are at an early stage of adoption, where Kenya, Tanzania and the East African Community (EAC) are characterized as in the planning phase, whereas Uganda and Rwanda are on more advanced implementation phases. Nonetheless, informant II who is monitoring NQF developments internationally,

characterized the NQF developments in East Africa as “... *a start on something interesting*”, where the following analysis seek to give more insight to these developments.

5.1.2 Kenya and Tanzania in the Planning Phase

As will be argued here Kenya and Tanzania are in the planning phase of NQF implementation. Both states have committed to implement the reform where Tanzania hopes to have it operational within two years (Tanzania Ministry of Education and Vocational Training [Tanzania MOEVT], 2012a:xiii,26,35-36). In the Kenyan case, informant K1 asserts similar hopes, where the framework is expected to be established in three years. Comparing Kenya’s and Tanzania’s plans to the three key design elements one can observe that both states seek to implement a comprehensive framework which includes all levels of education. In the Kenyan case the “Kenya Qualifications Framework Act 2012” is prepared, however it has been delayed due to challenges in the 2013 national elections, according to informant K1. Similar events of preparing an official Act or Bill were not captured in Tanzanian documents and neither in interviews with informants in Tanzania.

The comprehensive framework in Kenya is planned to consist of two sub-frameworks—one for general and higher education, the second for TVET qualifications with ten levels in each sub framework. According to a Sessional Paper the purpose of that design is to align the Kenyan NQF to the planned East African regional framework (Kenya MoE & MoHEST¹¹ 2012a:116-117), to be discussed below. In the Tanzanian Qualifications Framework draft forwarded by informant T1 such sub-frameworks were not evident. Rather, the Tanzanian design was a single comprehensive framework with ten levels including foundational education, TVET and Higher Education qualifications. As noted by informant T1 the “... *Tanzanian Qualifications Framework is still work in progress so it is subject to both thematic and structural changes. You are therefore advised to use this information carefully*”. In line with this precaution, it would be premature to consider the Tanzanian framework structure to be a definitive one.

A common design feature in both states is the level descriptors which accounts for the second NQF key design element (Allais 2010:68). These level descriptors are in both cases assigned to each of the ten levels in the frameworks. Allais’ (2010:68) third key design element is

¹¹ Kenya Ministry of Education [Kenya MoE] & Kenya Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [Kenya MoHEST], 2012

learning outcomes. Designing learning programs and qualifications in terms of learning outcomes are linked to the implementation of NQFs in both cases (Informant T1; Kenya MoE 2012:50; Kenya MoE & MoHEST 2012b:47). Even if the NQFs in Kenya and Tanzania are at an early stage, they both include the three key design elements in their proposed drafts and policy documents. Though not included in the documents, these three elements in the proposed designs were highlighted by the informants.

5.1.3 First Steps of Operational NQFs in Uganda and Rwanda

Some progress has been made in certain parts of the planned comprehensive frameworks in Uganda and Rwanda (Informant I1; Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports [Uganda MoES] 2012:163; Okinyal 2012:27; Nuwamanya 2013; Rwanda Ministry of Education [Rwanda MINEDUC] 2008a:7). In the Ugandan case a five leveled TVET sector framework called Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework is in place with 80 assessment and training packages based on learning outcomes linked to partial and full qualifications mainly on levels 1-3, and with commitment to expand to level four and five in the years to come (Uganda MoES 2011:14; Okinyal 2012:31-33). The Ugandan approach is to start small scale, to expand as the national experience and familiarity with the TVET sector framework increase, and eventually to expand to a comprehensive Ugandan Qualifications Framework. Considering the three key elements of NQF, one can thus argue that Uganda has a framework of qualifications for lower TVET levels, with evident level descriptors to each of these levels, with qualifications based on learning outcomes (Okinyal 2012:15,18; Uganda Directorate of Industrial Training n.d.).

Rwanda resembles Uganda but is at a still more preliminary stage. It launched its seven leveled TVET sector framework in 2012 (Rwanda Workforce Development Authority 2013/2014:13-15; World Bank 2013:45,66). So far a pilot program has been developed with 16 outcomes-based curricula leading to qualifications which are part of the Rwandan TVET Qualifications Framework (Nuwamanya 2013). In addition Rwanda is working on a sub-framework which focuses on Higher Education linked to the international Bologna Process (Informant I1; Rwanda MINEDUC 2008b:18; Rwanda MINEDUC 2008c:12). One can thus observe that Rwanda is working from two angles (TVET and Higher Education) in developing its comprehensive framework. Table 5.2 summarizes the developments in the four states in using the three design elements of qualifications frameworks.

Table 5.2 East African Qualifications Frameworks and Key Design Elements of NQF

States	Phase	Framework of qualifications	Levels with descriptor	Outcomes based
Kenya	Planning	Comprehensive with sub-frameworks		
		A. General and Higher Education	10	Yes
		B. Sector framework TVET	10	Yes
Uganda	Planning	Comprehensive	Unknown	Unknown
	Operational	Sector Vocational	5	Yes
Tanzania	Planning	Comprehensive	10	Yes
Rwanda	Planning	Comprehensive with sub-frameworks	Unknown	Unknown
	Unknown	A. Higher Education	7	Yes
	Piloted	B. TVET	Unknown	Yes
EAC	Planning	Comprehensive with sub-frameworks		
		A. Higher Education	10	Yes
		B. Sector framework TVET	10	Yes

5.1.4 Regional Dimension

Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 shows an emerging Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) in East Africa (EAC 2011a:213). This development is similar to developments in the European Union and in the Southern African Development Community as discussed in Chapter 1, (Introduction). The way was paved for the East African Qualifications Framework by member states signing of the East African Community Common Market Protocol in 2010 which among other things is expected to enable free movement of people, services and labor within the Community (EAC 2010:7). Free movement of labor has implications for how the states organize their qualifications systems. The RQF is expected to be operational by 2016 where it will serve as a benchmark for qualifications from the member states, ensuring that a qualification from any state is recognized throughout the Community. (EAC 2010:8; The Inter-University Council for East Africa [IUCEA] 2011:3,27,41-42).

The proposed draft of the regional framework was forwarded by two informants. In it one can observe a design consisting of two sub-frameworks with 10 levels each. One deal with qualifications from primary to higher education levels; the other deals exclusively with TVET skills and qualifications from lower levels to higher education (EAC Unpublished 2011b:6-16). Each level in the qualifications framework has a level descriptor based on competencies,

skills and outcomes expected from candidates to be certified on a given level. Thus it seems the EAC framework meets the three key design elements discussed in Chapter 3 (Analytical Framework). According to informant I2, the draft is not yet approved and definitive conclusions cannot be drawn at this stage. However, it is evident that a RQF is underway in East Africa and its rough intended contours may be those discussed here.

Implementation of a regional framework in East Africa will eventually have implications for the national frameworks being developed in the Community. As mentioned by informant T2 a study is currently underway by the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA), the responsible EAC agency for the regional framework (EAC 2011a:213), on how one may harmonize NQFs in the region. Harmonization is already evident in the Kenyan NQF case where establishing similar structures to the EAC is seen as a step on the way to reach the goals of labor mobility and free movement (Kenya MoE & MoHEST 2012a:119). The developments in the EAC were also mentioned by informants as a source of inspiration in developing the NQFs in Kenya and Tanzania. Considering the influence the EAC evidently already has and the harmonization study underway, one can expect the four NQFs in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda to become more alike, perhaps in the direction of the proposed East African Qualifications Framework.

5.2 Summary of NQF's Spread to East Africa

As Table 5.2 shows, one can observe that some diversity exists among the designs of NQFs in the region, which signals Raffe's (2009:24) argument that designs of qualifications frameworks is one dimension of diversity among NQFs internationally. On the contrary there is a tendency to plan and develop comprehensive frameworks in East Africa, and the EAC regional framework, may reduce the diversity among frameworks in the region. Nonetheless, as Table 5.2 shows only the planned Kenyan and the regional EAC framework alike as they consist of a comprehensive NQF with two sub frameworks with 10 levels each. Rwanda plans similar sub-frameworks however in the current proposed higher education framework only 7 levels are planned, which differs from the plans of EAC and Kenya. Moreover Tanzania plans one comprehensive framework, and Uganda has an operational 5 leveled sectorial framework. In other words there seems to be considerable diversity among designs of qualifications frameworks in East Africa.

Nonetheless, these findings should be considered with precaution. As explained in Chapter 4 (Methodology and Methods), interviews were not carried out with informants from Rwanda and EAC. Moreover most informants stressed that the information they provided should be interpreted as provisional and from a policy process where changes in structure and plans may occur. The description above should be interpreted as pertaining to ongoing processes rather than providing definitive facts about what is emerging. Nevertheless, with these precautions in mind, some significant findings are worth summarizing at this point.

On the basis of quantitative content analysis, qualitative semi-structured interviews and review of available literature one can conclude that the international diffusion of NQF has reached the four East African states both individually and regionally in the form of an emerging East African Qualifications Framework. The five East African frameworks are at an early stage of implementation compared to more established frameworks internationally. One can observe a strong commitment to implement NQFs in the region in that all the states and their regional organization have issued official documents indicating a desire to adopt such a policy. One can observe a dividing line between on the one hand units purely at a planning stage namely Kenya, Tanzania and the EAC and on the other hand the partially implemented frameworks in Uganda and Rwanda. Thus it is evident that the East African region is working to adopt the NQF policy, and therefore turn to how the policy is justified in the next chapter.

