

Section 1 Introduction and Background

Introduction

The challenges associated with the recognition and transferability of teacher qualifications across the Commonwealth are not new, and remain closely interrelated with the increased migration of skilled professionals internationally. For many years significant efforts in the Commonwealth have focused on addressing the skewed nature of teacher migration, mainly from developing countries (such as South Africa, Jamaica and India) to more developed countries (including United Kingdom, Australia and Canada), and finding ways in which this brain drain could be limited, and even reversed (see for example UNESCO 2006, ILO and UNESCO 2006, Miller 2007, Edwards and Spreen 2007, Ochs 2007, McNamara et al., 2007, Bertram et al., 2007, and Degazon-Johnson 2007). An area that has received less attention, probably for good reason as it can easily be seen to contribute to teacher migration, is the limited recognition of the qualifications and experience of teachers from sending countries (usually developing countries) working in receiving countries (often, but not always, more developed countries).

Teacher loss has become a major concern in many countries across the world. The increasing international migration of skilled professional teachers is aggravating this situation, particularly for smaller countries trying to maintain their national schooling systems, and striving to reach the goals of universal primary education by 2015. At the same time, it is acknowledged that international teacher migration, if properly managed, can benefit schooling systems and contribute significantly to the professional development of teachers. The balance between the right of teachers to migrate for professional and personal development, against the possible negative impact on human capital in sending countries, has existed in the Commonwealth for many years.

SAQA has prepared this report at the request of the Commonwealth Steering Group on Teacher Qualifications. The Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned this report following on from an earlier study on the recognition of teacher qualifications and professional registration status that was completed prior to the 16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers held in Cape Town, South Africa, in December 2006. This report recommended that, amongst other

issues, the development of a teacher qualifications comparability table (SAQA and Commonwealth Secretariat 2006) be prioritised.

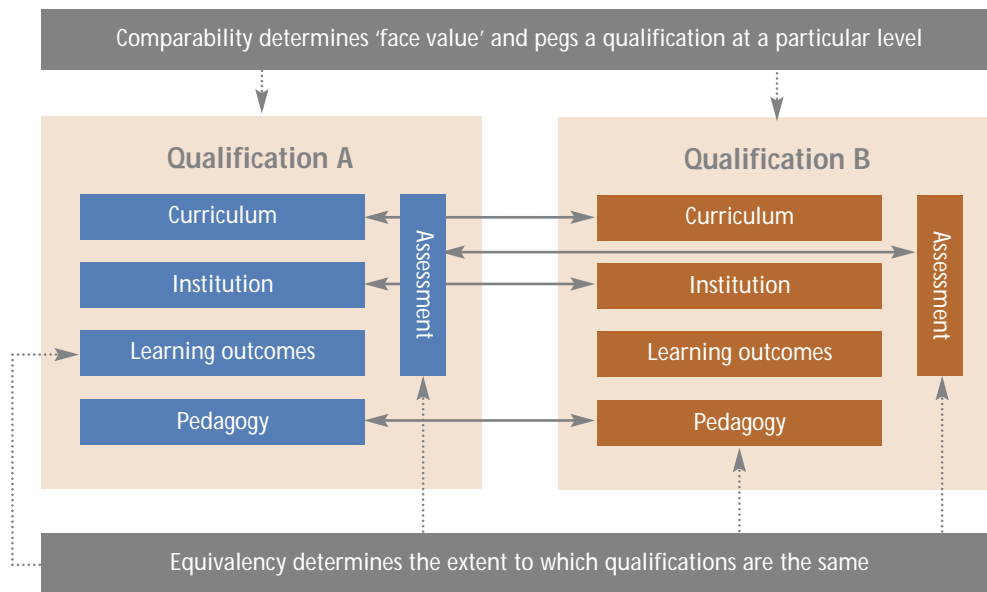
During this time, the Commonwealth Working Group on Teacher Qualifications, made up of teacher education representatives from member states, and tasked by ministers to advance the future actions of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol, considered and by-and-large supported the research findings. The Working Group, with support from the South African Department of Education, then opted to commission the development of a pilot comparability table that included eight member states¹. This study was completed in March 2007. On recommendation of the Steering Group, the pilot comparability table has now been further developed to include 35 member states. The report gives an account of the contextual and methodological considerations that underpin the research and led to the development of the comparability table. The comparability table is attached as an Annex to this report. It will also be made available separately through the Publications Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat as a handbook for government officials concerned with teacher education and teacher employment, teacher professional councils, teacher training institutions, qualifications agencies and, most importantly, for teachers considering foreign employment.

