Qualifications Systems: Bridges to Lifelong Learning

Dr. Patrick Werquin, OECD

Directorate for Education

Landscapes for Lifelong Learning: Are we going in the right direction?
London, 10 May 2006
Agenda for today

- The role of national qualifications system in promoting Lifelong learning: Rationale and concepts
- Pressures for change
- Actual policy responses
- Possible mechanisms
- Policy recommendations

Agenda for today

- The role of national qualifications system in promoting Lifelong learning: Rationale and concepts
- Pressures for change
- Actual policy responses
- Possible mechanisms
- Policy recommendations


Synopsis.

This link is identified as *mechanisms*
The approach.

National social and economic systems

Structural changes and changes in conditions

Structural changes

Changes in conditions

NQS

LIFELONG LEARNING

Agenda for today

- The role of national qualifications system in promoting Lifelong learning: Rationale and concepts
- Pressures for change
- Actual policy responses
- Possible mechanisms
- Policy recommendations
Pressures for change

What are the recent policy responses to the lifelong learning agenda that involve national qualifications systems?

Pressures for change (1/6)

Broad economic pressures

- discrepancy between job training and qualifications => Qualifications Framework and standards

- global economic trends or local needs (needs to be responsive to innovation, development of enterprise, human capital, skills shortages…)

- qualifications systems: seen as having the potential to better link education and work

- Pressures from enterprises (full range of qualifications, basic skills…)

- Promotion of greater mobility creates pressure on national qualifications systems
Pressures for change (2/6)

International pressures

- relative ranking in PISA/TIMSS/IALS/ALL
- EU: recognition for labour mobility and mobility of learners
  => qualifications structures that are consistent with other countries (European Qualifications Framework)
- parity between different recognition systems
Pressures for change (3/6)

Demographic pressures or issues

- ageing
- immigration
- Indigenous population
Pressures for change (4/6)

Social and cultural pressures

- not divorced from economic and demographic issues
- learning for its own sake
- behaviour, citizenship and democracy
- broaden ways of gaining credit (recognition of non formal and informal learning)
- more flexible vocational education and training for people in disadvantaged situations, for social inclusion and work
- Matthew effect, SMEs => pressure on Qualifications systems to give upper secondary education
Pressures for change (5/6)

Pressure from learners

- communication
- coherence
- transparency
Pressure from technological change

- using opportunities created by the new technologies (most up to date production methods);
- also for training and retraining;
- technology has encouraged the growth of international qualifications;
Pressures for change

- All demand led
- User oriented in structure, management, presentation and functioning
- Cater for different needs
- These pressures seem to have lead to many reforms!!!
- 9 policy responses (action or intention)
Agenda for today

- The role of national qualifications system in promoting Lifelong learning: Rationale and concepts
- Pressures for change
- Actual policy responses
- Possible mechanisms
- Policy recommendations
The 9 Policy Responses

1. Increase flexibility and responsiveness
2. Motivate young people to learn
3. Link education and work
4. Facilitate open access to qualifications
5. Diversify assessment processes
6. Make qualifications progressive
7. Make the qualifications system transparent
8. Review funding and increase efficiency
9. Better manage the qualifications system

Agenda for today

- The role of national qualifications system in promoting Lifelong learning: Rationale and concepts
- Pressures for change
- Actual policy responses
- Possible mechanisms
- Policy recommendations

The 20 Mechanisms

1) Communicating returns to learning for qualification
2) Recognising skills for employability
3) Establishing qualifications frameworks
4) Increasing learner choice in qualifications
5) Clarifying learning pathways
6) Providing credit transfer
7) Increasing flexibility in learning programmes leading to qualifications
8) Creating new routes to qualifications
9) Lowering cost of qualification
10) Recognising non-formal and informal learning

The 20 Mechanisms (cont’d)

11) Monitoring the qualifications system
12) Optimising stakeholder involvement in the QS
13) Improving needs analysis methods so that qualifications are up to date
14) Improving qualification use in recruitment
15) Ensuring qualifications are portable
16) Investing in pedagogical innovation
17) Expressing qualifications as learning outcomes
18) Improving co-ordination in the qualifications system
19) Optimising quality assurance
20) Improving information and guidance about QS

Ex.: Recognising non-formal and informal learning

Recognition systems for non-formal and informal learning make explicit the value of learning that is not assessed as part of a formal learning programme. This kind of recognition can act as a safety net for those who have not yet fully engaged with learning.

** Individuals** with relatively low levels of formal achievement might be motivated to enter programmes and continue learning if their knowledge, skills and wider competences acquired through experience can be recognised and used to reduce the costs of qualification.

**Employers** may see wider skills supply if more learning is recognised in the workforce. On the other hand this might lead to a reduction in commitment to formal training programmes.

**Providers** may be encouraged to widen access to programmes if quality assured recognition systems are in place. Although there may be increased direct and indirect costs involved in recognising non-formal and informal learning.

## Ranking the influence of mechanisms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th># of PR where strong role</th>
<th># of PR where supporting role</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Communicating returns to learning for qualifications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Recognise skills for employability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Establishing qualifications frameworks</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Increasing learner choice in qualifications</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Clarifying learning pathways</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Providing credit transfer</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Increasing flexibility in learning programmes leading to qualifications</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Creating new routes to qualifications</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Lowering cost of qualifications</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. <strong>Recognising non-formal and informal learning</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Monitoring the qualifications system</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. <strong>Optimising stakeholder involvement in the qualifications system</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Improving needs analysis methods so that qual. are up to date</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Improving qualification use in recruitment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Ensuring qualifications are portable</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Investing in pedagogical innovation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Expressing qualifications as learning outcomes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Maximising co-ordination in the qualifications system</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Optimising quality assurance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Improving information and guidance about qualifications system</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five highly ranked strong mechanisms</td>
<td>Three change mechanisms</td>
<td>Five key supporting mechanisms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Providing credit transfer</td>
<td><strong>3. Establishing qualifications framework</strong></td>
<td>11. Monitoring the qualifications system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Establishing a qualifications framework</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>17. Expressing qualifications as learning outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Creating new routes to qualifications</td>
<td></td>
<td>20. Improving information and guidance about qualifications system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Agenda for today

- The role of national qualifications system in promoting Lifelong learning: Rationale and concepts
- Pressures for change
- Actual policy responses
- Possible mechanisms
- Policy recommendations
Three tools

- Review of policy responses
- Pay attention to the powerful mechanisms
- Consider interactions between mechanisms
Next steps

- Collect quantitative data about the role of QS

- New OECD activity: *Recognition of non formal and informal learning*
merci

patrick.werquin@oecd.org
www.oecd.org/edu/lifelonglearning/nqs