6 East African Rationales for NQF. What are they and what may affect their realization?

As the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) policy has reached East Africa, this chapter set out to explore how the NQF policy is justified in the region. The previous chapter showed that the qualifications frameworks in the region are at an early stage of implementation. A study of publicly stated justifications (rationales) may provide understanding of the reasons and what the policy makers seek to achieve by adopting the policy. Moreover considering the early stage they are at, it seems timely and relevant to assess the prospects of achieving these goals held for NQFs, hence the research question of this study.

The chapter starts with a presentation of the identified rationales in East African official documents hence the second step of the content analysis of subjects and themes described in Chapter 4 (Methodology and Methods). This is followed by a discussion of precautionary elements derived from studies of other NQFs internationally, followed by contextual features which may influence the prospects of successful implementation. Each identified rationale is analyzed according to these two factors. As the Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF) has implications for the four NQFs, it is analyzed separately. The last section of this chapter set out to explore how NQF responds to mechanisms of globalization using Carnoy's (1999) three education reform types. Where the aim is to shed light on why the policy is attractive to East African states, and further show that there is an inherent bias in NQF in the prospects of realizing some broader goals over others.

6.1 East African Rationales for NQF

As described in Chapter 4 (Methodology and Methods) 23, documents were identified from the four East African states and the East African Community (EAC). These were content analyzed against the coding manual Appendix 2 derived from the nine mutually exclusive rationales presented in Table 4.2 in Chapter 4 (Methodology and Methods). Table 6.1 below is developed to enable analysis from the raw data produced in Appendix 3. The table shows

how many documents from each of the states and the EAC that makes reference to a given rationale. The far right column in Table 6.1 shows regional aggregate, where one can observe that out of the nine mutually exclusive typical rationales all were identified. The scope of documents making reference to each rationale ranges from only 2 out of 23 documents in ‘improve the status of TVET’, to 16 out of 23 documents referring to reform of ‘quality assurance systems’.

Table 6.1 Identified Rationales in East African Official Documents

Number of documents making reference to the different rationales. A given score on a rationale does not exceed the total number of documents for each unit.						
Type of rationale	Number of documents that make reference to a given rationale					
	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	EAC	Regional aggregate
Improving understanding of qualifications system	1	1	1	1	1	5
Credit accumulation and transfer	4	1	1	1	0	7
Recognition of Prior Learning	3	0	2	1	0	6
Reduce mismatch	2	1	0	5	0	8
Increase private sector contribution	1	1	1	2	0	5
Quality assurance system	5	1	3	3	4	16
Improve TVET status	0	1	1	0	0	2
International recognition and labor mobility	2	0	0	1	4	7
Broader goals	2	1	1	3	1	8
	Kenya	Uganda	Tanzania	Rwanda	EAC	Total
Total number of documents	6	3	5	5	4	23

One can further observe that not all rationales were identified in each unit of analysis. For instance Kenya and Rwanda referred to all but one which in both states was to ‘improve the status of TVET’. Uganda and Tanzania made reference to all rationales excluding two where both make no reference to ‘international recognition and labor mobility’ in official documents. Moreover Uganda does not refer to introducing NQF to promote ‘recognition of prior learning’ (RPL) and Tanzania evinces no mention of ‘reducing mismatch between education and labor market needs’ in their official documents. In the four documents analyzed from EAC only 4 out of the 9 rationales were identified as showed below in Table 6.1. Meanwhile all these four documents made reference to introduce ‘quality assurance systems’ and the rationale of ‘international recognition and labor mobility’.

The number of documents that are identified as giving reference to a certain rationale may indicate the relative priority given to a certain purpose of introducing NQF. Consider for instance the rationale of ‘quality assurance system’, in which case documents from all the four state units and the EAC have been identified as containing this rationale. On an aggregate level 16 out of 23 documents, and in Kenya 5 out of 6, 1 out of 3 in Uganda, 3 out of 5 in Tanzania and Rwanda, and all the documents from the EAC include this rationale. This one could argue suggests that reforming quality assurance is given high priority as a justification for adopting a qualification framework. On the other hand, one could argue that ‘improving the status of TVET’ is usually given lower priority as only 2 out of 23 documents on an aggregated level covers this rationale though it is referred to in Uganda and Tanzania. The remaining seven rationale types are referred to on the aggregate level in 5 to 8 identified documents.

This suggests that by far the most important justification for introducing qualifications frameworks in the East African region is to improve quality assurance. Otherwise, most other rationales are given roughly equal weight except the lesser importance that appears to be attached to ‘improving TVET status’. As only official documents are examined in this study, the justifications identified may be rationales that are perceived to be legitimate, meaning that the rationales explicitly mentioned are likely to meet broad acceptance. This may suggest that rationales that are perceived as sensitive, offensive or demoralizing may not be explicitly mentioned in the official documents in which this study has analyzed. In the case of ‘improving TVET status’ one could argue that it could be offensive or demoralizing for stakeholders in the TVET sector if policymakers referred to its low status, and the need to

improve it in policy documents. However as will be argued below, the low priority given to this rationale might also be due to NQF not being the appropriate policy to improve TVET status. Nonetheless, if the number of documents that make reference to a given rationale can indicate the priority given to each rationale, Table 6.2 shows how the rationales are ranked.

Table 6.2 Prioritized East African Justification of NQF

Priority given to typical rationale	Typical rationale	Aggregate number of documents
1	Quality assurance system	16
2	Reduce mismatch	8
2	Broader goals	8
3	International recognition and labor mobility	7
3	Credit accumulation and transfer	7
4	Recognition of prior learning	6
5	Increase private sector contribution	5
5	Improve understanding of qualifications system	5
6	Improve TVET status	2

As these types of rationale are identified from Allais’ (2010:49-62) research on more established frameworks internationally, one can observe that the East African states and regional association justify the need for a qualification framework in rather similar ways as other NQFs. As the column to the right in Table 6.1 suggests, the region seen as a whole makes reference to all these rationales. But not all the units make reference to all the rationales, suggesting that nuances among them in how the qualifications frameworks are justified. It is only the rationales of ‘improving understanding of the education, training and qualifications system’, reforming ‘quality assurance mechanisms’ and achieving ‘broader goals’ that are referred to in all the four states and the EAC. One can also observe from Table 6.1 that the EAC refers to only four out of nine rationales that suggest the states use a wider range of rationales compared to the EAC.

It is worth stressing that the analysis above may overlook nuances however it illustrates Raffe’s (2009:24) argument that some diversity exists in the rationales states have for adopting NQF. Moreover the quantitative findings above may be helpful for understanding how different rationales are prioritized for NQF policies and they underscore the importance

of the ‘quality assurance’ rationale. In the analysis that follows qualitative methods will be applied, revealing further nuances from these initial quantitative findings. However before engaging in each rationale identified, some precautionary elements are appropriate to analyze the prospects of achieving the goals of NQF.

6.2 Precautionary Elements of NQF

Earlier experience and contextual features may provide pointers for the prospects of fulfilling the expected benefits of NQF in East Africa (Tuck 2007:1). What follows are some general precautionary elements arising from earlier experience and from insights concerning contextual factors when implementing NQF in a new contextual environment.

6.2.1 Pragmatic Approach to NQF

Experience from established NQFs internationally tends to show that the promises embedded in the NQF have often been unrealistic and exaggerated (Allais 2010; Young 2011; Raffe 2009:23). Though the reasons may vary from case to case, what follows are some general lessons learnt for enhancing the possibility of achieving at least some of the expected benefits. A first fundamental issue in this regard is to understand how and under which circumstances introducing NQF works best. This suggests that one needs to look beyond the appealing rhetoric. As stressed by informant I1 it is important to “...*understand the philosophy*” of NQF. She further highlights that NQF is “*not a technical issue, it is not only about putting in place a framework, but also understanding the reform*”. A central element in this regard is how the different models, objectives, approaches and rationales of NQFs work and under which circumstances, an understanding that is not always evident among the newer NQF implementers, according to informant I3.

The overall rationale which states have for adopting NQFs is to reform the education and training sector. NQF offers appealing rhetoric and tools to do so however it is often overlooked that it is no ‘quick fix’ (Young & Allais 2013:1). For qualifications frameworks to be successful a long term perspectives and investments by governments are needed (Raffe 2009:36). Raffe (2009:36) argues that developing a trusted qualifications framework should be seen as a process developing over time and that it depends on support and engagement from institutions already in the system. Therefore, NQFs should not try to establish an

external system, but rather build on and use the experience in the existing system (Young 2008:132). Moreover, NQF itself is only a framework. Young (2013:23) and Raffe (2009:38) argue that for the framework to work adequately or according to expectations, it must be accompanied with appropriately broad policies. One aspect of such ‘policy breadth’ is capacity building among all involved stakeholders with the aim of building communities of trust in the qualifications framework (Tuck 2007:26; Young 2013:23; Informant I1). Another aspect of policy breadth is the broad scope of NQF, which includes issues as social exclusion, labor mobility, and overall economic improvements. Raffe (2009:38) argues that NQF alone cannot address these issues, but has to be accompanied with appropriate policies, with which NQF can work. These broad lessons from more established NQFs may be beneficial for increasing the prospects of achieving the expected benefits of NQF in East Africa.