Aim of the Research

Cross-border teacher recruitment constitutes an integral part of the twenty-first century education and training landscape, and poses a wide range of challenges to the integrity of national systems. Over the years, various technologies and approaches have evolved as a response to cross-border recruitment, including: regional conventions (such as Lisbon in Europe and Arusha in Africa); recruitment protocols (such as the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol (Commonwealth Secretariat 2004)); bi- and multi-lateral agreements between governments and institutions; regional networks (such as the Asia Pacific Quality Network, and the Mediterranean Recognition Information Centres); as well as the development of guidelines (leading agencies include the International Labour Organisation [ILO], the Organisation for

¹ Australia, Canada, India, Jamaica, Mauritius, South Africa, Sri Lanka and United Kingdom (only Northern Ireland and England).

Figure 1: Comparability and equivalency



Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], and the World Bank). More recently, the increasing global presence of national, regional and even transnational qualifications frameworks has also come to offer insights into how best to approach cross-border provisioning. This research draws on these various initiatives, as it attempts to offer another perspective on the existing challenges of cross-border provisioning.

In particular, the thinking underlying the comparability table draws on the 2006 study on teacher qualifications and professional status (SAQA and Commonwealth Secretariat 2006), the Lisbon Convention (1997), and a joint UNESCO-OECD initiative to develop an International Standard for the Classification of Education (1997, revised in 2006) (UNESCO 2006b). A distinction is made between different levels at which qualifications are compared, both in terms of comprehensiveness and ownership. Challenging the traditional and largely unqualified use of the term 'equivalency of qualifications', the report suggests that the terms 'comparability' and 'equivalency' are distinct but not mutually exclusive. 'Comparability' is defined as a higher-level process based on the analysis of the specifications of a qualification, such as the broad purpose, duration and awarding body that determines the 'face value' of the qualification. 'Equivalency' is defined as a more intensive process, based on an in-depth analysis of the specifications that determines the extent to which qualifications are the same (see Figure 1).

The broad aim of the research is to develop a pan-Commonwealth teacher-qualifications comparability table to provide the basis for pathways for the recognition of qualifications of teachers when they move across borders. The comparability table is a summary of first level (face value) information on teacher qualifications in the Commonwealth collected from member states, presented in an accessible format - nothing more, nothing less. The unique contribution of the research lies not so much in the comparability table itself, but more in the distinction between the different levels of comparison and, as a result, the improved ability to address the challenges of cross-border teacher recruitment.

As a secondary effect, the comparability table also clarifies the responsibility of employers in recruiting countries to provide dedicated programmes to enable foreign teachers to achieve fully qualified status. The comparability table is included as an Annex to this report, and is available separately as a tool for practitioners (as noted in the Introduction). The research attempts to contribute to the broader comparability discourse by making not only the results of the study explicit, but also the thinking and methodological considerations that underlie it. While the research is limited to teacher qualifications offered across the borders of Commonwealth countries, the developed instrument (the comparability table) may have broader applicability.

