

# IMPROVING COHERENCE IN COMPETENCE AND CREDIT BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN NEPAL; SCOPE TO ALIGN WITH NEW INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE

## Summary

The Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) has responded to labour market demand over the last 30 years with the development of Occupational Profiles, National Occupational Skills Standards and Occupational Curricula. Establishing Occupational Curricula and Occupational Skills Standards are necessary so learners, including those in non-formal and informal training, can benefit from an improved vocational training qualification and skills certification system, increasing their chances of securing decent employment. However, gaps remain, and without a coherent system of curricula and skills standards it is difficult to create a curriculum with credits, career pathways and articulations between different occupations and sectors (one of the stated aims of the government). Nepal is therefore working towards the establishment of competence and credit-based curriculum in line with global practice.

For this, the Dakchyata: TVET Practical Partnership project has provided technical assistance to CTEVT in evaluating current procedures and systems and providing recommendations for a new approach to competence and credit-based curriculum development. Based on the findings of this study, a paradigm shift has been recommended: moving from the current bottom-up approach through DACUM (Developing a Curriculum), to a top-down, systematic approach with Functional Analysis at its core.

## Key Findings

### **Opportunity to further improve coherence in the National Competency Standards system**

The National Competency Standards (NCS) system offers outcomes and evaluative statements against which a learner's performance can be judged in Nepal. However, the current National Occupation Standards System (NOSS) has limited description of occupational competence in its broad sense (as recognised, for example by ILO, the UK and many other nations). Likewise, NCS do not include analysis of sectors and functions (top-down) which would enable a coherent system of competence standards to be developed. That said, efforts are already underway to address some of these principles - a positive move towards improving coherence. Such efforts also present potential for a high degree of synergy between TVET projects in Nepal and every effort should be made to harmonise activities.

### **Limited institutional employer leadership and representation in the development of curricula and standards**

Efforts are already being made to strengthen employer leadership through the formation of new Sector Skills Committees (SSC). These include committees for construction and hospitality, and a planned SSC for Agriculture. Current NOSS and National Skills Testing Board (NSTB) skill tests have some relevance and quality in terms of labour market and learner needs. However, the NOSS has little direct or indirect influence on content of the key learning programmes: Technical School Leaving Certificate (TSLC), Short Duration Training, and 3-Year Diplomas. In the case of TSLC and 3-Year Diplomas, employers in the Construction sector, for example, report that they have to spend 1-2 years retraining graduates to make them competent. This does not represent quality according to international definitions on satisfying employer and learner needs.

## Limited coherence with international standards

Based on international practices, the current DACUM approach to curriculum development may not be the most effective way of developing a competency-based curriculum standard system. No credit values exist yet for units and qualifications, and Nepal must pay more attention to benchmarking with, or integration of, international standards.

## Recommendations

### Adopt a coherent structure of competency standards

A coherent structure of competency standards would involve adopting a top-down approach starting with the whole economy, its sectors, the functions and competency standards required, and the generation of different types of units, e.g. Generic, Sector Specific, and Occupation Specific. Other actions include: promotion of an appropriate methodology (Functional Analysis) to enable the development of such a structure; agreement and adoption of a uniform template for National Competency Standards (which may be very close to the template most recently used by NSTB); and introduction of an agreed and consistent method of assigning credit to units and qualifications.

### Benchmarking against international standards and practices

Harmonise with broad definitions of occupational competence which are already in use globally and promoted by ILO. This should cover: Tasks Skills, Task Management Skills, Contingency Management Skills, and Work Environment Management Skills. Ensure that, where appropriate, best use is made of international standards to integrate best practice and possibly accelerate the development process. International standards can be adapted to cater for local needs.

## Strengthen employer leadership of TVET curriculum

Ensure that labour market needs are accurately identified by enabling employer leadership of the development process (creating semi-autonomous sector bodies) and representation in the development panels. It is also necessary to complete the establishment of the three existing sector skills committees and strengthen their functionality by developing strategic plans for each and bring it in line with sector profile. Strengthening leadership skills of employers through SSC will result in the new occupational competency standards and packages forming the basis of all TVET curricula and qualifications, including TSLC, Short Duration and 3-Year Diplomas.

### Explore the feasibility of revising all TVET qualifications and curricula in line with National Competency Standards

Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of current qualifications and curricula (TSLC, Short Duration and 3-Year Diplomas) to clearly define the purpose of each and suggest necessary reforms. These qualifications should be tested in line with corresponding NCS to inform the creation of a comprehensive Quality Assurance System for the development and delivery of curricula and qualifications.

### Promote models of training which integrate trainees in the world of work

Training which integrates off- and on-job training (dual system) should be promoted to ensure that broad competence can be developed and assessed in the workplace.

### Establish a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system

Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation system to evaluate the relevance and quality of the curriculum for employers and learners.

This Policy Brief is based on the findings and recommendations of a summative evaluation carried out in April 2019 by an independent consultant, supported by Dakchyata. The aim of the study was to support CTEVT in evaluating existing processes for the design of TVET curricula in Nepal. The study provided a series of recommendations for future development and refinement, and a proposed 'roadmap' for implementation by CTEVT. The consultant's evaluation was based on the review of over 30 key documents, and interviews with 19 internal and external stakeholders. The findings are based on the concept that Nepal should have Competency and Credit-based Curriculum.

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