6.2.2 Contextual Factors

Eastern Africa consists of low-income states. Johanson and Adams (2004:4) suggest caution in introducing qualifications frameworks in such contexts. They argue that NQFs are difficult to implement in general however even more so in low income states. As NQFs are complex and require long term commitments from governments and stakeholders, King and Palmer (2010:110) argue that adopting the policy might exceed local and administrative capacities. In a similar vein, the Executive Officer from the South African Qualifications Authority, Isaacs (2008) notes that low income states often do not probe sufficiently into these implications and embark on qualifications frameworks with unrealistic expectations (Young 2005:17; Allais 2010). Relating these precautionary arguments to the planned comprehensive frameworks throughout the East African region one could argue that these are unrealistic plans which may exceed their capacities. But the Uganda’s approach to incrementally expand the scope as experience grows may stand a better chance to take account of their administrative capacity limitations and may therefore eventually be more effective than in the other countries in the region.

Another contextual limitation in the East African region (discussed in Chapter 2, the East African Context) is the overall low skill level, high dropout rates, high illiteracy rates and limited general education infrastructure. It would seem that other established qualifications frameworks are located in contexts with better performing education sectors. A fruitful approach according to King and Palmer (2010:23) is thus to examine how NQFs concepts and

models work in practice and how they could be adjusted to target some of these contextual weaknesses. NQF cannot be seen as a miracle cure for a low performing education sector (Young & Allais 2013:1). However by closely examining how other policies can work together with the qualifications framework, one may better achieve some change and improvements (Young 2013:23; Raffe 2009:38).

6.3 The Regional Qualifications Framework

As the four states studied here are members of the EAC and since the planned RQF presumably will have implications for frameworks developed in these states, examining the regional dimension separately may be useful. The *broader goal* for the proposed EAC regional framework is to facilitate further and deeper regional integration among the member states. As stated by the Permanent Secretary of the EAC, Shakaba (2012), a major obstacle in this regard is the current lack of recognition of qualifications throughout the region. In the light of such strong claims, it is unsurprising that the rationale of *regional recognition of qualifications and regional labor mobility* was identified in all the four documents content analyzed from the EAC, hence Table 6.1 (EAC 2010; EAC 2011a:7; EAC 2011b; IUCEA 2011:3).

The two other rationales identified in the content analysis of EAC documents must therefore be seen in the light of these broader objectives. *Improved understanding of qualifications system* relates to the education, training and qualifications system in the entire region (IUCEA 2011:7,18-19; EAC 2011a:3). As discussed in Chapter 2 (the East African Context), each of the states has an education system characterized by much disharmony and complexity, implying that such challenges perhaps are even more evident on the regional level. The last identified rationale concerns *quality assurance systems*. As such systems are key elements in qualifications frameworks, it is unsurprising that the EAC refers to this rationale as well (Allais 2010:55; Tuck 2007:13; Raffe 2009:29; Graham & Deji 2013:21). Whereas states usually reform existing quality assurance systems, one can observe that no such system has existed on the regional level in East Africa, thus implying that the EAC seeks to implement a new quality assurance system for qualifications between member states (IUCEA 2011:18-19).

6.3.1 Implications for EAC Member States

An essential contextual element determining the prospects of fulfilling the expected benefit of regional recognition and labor mobility, will be commitment and participation from the EAC member states. One technical dimension mentioned by informant I1 is “... *if one framework [in the region] has 11 and another has 8 levels, I don’t think that is good for the region...*”. This suggests that a first step would be to align the frameworks in East Africa to at least have the same number of levels. Given the argument about the need to build trust in qualifications frameworks, this would imply that a regional understanding among stakeholders is essential on how level descriptors operate and how the outcome based qualifications relate to them (Tuck 2007:26; Young 2013:23; Informant I1). As discussed in the previous chapter, Kenya is already committed to follow the EAC proposed design; and Rwanda states that it is committed to work towards a functional RQF (Kenya MoE & MHEST 2012a:120; Rwanda MINEDUC 2008b:18). A commitment to work towards a common understanding of qualifications regionally was also evident in the interviews with the two Tanzanian informants.

Even if some commitment to align qualifications frameworks to the RQF is evident in Tanzania, the country’s dual membership in both EAC and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) may pose a challenge. As the SADC has another regional framework for Southern African states (Chisholm 2007:301), it may leave Tanzania in a limbo of which RQF it should align its NQF to. As friction is evident in Tanzania’s relationship to EAC already which some suggest is due to Tanzania’s tendency to lean towards SADC (Kenya Television Network 2013), it may propose that Tanzania rather aligns its NQF with the SADC rather than the EAC. Another plausible obstacle in alignment of NQFs to the EAC qualifications framework is the Ugandan case that currently has the most deviant design (Table 5.2 (NQF designs) in the previous chapter). Only loose plans for a comprehensive NQF were referred to in Ugandan policy documents, suggesting it will not happen in the near future.

Seen from a regional perspective it might seem fruitful if Uganda and the other member states developed and expanded their frameworks according to EAC plans. However such expansion might be counterproductive as it could imply rapid expansion that risk exceeding administrative capacities. Possibly, the RQF the EAC has embarked upon may demand too much both from its member states and from the EAC administration. A more feasible

approach might be something similar to the Ugandan approach. However changing course at this stage might be difficult. Technical alignment of national frameworks design may well be an important policy goal both for the EAC and its individual member states. It seems that tension cannot be ignored if NQFs and the RQF are to have prospects of implementation. It is beyond the scope of this study to suggest how that might best be worked out.

6.3.2 Prospects of Regional Recognition of Labor Mobility

Building as Tuck (2007:26) suggests communities of trust is also essential for the regional framework to be successful. Such processes were referred to in the interview with the Kenyan and Tanzanian informants, where stakeholder meetings and discussions are taking place. According to Shakaba (2012), professional bodies in the EAC member states have started developing mutual recognition agreements using the drafted East African Community Qualifications Framework as a guiding document (informant I2). These processes may suggest that the processes of building communities of trust are taking place. However due to the lack of insight into the EAC developments it would be presumptuous to comment on the prospects that EAC has in achieving its goals. Nonetheless due to the planned comprehensive design of the East African Qualifications Framework, the EAC has to be careful in embarking on a project that risk exceeding the capacities of education providers, and of national and regional administrative units, –bearing in mind King and Palmer’s (2010:110) precautionary comment.

6.4 The Four East African States

Having discussed the regional dimension, what follows will focus on how the four states justify implementation of their qualifications frameworks, and discuss the prospects of realizing the benefits of the policy. As presented in Chapter 3 (Analytical Framework) the three rationales: improve the understanding through a transparent framework of qualifications, enable credit accumulation and transfer possibilities, and recognition of prior learning seek to facilitate increased access to education and training as well as to the labor market (Allais 2010:55). Since the three first are assumed to lead to the access rationale, these will be discussed in detail first, and summarized by discussing the access rationale.

6.4.1 Improving Understanding of Qualifications System

As Table 6.1 show commitment to *increase the understanding of the education, training and qualifications system* is evident in policy documents in all the states. As such understanding through the principle of transparency discussed in Chapter 3 (Analytical Framework) can be understood as a foundation of NQF (Tuck 2007:51), it is perhaps unsurprising that this rationale was identified in documents from all the states. Moreover, if one considers the complex education sector presented in Chapter 2 (the East African Context), such a rationale is also understandable. In the Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan cases the NQFs are explicitly seen as a tool to address the mosaic of various education providers and to harmonize the system to make it more comprehensible (Kenya MoE & MHEST 2012a:7; Tanzania MOEVT 2012b:29-30; Uganda MoES 2011:18-19). The rationale is also evident in the Rwandan case, however less explicit on the complexity of the existing system, where the TVET policy (Rwanda MINEDUC 2008c:12) refers more loosely to the need of more coordination in the sector.

Nonetheless, NQF neither guarantees nor provides a blueprint on how to achieve a more understandable system. Earlier experience show that in some cases stakeholders saw the qualifications framework itself as something complex and incomprehensible (Allais 2010:70). Such scenarios might indicate that stakeholders were not sufficiently familiarized with NQF's principles and models, hence informant I1 argument of understanding the philosophy. Moreover it could also be a sign of insufficient processes of trust building, where there was a lack of building communities of trust as suggested by Tuck (2007:27). However, it may indicate a more serious challenge embedded in NQF itself. As one of the claims often associated with NQF is to create more understandable systems, it is a paradox that NQF itself carries complexity as its principles and philosophies are difficult to understand and in some cases incomprehensible (Allais 2010:70). This suggests that NQF itself can be a potential factor which affects the prospects negatively for the East African states in achieving a more understandable education system by introducing the policy.