Pilot Study

An initial pilot was the investigation of minimum initial teacher qualifications and was completed in March 2007. Six countries participated in the study: Australia, England, India, Jamaica, Northern Ireland, and South Africa. Secondary data from Canada, Mauritius and Sri Lanka were included. Based on the proposed distinction between comparability and equivalency, eight categories of criteria were proposed:

- ◆ the purpose of the qualification;
- ◆ the broad outcomes of the qualification;
- ◆ assessment statements that guide assessment of the qualification;
- ◆ the time taken to complete the qualification (including the time spent on assessment, preparation, tuition and even in the workplace), which is directly linked to a number of credits as defined on the particular framework;
- ◆ the level at which the qualification is registered on a particular framework, as described by the level descriptors of that framework;
- ◆ the status of the awarding body;
- ◆ articulation with other qualifications on the same or different levels of the framework; and
- ◆ the extent to which international comparability was considered during the development of the qualification (SAQA and Commonwealth Secretariat 2006:28).

The criteria were subsequently applied in a pilot study (SAQA 2007). The findings suggested that there are considerable difficulties in garnering reliable information about all the criteria and that, in most countries, the development of both national (and in some cases regional) qualifications frameworks is still at a very early stage. In addition, it was observed that not all submissions received were qualifications. For example, the data from England included two programmes, the Overseas Trained Teacher Programme (OTTP) and the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) that do not lead to formal qualifications, but do lead to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

The comparability criteria were subsequently modified by drawing on the UNESCO International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), developed in 1997 and revised in 2006 (UNESCO 2006b). It was assumed that ministries of education would be familiar with the

ISCED system as it provides the template for their annual national reports to UNESCO. ISCED classifies educational programmes by levels, based on programme duration, entry requirements, and theoretical versus practical/technical orientation. The ISCED framework has seven levels, from pre-primary education to advanced research qualifications. Levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 have sub-levels according to whether they lead directly to the labour market, and to which higher level qualifications they provide access. Level 6 "is reserved for tertiary programmes which lead to the award of an advanced research qualification" (UNESCO 2006b: 39).

Importantly, ISCED also acknowledges that direct and consistent comparison of the content of different educational programmes (such as determining equivalence) will be very difficult and labour-intensive using available technologies.

While the classification of educational programmes by level should be based on educational content, it is clearly not possible to directly assess and compare the content of educational programmes in an internationally consistent way. Curricula are far too diverse, multi-faceted and complex to permit unambiguous determinations that one curriculum for students of a given age or grade belongs to a higher level of education than another. International curricula standards that are needed to support such judgements do not as yet exist (UNESCO 2006b: 16).

The final set of comparability criteria used during this process included the following (SAQA 2007):

- ◆ the official title of the qualification;
- ◆ target level of employment: Primary (ISCED Level 1), Lower Secondary (Level 2) or Upper Secondary (Level 3) schooling;
- ◆ the awarding body that officially issues the certificate;
- ◆ the minimum qualification required for entry to the programme leading to the qualification (including ISCED level);
- ◆ the minimum duration of the programme, from initial entry to the award of the qualification (in years of full-time study or its equivalent, and also the number of credits if available);
- ◆ number of weeks of practical experience required;
- ◆ ISCED classification of this qualification.

The comparability criteria, as applied during the pilot study, proved adequate for the purpose. It was, however, suggested that the further development of a Commonwealth teacher qualification comparability table should include data on the professional status of teachers in the individual countries. While it was acknowledged that such data might be limited, it was recommended that this information be included to improve the general applicability of the comparability table.

Qualifications Frameworks and Comparability

A significant influence on the development of the comparability table, including the earlier pilot study discussed above, has undoubtedly been the global development of qualifications frameworks. This influence needs to be stated upfront as it constitutes an important aspect of the context and background wherein the study took place. The organisation that conducted this research, SAQA, is actively involved in qualifications framework-related developments not only in South Africa, but also on the African continent, in Europe and further afield.

It is well-known that qualifications framework developments across the globe have not remained uncontested since first emerging in Australia, England, Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland and South Africa at the end of the twentieth century. Strongly influenced by the then increasing awareness of lifelong learning; the competency-based approach to vocational education and training; the emerging learner-focused outcomes-based education; and the expectations that the strong divisions between academic and vocational systems would decline

(Mukora 2007), qualifications frameworks continue to be developed across the globe despite the challenges.