To overcome this intrinsic challenge of NQF one could argue that extensive administrative capacities of implementers and stakeholders would increase the prospects of achieving a more understandable system. As such capacities are limited in low income states like the East African region studied here (King & Palmer 2010:110), one could argue that contextual factors pose another challenge to achieve the goal. Nonetheless based on interviews, both in

the Kenyan and Tanzanian cases it seems that processes of involving stakeholders happen continuously which may create understanding of NQF itself and increase the prospects of achieving a more understandable education system. Moreover one could argue that the Ugandan approach to start with a limited scope may assist in overcoming the intrinsic challenges of NQF. As it builds on the existing system with a limited number of stakeholders in a sector and builds confidence, trust and understanding among them, and increases the scope to new sectors incrementally. Put differently some regional processes indicate that the region may succeed in creating a more understandable system, however NQF itself and some contextual factors may affect the prospects negatively. As this rationale lays the ground for the other principles and rationales of NQF, it suggests that it is crucial to ensure that introducing NQF leads to better understanding rather than even more complexity and confusion in the education systems in East Africa.

6.4.2 Credit Accumulation and Transfer

If a transparent qualifications framework is achieved it may pave the way for another rationale of NQF namely *credit accumulation and transfer* possibilities in the education, training and qualifications system. As Table 6.1 displays this rationale is widely supported by the states. In the Kenyan, Rwandan and Tanzanian cases it is hoped that NQF will enable pathways between different fields of learning and qualifications (Tanzania MOEVT 2012b:29-30; Rwanda MINEDUC 2008c:14; Kenya MoE & MHEST 2012a:97). Similar broad references were also made in the interviews with the Kenyan and Tanzanian informants however more specific details on how such mechanisms would work were not touched upon. In the Ugandan case a specific approach was laid out in the Education Sector Strategy Plan (Uganda MoES 2008:32, 39-40) to modularize qualifications that allows learners to take smaller units rather than required to complete full qualifications. By so doing it is hoped that learners can chose and accumulate modules from different fields of education, allowing learners to acquire the specific skills they need in the labor market. The rationale is, according to Table 6.1, included in all the states plans, however only Uganda provides a specified plan for how to take account of the rationale.

Considering existing NQF's experience on this rationale the picture is not clear cut. Some claim to have achieved a more flexible education system allowing pathways of credit accumulation and transfer possibilities, however others seem to have limited impact (Allais

2010:27,96-97). In other words one can say that NQFs may enable credit accumulation and transfer possibilities. However what ultimately matters is whether a transparent and trusted framework is established, where consensus among stakeholders reigns on how one can accumulate credits and which pathways are allowed across different fields of learning.

6.4.3 Recognition of Prior Learning

From Table 6.1 one can observe that Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania include the rationale of *recognizing prior and informal learning (RPL)* in their plans for qualifications frameworks. Uganda makes no explicit reference to such practices in its policy documents. However other sources indicate that the country has operational RPL practices. As informant U1 observes, individuals usually from the informal sector are invited to the Worker's Practically Acquired Skills (Worker's PAS) scheme, in which one assesses and certifies skills acquired outside of the formal school system. The Ugandan Vocational Qualifications Framework (UVQF) recognizes these certificates to their two lowest levels.

RPL was highlighted as a priority in the interviews with the Kenyan and Tanzanian informants; however it was discussed in broad terms as for instance by informant T1: *"...informal and non-formal learning have been considered in the form of Lifelong Learning, and its articulation is spread out across all levels."* Similarly the Kenyan informant argued that *"recognition of qualifications and competencies obtained through [...] informal, non-formal and prior learning will be considered [...in the NQF]..."*. The undefined and broad character of these responses is perhaps due to the two qualifications frameworks being in the planning phase. Nonetheless, informant I1 referred to the international momentum on NQFs and RPL and stated that she felt confident that such practices would come to these states eventually.

Her view suggests that RPL is well rooted in the qualifications framework approaches among the states in East Africa. Similarly Allais (2010:98) observes that most states embrace RPL in their NQF approach, however with limited actual implementation. Even in cases where considerable political prestige was invested in RPL, as in South Africa, informant I3 claimed after years of operation of the qualifications framework there were only *"...islands of good practice..."* of RPL and of limited scope. The Scottish and Australian NQFs claim some success of RPL, however its scope has not been quantified, making evaluation of its impact

difficult (Allais 2010:98). Given RPL's equity focus, one can understand that the approach is appealing. However international experience suggests that it is a challenging concept to implement.

6.4.3.1 Prospects of RPL

RPL practices can work in different ways and is mainly tied to the broader social goals associated with NQFs (Allais 2010:54). However RPL alone seems insufficient in eradicating for instance poverty and social exclusion on large scale in East Africa, which calls for a range of accompanied policies. Nonetheless, RPL can play a role in addressing these issues as it gives a 'second chance' to formal qualifications, to people who have little schooling and no formal qualifications. However the precondition seems to be that these individuals must have acquired some sort of skills outside the formal education system. As RPL approaches in East Africa are rather undefined, with the exception of Uganda, a critical examination of RPL approaches is perhaps appropriate.

Considering the low formal skill levels and the large informal sectors in the East African states, informant I1 suggests that RPL can be a fruitful tool in this regard. Similar to the Worker's PAS scheme in Uganda, she argues that the potential of RPL lies in the lower TVET levels of a qualifications framework, where one targets and identifies individuals who have acquired some sort of skills informally in the informal or traditional economy. She argues it is insufficient to assess and certify what they already know, as it needs to be accompanied by some targeted teaching and training to fill the knowledge gaps required for a given qualifications. Such an approach, she argues, is currently in operation in certain countries with large informal sectors and overall low skill levels, and she concludes it would perhaps be appropriate in East Africa as well. As the states in East Africa embrace RPL as part of their NQFs, one could argue that to achieve social and equity impact through RPL, a contextual and targeted approach like informant I1 suggests would be appropriate.

Such an approach has some challenges. Experience from earlier NQF implementers indicates it is challenging to implement even in better resourced contexts (Allais 2010:54) than in East Africa. As informant I1 suggests it requires a targeted approach which could make it inappropriate to use a standardized RPL approach with the same assessment, certification, curricula and pedagogy regardless of context. To illustrate this last point, consider RPL approaches for two relevant groups in the East African context presented in Chapter 2,

namely illiterate people with no schooling and for those who have some years of primary schooling but dropped out. Considering that RPL should identify the knowledge gaps, one could argue that the additional teaching and training for these two groups would look rather different. For the illiterate person the additional training would perhaps be basic literacy, whereas for the other group RPL could more appropriately be combined with more advanced teaching and training. In other words properly targeted RPL approaches can on the one hand increase the prospects of achieving the expected benefits. However such targeted approaches to RPL may also reduce the prospects, as it requires considerable investment and resources which may exceed the capacities of East African governments.

6.4.4 Prospects of Access

The discussion so far has dealt with the three following rationales: improving understanding of qualifications systems, creating credit accumulation and transfer possibilities, and RPL. As explained earlier these three rationales are together expected to facilitate better *access* opportunities in the sense that it makes it easier for people to enter and re-enter education and training (Allais 2010:55). As these three rationales have been identified in the four East African states¹², it indirectly implies that these states seek to increase access possibilities by introducing NQF. The extent to which the states will manage to increase access will then depend on whether they achieve a trusted transparent framework of qualifications, structures of credit accumulation, and practices of recognition of prior learning.

One could expect that it will be difficult to create more access routes in an education system that is struggling with relatively high dropout rates as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2,3 (Regional Education Features). In such contexts one might propose introducing such measures that enable pupils to stay in school as reducing school fees and indirect school costs (UNESCO 2010:186), and that these measures are more acutely needed than enabling more access routes. Moreover if NQF in the region succeeds in allowing more pupils access, the same factors which cause them to dropout will most likely continue to be at work if not simultaneously addressed. This risk again underlines the significance of policy breadth, and that NQF alone will not suffice. Thus the prospect of achieving access seems to depend on the

¹² RPL in Uganda was not stipulated in policy documents. However such mechanisms are operational as discussed above.

states' ability to create trust in the framework, and to implement appropriate accompanying policies with NQF.

6.4.5 Linking Education to Labor Market Needs

As one can see from Table 6.1, policy documents from Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda all explicitly refer to increase the *relevance of education to the labor market*. A similar rationale was noted by the Tanzanian informant T1:

“The main objective of TQF [Tanzanian Qualifications Framework] is to standardize and harmonize the country’s qualifications by putting in place a system for setting standards, defining expected knowledge, skills and competencies needed for the labor market...”

In general it appears that all the states in East Africa hope to achieve qualifications that correspond to labor market needs by adopting NQF. One approach perceived to be beneficial for this goal is to involve employers and private sector in the process of developing level descriptors and new learning outcome based qualifications (Uganda MoES 2008:22,32; Rwanda 2008c:4; Kenya MoE & MHEST 2012a:97).

Such an approach has been widely used by earlier implementers. The assumption has been that private sector and employers understand what skills education and training should provide to accommodate their needs (Tuck 2007:13). According to Allais (2010:94-95) the approach has been successful in some states, however others seem to have achieved little. Some cases show that new qualifications believed to be highly relevant to the labor market were developed on paper, yet after years of existence no institution had developed learning programs, no assessments have been conducted and no person awarded the qualification. This suggests that it is hard for NQFs to achieve more labor market relevance simply by designing purportedly relevant qualifications (Allais 2010:94).

More precautions in developing new qualifications may secure labor market relevance and ensure that they are used. Informant I1 draws the attention to the compositions of stakeholder representatives involved in such processes. She argues that only involving private sector or employers becomes too narrow and stresses that a broader set of stakeholders would be beneficial. Involving for instance education providers in the process would perhaps ensure that learning programs were developed against the new labor market relevant qualifications. Broad stakeholder involvement may require a recurring process, as it takes time to understand

each other's purposes, working methods and cultures (Raffe 2009:26). Experience suggests that simply laying out labor market relevant outcomes without building trust among the stakeholders and the NQF itself, will not lead to the desired change (Tuck 2007:7) for East African governments.

6.4.5.1 Contextual Considerations

The idea to involve employers and private sector stakeholders to develop or adjust qualifications to the labor market needs, raises the question of which employers and private sector companies should be invited to such processes? The private sector in East Africa varies from some large multinational corporations to large-medium national companies and many small local enterprises. Moreover the public sector is a large employer demanding a whole range of skills from teachers, accountants and other administrative professions. One may expect that these stakeholders' willingness and capacity to engage in time consuming and recurring processes of developing qualifications will vary significantly and that these processes demand scarce resources from stakeholders.

Moreover as most East Africans are employed in the informal and traditional sector, one may wonder if small companies in the informal sector are expected to participate. If only multinational corporations participate, their demands might differ from those of smaller and national companies, and there is the risk that the qualifications will still be irrelevant to smaller and local companies. There is no blueprint to these issues however the discussion illustrates the challenges to operationalize this rationale embraced by all the states. Possibly closer examination of *why* the states embrace the rationale, may give further insight to some of the questions raised above.

Improving the labor market relevance of qualifications might also have little impact in a region with a depressed labor market, as Chapter 2 (the East African Context) suggests is the case in East Africa. In such conditions people may have labor market relevant qualifications, however due to the labor market situation they are unlikely to get jobs. This again points to the importance of combining improved relevance with policy breadth (Young 2013:23; Raffe 2009:38) that stimulates jobs creation. On the other hand, job creation in a context where people do not have the skills needed to fill them is also problematic. Thus UNESCO in its Global Monitor Report (2012:15) argues that a first step is to address skills deficits that leave people unemployed, which indicate that improving relevance of qualifications is an

appropriate approach. However this discussion illustrates NQFs limitations to solve on its own complex societal challenges.

6.4.6 Increase Private Sector Contribution

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Analytical Framework) this rationale has two aspects: *increasing private sector financial contribution* to provision of education (Allais 2010:57), and *facilitate private provision of education* (Young 2005:57). In regards to the first aspect, as private sector employers are invited to develop new qualifications hence the discussion above, Allais (2010:57) notes that some states expect them to invest financially in delivery of education and training. Among the states studied here such hopes were only identified in the Rwandan case, where private sector financial contributions to higher education are expected (Rwanda MINEDUC 2008b:13-14). Allais (2010:100) suggests that few states have experienced such effects, which might indicate that Rwanda might have disappointing prospects in this regard.

Looking at the other aspect of the rationale, one can argue that NQF implicitly facilitates private provision through deregulation and learning outcomes which allows private providers to deliver learning programs against learning outcomes (Young 2005:57). Nonetheless all the states make such expectations explicit in their policy documents. In Uganda and Kenya it is hoped that the development of learning outcomes will encourage private providers to deliver programs for these qualifications (Uganda MoES 2008:32; Kenya MoE & MHEST 2012a:94,121). Similar hopes were evident in Rwanda and Tanzania where it was hoped introducing NQF would facilitate continued private provision of education in TVET and higher education (Rwanda MINEDUC 2008a:14-15; Tanzania MOEVT 2013:8). An increased number of private providers could take some of the burden from the public sector in providing education (Young 2005:31; Carnoy 1999). However, Young (2005:31) argues that considerable challenges are associated with achieving effective regulation of such providers in low income countries with limited administrative capacity. Nonetheless considerable amount of private providers of education exists in the region already. Whether more providers will emerge after implementation of NQF will perhaps depend in the political will to increase the number of private institutions. Even so, one could argue that NQF itself provides a framework to regulate such providers as it can accredit providers according to their ability to deliver on learning outcomes in the framework.

6.4.7 Quality Assurance System

As Table 6.1 show all the states analyzed seek to reform *quality assurance mechanism* as part of adopting qualifications frameworks. As the NQF policy seek to reform education by making it more transparent and allow alternative access routes to qualifications, it seems essential to accompany such change with new regulations on quality assurance and certification. As stressed by Raffe (2009:32), the value of a qualification is dependent on how society at large perceives and trusts the institutions that provide them. NQFs may therefore undermine trust as qualifications become more transparent and less tied to the trusted institutions (Young 2011:86). With this in mind one can understand why introducing new quality assurance mechanisms are included, namely that they purport to secure trust in qualifications. As Table 6.2 illustrate a total of 16 out of the 23 documents content analyzed referred to such a mechanism, suggesting it is given considerable weight when introducing the policy.

Providing an external function to assess and quality assure qualifications and providers are no easy task, and experience from earlier NQF implementers reveals numerous of pitfalls. A general observation is that implementers with extensive administrative capacity and strong education institutions show better ability to create trust in qualifications when introducing NQFs (King & Palmer 2010:110; Johanson & Adams 2004:4). Experience from Botswana and South Africa suggests that relying on outcomes-based accreditation models of education providers with weak and uneven institutions was difficult, ineffective and costly (Allais 2010:99). Nonetheless whether or not the new qualifications are trusted does not only depend on level of income and administrative capacity. Qualifications frameworks from well-resourced states also experience challenges in creating trust if the NQF did not build on the existing system (Young 2008:131).

This may suggest that choosing an appropriate design and role for the central state administration is crucial. As Tuck (2007:22) argues, qualifications frameworks with little central direction may lead to little change, whereas too much central control may also create controversy and conflict among stakeholders that may lead to little change. This suggests that balancing these two extremes by choosing a middle ground approach could be beneficial in the East African states, as it will lead to desired change while limiting controversy and conflict levels (Tuck 2007:23). Whether such an approach in fact is chosen in the states,

requires an in-depth study for each state that exceeds the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, exploring potential pitfalls if a “correct” approach is not taken is at the core of this research.

Centralized qualifications frameworks are often referred to as NQFs with “tight” designs. In such situations new qualifications are perceived by education providers to be a “straightjacket”, of over-specified, detailed, narrow and cumbersome qualifications (Young & Allais 2009:12; Allais 2010:105; Tuck 2007:22). Under such circumstances education providers are reduced to institutions that merely comply with the developed learning outcomes, which may lead to conflicts between providers and the central ministry or authority (Tuck 2007:23). Moreover tight NQF designs are according to Tuck (2007:22) more likely to be driven by bureaucratic understanding rather than by the practical concerns of the users. This may further lead to a so called “box ticking” mentality where education providers become more preoccupied with fulfilling bureaucratic procedures of quality assurance rather than engaging directly on pedagogical and practical measures to improve quality (Young 2008:131). Since such tight NQFs are likely to create conflict, one might risk a scenario where the new outcomes-based qualifications are ignored and remain unused as education providers oppose and mistrust the system.

These considerations illustrate the importance for East Africa to strive for a middle ground approach between ‘loose’ and ‘tight’ qualifications frameworks, if one seeks to implement a framework that will achieve some impact and have low conflict levels. Failing to do so might have fatal consequences on an already strained education sector as it may divert energy from proper quality measures and it may create mistrust in the sector. Again, it seems that creating communities of trust with education providers and other stakeholders emerges as the most crucial aspect for the East African states to devote attention to in order to fulfill expected benefits from NQF (Tuck 2007:26).

6.4.8 Improving TVET Status

A rather different typical rationale states have for adopting NQFs is to *improving the status of TVET*. Table 6.1 shows that this rationale was explicitly referred to only in Ugandan and Tanzanian policy documents. In both these states the low status of TVET was perceived as a challenge to recruitment of skilled individuals. Thus by placing TVET qualifications on the framework, enabling comparison to other more desired qualifications as discussed in Chapter

3 (Analytical Framework), NQF is expected to improve TVET's status (Allais 2010:57). Allais (2010:100) notes that changing the status of TVET is a challenging task to undertake as it depends on changes in the perceptions society has towards these qualifications.

Low public perceptions on TVET may have been caused by the so called 'crisis in public TVET' in Sub-Saharan Africa. The TVET sector has for decades been characterized by poor quality, low public funding and lack of relevance (Atchoarena & Esquieu 2002:43). Rather than expecting NQFs to improve status (Allais 2010:57), it seems more reasonable to address the underlying issues by other policy measures. Thus if Uganda and Tanzania seek to increase TVET status, it seems NQF alone will show limited results unless it is accompanied with a 'policy breadth' addressing the fundamental issues.

6.4.9 International Recognition and Labor Mobility

As presented above (Chapter 6, Section 6.3 the Regional Qualifications Framework), this rationale has a regional dimension, however it may refer to *international recognition and labor mobility* beyond the regional EAC dimension as well. As one can observe from Table 6.1, Kenya and Rwanda explicitly expect their NQFs to facilitate this rationale. It was also evident in the Tanzanian case as informant T1 listed 'international recognition and labor mobility' as one of top three arguments for why Tanzania adopts NQF.