Today at least 83 countries are at an early stage of qualifications framework development, while 68 countries are involved in regional developments, and some 34 countries in transnational developments. As mentioned before, this accelerating global trend has been strongly influenced by outcomes-based thinking, to the point that virtually without exception all national, regional and transnational qualifications frameworks can be described as 'outcomes-led'.

The challenge that is taken up in the research initiative is how best to locate the improved cross-border recognition of qualifications within this relatively new field of outcomes-led qualifications frameworks. Considering the exploratory work done in the pilot study (SAQA 2007) (as explained earlier in this section) it was found that outcomes alone are inadequate to compare qualifications in an internationally consistent manner, and that there is a need to consider a much broader set of criteria, including curriculum and assessment strategies, to mention only two. The resulting complexity and resource-intensity required for cross-border recognition prompted a careful reconsideration of the 'language of comparability'.

In essence, the research attempted to make explicit different levels at which qualifications could be compared for different purposes. As noted in the earlier overview of the findings of the pilot study (SAQA 2007), this included a careful consideration of time-based technologies, such as ISCED (UNESCO 2006b), that is despite the fact that the wider qualifications framework discourse has by-and-large discarded time-based technologies in favour of outcomes.

Figure 2: Global distribution of qualifications frameworks

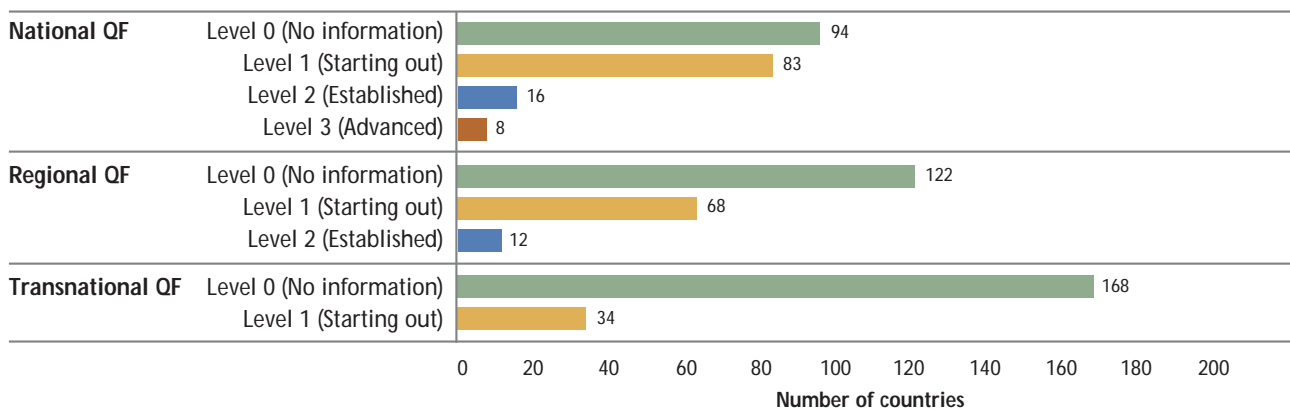
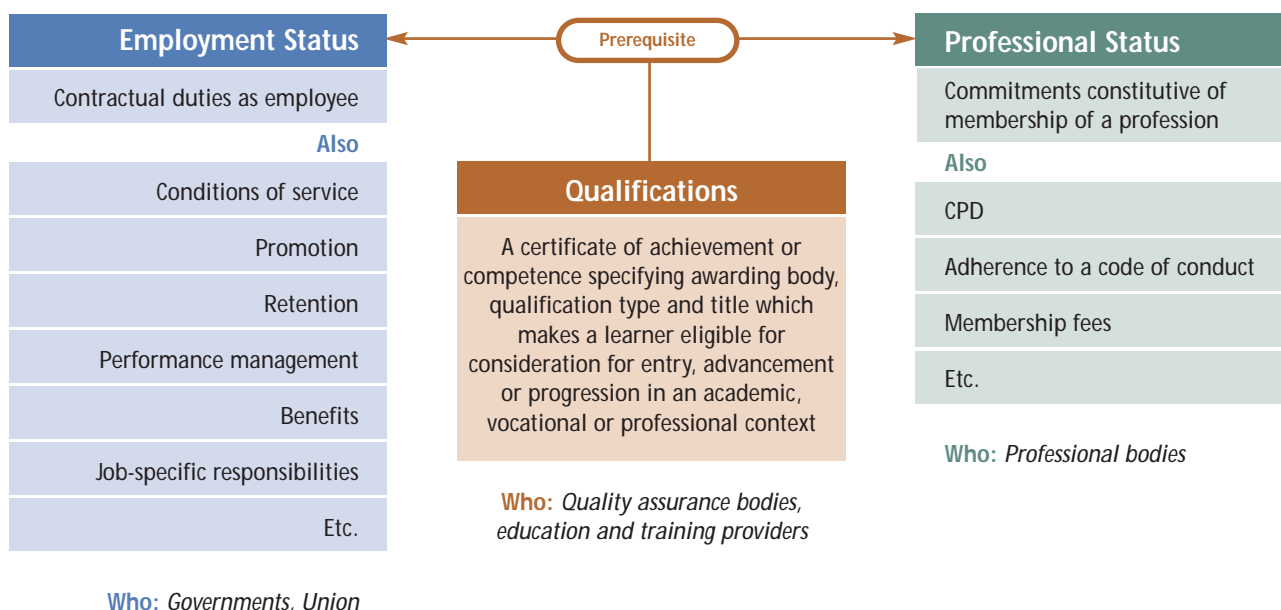