This rationale has received considerable weight internationally when NQFs have been planned. Research on other NQF implementers indicates that very few evince significant evidence of improved international recognition or mobility of labor as a result of NQF (Allais 2020:100). A plausible explanation could be a misconception about mobile workforces in a so called globalized economy. Young (2011:86) suspects that the typical mobile worker consists of "... two kinds – the elite employees of multi-nationals who can and do disregard qualifications frameworks, and the unemployed from disadvantaged communities searching for the growing number of low skilled jobs..." who also has little use of formal qualifications.

The lack of NQFs' ability to facilitate international recognition and labor mobility can also be explained due to formal barriers to international human mobility. Visa regulations hinder free movement of East Africans to other African states, and even more so to Europe and the USA. East African states also have regulations that obstruct foreigners from outside the EAC to seek work in the region (Cronjé 2013). Hypothetically one could argue that if such hindrances

were removed globally, NQFs' ability to confer international recognition and promote labor mobility would perhaps increase. This further indicates the significance of policy breadth, in the sense that NQF alone (Raffe 2009:38; Tuck 2007:25) is insufficient to facilitate labor mobility. A world without visa regulations is politically unrealistic in the foreseeable future, but it is an illustration of the significance of broader policies. Within the EAC, removed hindrances to mobility (EAC 2010), as discussed above, could potentially enable the qualifications frameworks to facilitate labor mobility on a regional level.

6.4.10 Broader Goals

The prospects of fulfilling the expected broader goals of NQF in the East African context, is related to the extent the other rationales are fulfilled (Allais 2010:58). Experience from earlier NQFs implementers suggests that the NQFs achieve rather poorly in what they set out to achieve (Young 2011:84; Allais 2010). And the analysis above has identified certain factors and issues that may increase the prospects of fulfilling the expected benefits of the policy in East Africa. An elementary starting point in this regard is, as informants I1 and I3 stressed, that one needs to fully understand the concepts and models of NQF before one implement. An incremental approach to NQF that builds on the existing system seems to be beneficial in a context with limited administrative and economic capacities (King & Palmer 2010:110; Young 2008:131). Moreover, NQF only provides a framework (Tuck 2007:24), that needs to be accompanied with other policies. A critical evaluation of these factors in the East African contexts seems crucial for planned and piloted frameworks in the East African region, to fulfill the broader goals of the policy.

6.5 NQF as a Response to Globalization

The analysis above has given insight into how the East African governments justify implementation of NQFs, based on official documents and responses from informants. This section set out to go beyond stipulated rationales, and explore theoretically why NQF is attractive to East African states. The analysis seeks to give a theoretical understanding of underlying rationales states have for adopting NQF, namely that it responds to mechanisms of globalization. To do this Carnoy's (1999) three reform types, that he argues are triggered by certain mechanisms of globalization (explained in Chapter 3 Analytical Framework), are compared with the NQF models and rationales.

6.5.1 NQF as a Competitive-driven Reform

Carnoy's (1999:37) first reform type is competitive-driven reforms. One of the reasons why NQF can be subsumed under a competitive-driven reform type is that one of the broader goals of NQF is to increase states' international competitiveness (Allais 2010:58; Young 2005:5; Young & Allais 2009:7). Carnoy (1999:37) claims that such policies usually contain new ideas about how one organizes production of knowledge, skills and qualification, which are characteristics that suits well with NQF, hence the move from an institutional focus on education, to outcomes-based education models, and make the education sector more flexible (Raffe 2009:1). More specifically NQFs seek to achieve increased competitiveness by securing high quality of qualifications through learning standards (Tuck 2007:3), which by Carnoy (1999:37) is seen as a key strategy in competitive-reform types. In this way states can set minimum requirement standards which education providers are required to meet, thus securing high quality of the human capital in the country, in a competitive international environment (Carnoy 1999:39).

Another reason why NQF goes well with the competitive-driven reform type is that NQF intends to make the education system more flexible to accommodate changes in skill demand and occupations (Allais 2010:59; Chakroun 2010:207) caused by globalization (Carnoy 1999:37,87). Through transparent qualifications and the access rationale, people can enter and re-enter education and training more easily (Allais 2010:55; Coles 2006:14). That allows learners to re-skill and up-skill throughout life according to shifts in labor market, which at an aggregated level accommodate the need to improve the human capital and make the state more competitive (Allais 2010:58).

The rationale for recognition of prior learning (RPL), though mostly related to equity-driven reform (Allais 2010:97), also contains competitive driven elements. If large amounts of previously unskilled individuals, through RPL are given access to up-skilling, it may on an aggregate level improve the overall human capital, thus increasing the competitiveness of the state. One last aspect of NQF which matches the competitive-driven reform type is how NQFs address the lack of relevance of education (Carnoy 1999:38; Young 2005:16). In a competitive international environment this mismatch threatens a state's competitiveness (Carnoy1999:38). As discussed above the East African states seek to address this mismatch by implementing NQF.

6.5.2 NQF as Finance-driven and Equity-driven Reform

A characteristic of finance-driven reforms is that they seek to deregulate and facilitate privatization of provision of education (Carnoy 1999:41-42). Through developing learning outcomes with minimum standard requirements and quality assurance mechanisms, the NQF reform is in principle indifferent to who provides the qualifications and how they are provided (Coles 2006:8). This coincides with the 'finance-driven type' in two ways. First these learning standards deregulate the education sector by governments allowing considerable freedom to providers in designing appropriate teaching designs as long as the standards and set outcomes by the government are met (Carnoy 1999:41; Allais 2010:55). Secondly, it is often believed that these mechanisms will ensure provision in a competitive and effective way, since learning providers, whether governmental or private, compete to provide cost-effective learning programs to meet set learning standards and outcomes. By so doing the governments are expected to reduce their expenditure and ensure high quality education in a cost-effective way (Carnoy 1999:41). As these arguments coincide with rationales of NQFs, it provides a fruitful ground to claim that NQF seem to have elements from the finance driven reform type.

In regards to NQF as an equity-driven reform, the broader social goals associated with the policy are tied to the RPL rationale (Allais 2010:58). As discussed above, this rationale targets marginalized, poor, unskilled and individuals who have been excluded from education (Allais 2010:54,58).

A last rationale that states have for adopting NQF which has not been discussed in the light of Carnoy's (1999) reform types is the labor mobility and international recognition of qualifications rationale. A fruitful way to capture this rationale is to see it as a general response to globalization rather than linked to any specific reform type. As discussed in Chapter 3 (Analytical Framework) advances in technology, infrastructure and communication have made people and labor more mobile and more likely to cross international state borders. NQFs can be understood as a response to such labor mobility by creating mechanisms for recognition of foreign qualifications as well as providing qualifications which can be more easily assessed and approved abroad.

6.5.3 NQF as a Response to Global Mechanisms

Based on the analysis of NQF in the light of Carnoy's (1999) reform types, one can argue that NQF's concepts and models seem to capture all these reforms that are triggered by mechanisms of globalization. The analysis has thus provided an argument about how NQF responds to global dynamics. In an attempt to summarize and enhance the understanding of the analysis above, Table 6.3 below has been developed by the researcher. It is hoped that this contribution can give further insight and understand to how NQF relates to mechanisms of globalization understood through Carnoy's (1999) three reform types.

Table 6.3 Understanding NQF as a Policy Triggered by Mechanisms of Globalization

NQF rationales and aspects	Carnoy's typologies and globalization trends
Improving understanding of qualifications system	Foundational for competitive, finance and equity aspect of NQF
Credit accumulation and transfer	Competitive and equity
Recognition of prior learning	Competitive and equity
Reducing mismatch	Competitive
Increase private sector contribution	Finance
Quality assurance system	Competitive and finance
Improve TVET status	NA
International recognition and labor mobility	General globalization trends
Contextual and broader goals	Competitive and equity

This analysis may also help to explain why the NQF is attractive to the East African states, as the policy package responds to global mechanisms such as increased international competition and the quest to increase human capital, shifting demands of skills, a more unpredictable world of work, containing public spending to attract investments while simultaneously addressing equity issues (Carnoy 1999:37-46). As these mechanisms affect states in a globalized inter-connected world in similar ways, NQFs ability to respond to these trends may explain not only the East African attractiveness to the policy, but also the 140 other NQFs internationally. Whereas the analysis and arguments presented here are not

traceable in official documents as stipulated justifications for adopting NQFs in East Africa, the analysis provides a theoretical understanding of underlying rationales states may have for adopting NQF.

Another observation revealed from this analysis is related to the broader goals East African states seek to achieve by introducing NQF. As Table 6.1 in Section 6.1 (East African Rationales for NQF) show, such goals were identified in all the states, operationalized in Appendix 2 as social and economic goals. Examining Table 6.3 one can observe that most of NQFs concepts and rationales responds to Carnoy's (1999) competitive and finance reform types. Only recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer are explicitly linked to Carnoy's (1999) equity reform. This suggests that NQF has an inherent bias to accommodate broad economic goals, rather than social and equity goals. This view is supported by Allais (2010:58), and informant I1 who argued that when states implement NQFs, "*...at the bottom of it is always the economy...*". Despite traceable social broader goals in policy documents, the content analysis supports the impression that broad economic goals dominate NQF justifications. This may further suggest that economic broader goals may stand a better chance of being realized in the East African implementation of NQF, compared to social broader goals, as most of NQFs concepts are associated with competitive and finance considerations.

7 Conclusions

This study has, through a mixed methods approach, found that the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) policy has reached the East African Community (EAC) and its member states¹³. As the analysis argues, Kenya, Tanzania and the EAC are purely in the planning phase and expected to have operational frameworks in the next few years. Rwanda has piloted some programs in regards to their framework, whereas Uganda has three operating levels in their TVET NQF with plans to expand as experience and familiarity grows. Table 5.2 in Chapter 5 displays, according to Allais's (2010) three key design features, how the East African qualifications frameworks are planned. However, due to the preliminary stages of all the frameworks in the region, these findings should be interpreted as provisional and from a policy process where changes in structure and plans may occur. Nonetheless, a tendency towards planned comprehensive frameworks, dealing with all levels of education is evident.

Furthermore, this study found that the East African states justified implementation of NQF in rather similar ways to existing qualifications frameworks internationally. This supports Allais's (2010) model of typical rationales for NQF, as a fruitful theory to study why states adopt qualifications frameworks. Through a content analysis, this study found that the most important justification East African states have for implementing NQF is to reform or change quality assurance mechanism in their qualifications systems. Most of the other rationales were given more or less equal weight, except the rationale to improve the status of TVET.

The prospects of realizing the benefits of the policy were analyzed based on experience from established NQFs and contextual factors. Where limited success is evident among existing NQFs, the analysis indicated that some East African contextual features pose further challenges towards realizing NQF's goals (Isaac 2008; Johanson & Adams 2004:4; King & Palmer 2010:11; Young 2005:17). However, the study identified some challenges and pitfalls to be avoided based on existing literature, which might increase the prospects of qualifications frameworks in the region. The determining variables in this regard seems to be trust building among stakeholders in the new frameworks in the region (Tuck 2007:29), choosing a middle ground approach between 'tight' and 'loose' frameworks (Tuck 2007:26), and a pragmatic approach with realistic ambitions and scope in the light of contextual limitations (Tuck 2007:26; King & Palmer 2010:110). The study further found that NQF seems to have an

¹³ Burundi has not been studied.

inherent bias towards economic broader goals, based on the comparison between Carnoy's (1999) reform types and the typical rationales of NQF. This suggests that the prospects of achieving economic broader goals are higher than the prospects of achieving the social broader goals.

7.1 Elements of Diffusion

As the analysis has shown NQF continues to spread. The presence of NQF in East Africa seems to take place despite the limited results. This somewhat surprising tendency encourages one to look for other plausible explanations to answer the question of what it is with NQF that causes its continued spread despite the shortcomings highlighted in this analysis. Thus, the analysis presented hitherto seems insufficient to fully understand the spread of NQF to the East African region.

One factor that may give some insight into this question is the so-called 'international momentum' of NQF implementation, which was introduced by informant I1. This explanation suggests that the presence of NQF policies in East Africa is no isolated case, nor unique to the East African region, as they join the club of 140 other states (Young 2011:84). Among them are 36 European (Bjornavold & Pevac-Grm 2013:13), which according to informant I3 is highly significant as these are "reputed" states serving as a model for others. Moreover Allais (2010:58) notes that NQF may become a self-perpetuating policy cycle:

"... as more countries have developed frameworks, and as regional frameworks [...] have come into existence, policy makers seem to feel under increasing pressure to have a framework in order for their national qualifications to fit in internationally."

Nonetheless, the spread of NQF to East Africa did not happen in isolation however, it is rather part of a broader international trend where states look to qualifications frameworks to improve the education and training sectors.

Another element which may have influenced the emergence of NQF in East Africa is the support NQF receives from international organizations. According to Young (2011:84), NQF is supported by OECD, the World Bank and UNESCO, which may stimulate its diffusion. Meanwhile, it is worth mentioning that UNESCO recognizes the complexities associated with adopting NQFs in developing countries like the East African states (UNESCO 2012:24), while the World Bank (2013:65) itself may have been rather cautious in its approach to such developments. Even so UNESCO through its Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) sees NQFs

as a fruitful tool for recognition of prior and informal learning, thus endorsing qualifications frameworks (UNESCO 2012:32,252-253; UNESCO UIL 2012:4). Similarly, ILO recommends its member states in the Human Resource Development Recommendation Number 195 (2004) to “...develop national qualifications frameworks to facilitate lifelong learning, assist enterprises and employment agencies to match skill demand with supply...”

A theoretical element that may give some insight into the continued spread of NQF is the analysis in Chapter 6, section 6.5.4. It showed that NQF responds to certain global dynamics that affect education systems in similar ways internationally. This is not to suggest that globalization or a ‘global force’ is an explanatory variable for NQF diffusion. Rather it shows that the policy is relevant and attractive to implementers in Europe, Asia as well as in the East African region as it responds to challenges common for many states in an inter-connected world, where the existing systems are seen insufficient to the challenges that mechanisms of globalization pose on education systems.

Diffusion of NQF to East Africa does not just happen, as it has to be actively brought about by individuals and governments in the respective states. However the argument in this regard is that the adoption of qualifications frameworks to East Africa is no isolated phenomenon and can thus fruitfully be seen as part of these three elements. As exemplified by informant K1’s statement, other states in the “...African region that have been ahead of Kenya in its implementation of NQFs have also inspired Kenya to follow suit...” Similarly, informant T1 argues that other states in the EAC and The Southern African Development Community (SADC) regions have been of inspiration. This may suggest that the implementation of NQF by other African states is more relevant than the “reputed” European states as suggested by informant I3. Nonetheless, the response from these two informants illustrate that what other states do have inspired the East African states to implement NQF. Informant K1 also argues that UNESCO has played a key part in the Kenyan case as it has provided knowledge on international practices on NQF.

Other elements might also be at work, which can be a subject for further research.

7.2 Further Research

The aim of this study is to be a door-opener to developments in a region where little research exists on NQF diffusion, and a field of plausible research areas arises from this study. In-

depth case studies on each of the four states and the EAC developments seem relevant to understand the internal dynamics of NQF implementation. How education providers, private sector and employers, and the central authorities cooperate in the process of developing the new framework. Moreover it seems relevant to explore how the new frameworks in the region are expected to work with the existing qualifications systems and other aspects of administering qualifications. Uganda emerges as an especially interesting case, as it has an operational sector framework for the lower TVET levels. A case study on Uganda's process of implementation seems relevant as it has chosen an incremental approach, which seems beneficial for the East African states, bearing in mind King and Palmer's (2010:110) argument.

This study has further provided an overview of what the East African states expect to achieve by adopting NQF. Each of these rationales according to informant I1 and I3 are complex concepts, which one could argue deserves a case study in their own right. However, as reforming 'quality assurance' is given the highest priority, hence Table 6.2 (Section 6.1), it seems appropriate to give this rationale most weight in further studies in East Africa, where a study of the "looseness" and "tightness" of the frameworks arise as a crucial field of study.

Another NQF concept that may have considerable potential in East Africa is recognition of prior learning (RPL), considering the large informal sector, low skill levels and dropout rates in the region. Thus a large proportion of the East African population could benefit from a "second chance" to qualifications through RPL schemes. Again Uganda stands out as an interesting case to study as it has an operating RPL scheme.

The regional dimension of this study is another significant area for further research. How is the regional framework expected to work with the frameworks in the four states, and what is the process of implementation of the regional framework. Other general issues for further research could be how NQFs in the region are accompanied with other policies in relevant policy areas, hence the argument of 'policy breadth', or how the process of developing qualifications based on learning outcomes takes place as part of establishing the frameworks.

There is little research on the emerging qualifications frameworks in East Africa, and the room for further studies is almost infinite.

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Appendix 1 Coding Schedule of 39 Sampled Documents

39 sampled documents from Ministries of Education in unit states and the EAC.
 Identify reference to NQF in text, based on search words: “national qualifications framework”, “qualification”, “framework”, “NQF” or identified abbreviation for the respective NQFs.
 Dichotomized based on positive or negative mention to NQF.

Country	Source	Year	Doc nr. ¹⁴	Title of document	NQF reference		No NQF reference	Type of Document
					Positive	Negative		
Kenya	MOE	2008	1	Strategic Plan 2008-2012, Kenya Vision 2030 towards a globally competitive and prosperous Kenya	1	0	0	2
Kenya	MOE	2012	2	The Basic Education Bill 2012 Arrangement of clauses	1	0	0	1
Kenya	MEST	2013	3	The technical and vocational education and training act 2013	0	0	1	NA
Kenya	MEST	2012	4	Education Sector Report, 2013/14-2015/16 Medium Term Expenditure Framework	1	0	0	4
Kenya	MEST	2012	5	The Kenya Qualifications Framework, Bill 2012	1	0	0	1
Kenya	MEST	2013	6	The Basic Education Act 2013 No. 14 of 2013	1	0	0	1
Kenya	MEST	2012	7	Sessional Paper of 2012. A policy framework for Education and Training Reforming Education and Training in Kenya	1	0	0	3
Kenya	MEST	2011	8	TIVET institutions guidance and counseling policy and operational guidelines	0	0	1	NA
Kenya	MEST	2012	9	The University Act No. 42 of 2012. Kenya Gazette Supplement No.192 (Acts no.42)	0	0	1	NA

¹⁴ Corresponds with Document numbers in Appendix 3.