Figure 3: Employment and professional status



This debate lies at the heart of the research design. The important point to make at the outset of the report is that both outcomes-led and time-based approaches to qualification development have limitations and are criticised by different schools. This research does not attempt to favour the one approach above the other, but rather makes explicit the limitations of both and then recommends how best to apply each, or aspects of both, for a specific purpose. In this regard, it is important to indicate upfront that the research takes place from within the qualifications framework discourse, and is conducted by a qualifications agency. It is for this reason that the research findings, despite this apparent bias towards qualifications frameworks and the benefits of outcomes-led qualifications design, are of even more significance. A more detailed discussion on re-thinking comparability, including the limitations of using outcome statements as main technology, is included in Section 2 of this report.

Teacher Professional and Employment Requirements

Another important point of departure for this research is located within the teacher education field, where the professional status of a teacher is related to his or her employment status, but the two are not identical, see

Figure 3. Again, following on from the 2006 report on teacher qualifications and teacher professional status (SAQA and Commonwealth Secretariat 2006), the requirements for teacher professional status usually include aspects such as qualifications, continuing professional development, and adherence to a code of conduct. On the one hand, in the majority of cases, adherence to professional requirements is overseen by professional teacher councils. On the other hand, employment requirements are the domain of employers (ministries and private institutions), and unions. The requirements for employment status include professional affiliation, but add work-related aspects such as pension and medical health contributions, job-specific requirements, and conditions of employment. The recognition of qualifications is essential to both the professional and employment status of migrating teachers. For this reason, the involvement of professional councils, employers and unions is required.

The main reason for making a distinction between professional and employment requirements is in an attempt to strengthen the available technologies with which qualifications can be recognised across borders. As will be shown in Section 2, the professional context in a country can contribute substantially to a deeper understanding of the qualifications offered, whether using outcomes-led or time-based designs, or a combination of the two.

Structure of the Report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- ◆ Section 2 presents a discussion on comparability within and beyond the context of teacher qualifications in the Commonwealth. This section is important in that it attempts to make explicit the notion of comparability based on an engagement with current literature. This section also includes a critical reflection on the use outcomes and ISCED levels.
- ◆ Section 3 describes the data-collection process and methodology employed during the development of the comparability table, and then provides a detailed analysis of the initial teacher qualifications offered across the 35 participating countries.
- ◆ The final section offers concluding comments, including some suggestions for improvement and use of the comparability table.
- ◆ The comparability table for teacher qualifications in the Commonwealth is included as an Annex to facilitate independent distribution.