Kenya	MEST	2013	10	Kenya Gazette Supplement no. 43. (Acts no. 28). “the Since, technology and innovation Act 2013	0	0	1	NA
Uganda	MOES	2012	11	The education and sports sector annual performance report FY 2012/13	1	0	0	4
Uganda	MOES	2008	12	Revised Education Sector Strategy Plan 2007-2015	1	0	0	2
Uganda	MOES	2012	13	Ministerial Policy Statement 2012/2013	1	0	0	3
Uganda	MOES	NA	14	Annex 5	0	0	1	NA
Uganda	MOES	NA	15	Formal Education Pathways in Uganda	0	0	1	NA
Tanzania	MOEVT	2012	16	Adult and Non-Formal Education Development Plan (ANFEDP) 2012/13-2016/17 Final Draft	1	0	0	2
Tanzania	MOEVT	2012	17	Medium Term Strategic Plan 2012/13-2015/16	1	0	0	2
Tanzania	MOEVT	2012	18	Education Sector Development Programme, Joint Education Sector Review 2012	1	0	0	4
Tanzania	MOEVT	2013	19	Technical and vocational Education and Training Development Programme (TVETDP) 2013/2014-2017/2018	1	0	0	2
Tanzania	MOEVT	2001	20	Basic Education Master Plan (BEMP)	0	0	1	NA
Tanzania	MOEVT	2001	21	Teacher Education Master Plan (TEMP)	0	0	1	NA
Tanzania	MOEVT	2006	22	Education and Training Sector Development Programme (ESDP) Primary Education development Programme II (2007-2011)	0	0	1	NA
Tanzania	MOEVT	NA	23	Education and Training Policy	0	0	1	NA
Tanzania	MOEVT	2000	24	Secondary Education Master Plan 2001-2005 (SEMP)	0	0	1	NA
Tanzania	Informant	NA	25	Tanzanian Qualifications Framework, Qualification Type Descriptors	1	0	0	5
Rwanda	MOE	2008	26	Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Policy in Rwanda	1	0	0	1
Rwanda	MOE	2008	27	Higher Education Policy	1	0	0	1
Rwanda	MOE	2008	28	Education Sector Strategic Plan 2008-2012	1	0	0	2

Rwanda	MOE	2013	29	Skills Area and Numbers of Priority Skills Required Across Rwanda, Five Year Program for Priority Skills Development to Deliver EDPRS II (2013-2018)	1	0	0	2
Rwanda	MOE	2012	30	Forward-Looking Joint Review of Education Sector Summary Report April 3 rd 2012	1	0	0	4
Rwanda	MOE	2010	31	Adult literacy Education Official Gazette no. special of 24/12/2010	0	0	1	NA
Rwanda	MOE	NA	32	Vision 2020 The Role of Education in the Realization of Vision 2020	0	0	1	NA
Rwanda	MOE	2008	33	Nine Years Basic Education Implementation Fast Track Strategies	0	0	1	NA
Rwanda	MOE	2007	34	Teacher Development and Management Policy in Rwanda	0	0	1	NA
Rwanda	MOE	2003	35	Education Sector Policy	0	0	1	NA
EAC	EAC	2011	36	4 th EAC Development Strategy (2011/12-2015/16)	1	0	0	2
IUCEA	IUCEA	2011	37	Rolling Strategic Plan 2011/12-2015/16	1	0	0	2
EAC	Informant Int.	2011	38	Annex VI. The East African Common Market (Mutual Recognition of Academic and Professional Qualifications) Regulations 2011	1	0	0	5
EAC	Informant national	2010	39	Annex IV. The East African Community Common Market (Mutual Recognition of Academic Qualifications) Regulations 2010	1	0	0	5
Total Documents			39		24	0	15	

Appendix 2 Coding Manual

Coding manual for identified documents with reference to NQF

Origin of report:

1. Kenya
2. Uganda
3. Tanzania
4. Rwanda
5. EAC

Type of document:

1. Laws/bills
2. Education strategy plans
3. Sessional papers
4. Sector reports

Allais model on NQF

1. Key design:

A. Nationally accepted framework

1. No reference
2. Comprehensive
3. Comprehensive with sub-frameworks
4. Sector framework
 - a. Higher Education
 - b. TVET
 - c. TVET low level
5. Other types

B. Level descriptor

1. No reference
2. Have level descriptor

C. Learning outcome based

1. No reference
2. Outcomes

2. Typical rational of NQF:

1. Improving understanding of qualifications system
2. Credit accumulation and transfer
3. Recognition of prior learning
4. Reducing mismatch between education and labor market
5. Increase private sector contribution
6. Quality assurance system
7. Improving parity of esteem for TVET and skills qualifications
8. International recognition and labor mobility
9. Broader goals

Operationalization of Allais typology for NQF designs and rational

1.0 Key design features

A. Nationally accepted framework qualifications

- A nationally accepted network linking qualifications together
- Comprehensive or sectorial.

B. Level descriptors

- Focus on number of levels
- A broad stance giving information about skills, competencies, abilities, possessions and mastery of a knowledge area
- Qualifications are placed on a level
- Systematic and hierarchical organization of qualifications according to level

descriptors

C. Learning outcomes

- Qualifications described in terms of learning outcomes providing details about the competencies and knowledge

2.0 Operationalization of national for NQF

2.1 Improving understanding of qualifications system

Often referred to as improving *transparency* of qualifications:

Focus on existing system being complex and ineffective

Focus on making easier qualifications system with multiple providers

Focus on improving understanding of the qualifications system for society

2.2 Credit accumulation and transfer

Focus on creating (progression) pathways within the education and training sector

Focus on improving possibilities for credit accumulation

Transparent qualifications make credit accumulation and transfer between education and training fields and levels possible

Focus on easing mobility of workforce

Focus on enabling comparability between qualifications

2.3 Recognition of Prior Learning

Focus on providing systems in the NQF which will recognize competence, knowledge, skills and abilities acquired outside formal education and training

Focus on incorporating adult education and literacy programs in NQF

2.4 Reducing mismatch between education and labor market

Focus on existing system not addressing economic needs

Focus on existing system not addressing labor market needs

Focus on issues related to address this mismatch

2.5 Increase private sector contribution

Focus on lack of public funding

Private sector expected to fund funding gap

Focus on encouraging private education providers to deliver

2.6 Quality assurance systems and new regulatory, assessment and certification mechanisms

Focus on quality assurance of education

Focus on creating confidence in qualifications

Focus on standards for external evaluation of learning programs

Change existing structures for quality assurance

2.6 Improving parity of esteem for TVET and skills qualifications

Focus on low status on TVET qualifications

Focus on placing TVET qualifications in NQF will change perceptions about TVET

2.8 International recognition and labor mobility

Focus on the role NQF can have to make national qualifications internationally recognized

Focus on recognizing foreign qualifications nationally

Focus on linking qualification framework to regional qualifications standards

2.9 Broader goals

Focus on the broader goals associated with NQF adoption

Focus on what broader goals the NQF is expected to achieve

Focus on economic and social benefits with NQF

Appendix 3 Coding Schedule

Coding Schedule for identified documents with reference to NQF of 23 docs.														
Doc ¹⁵	Origin	Type of doc	Allais's two dimensions of NQF model											
			Key Design			Purpose of NQF								
			A	B	C	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
2	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
4	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
5	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
6	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
7	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1
11	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	2	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1
13	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	3	2	4	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
17	3	2	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
18	3	4	3a	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
19	3	2	3b	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
25	3	5	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26	4	1	3b	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
27	4	1	3a	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
28	4	2	1 + 4	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
29	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
30	4	4	1 + 3b	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
36	5	2	1 + 3a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1

¹⁵ Numbers correspond to documents in Appendix 1.

Coding Schedule continues

Doc	Origin	Type of doc	Allais's two dimensions of NQF model											
			Key Design			Purpose of NQF								
			A	B	C	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
37	5	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
38	5	5	1 + 3b	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
39	5	5	1 + 3b	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0

Appendix 4 Interview Guide

Interview guide to semi-structured interviews

Information given will receive confidential treatment. I will carefully handle information to protect informant's anonymity in the final text. I will not refer to informants name and the text will be written in such a manner that locally informed readers cannot identify informants

1. Qualifications Framework in state

Based on your experience and work why do you think your country is implementing a qualifications framework?

Where there any specific event or political process that triggered the implementation of the framework?

What are the main objectives and reasons for implementing the framework?

Have other countries or international organizations been of inspiration or assistance in the process of developing the framework?

2. Design feature.

Questions depend on what the content analysis and the literature review shows.

3. Status today

Specific questions developed based on content analysis and literature review.

Could you please describe the process of implementation in brief? What qualifications were the first to be piloted if any?

Any further comments are welcomed in this regard.