Quality Assurance and Quality Management in TVET

POLICY and GUIDELINES

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Quality Assurance and Quality Management in TVET

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<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>EPIC</td>
<td>Employment Policy Implementation Coordination (dept of MoLSP)</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</td>
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<td>MoLSP</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour and Social Protection</td>
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<td>NCVET</td>
<td>National Council on Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>NMCEA</td>
<td>National Mongolian Council for Education Accreditation</td>
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<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>QA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance</td>
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<td>QM</td>
<td>Quality Management</td>
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<td>QAMS</td>
<td>Quality Assurance Management System</td>
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<td>RMC</td>
<td>Regional Methodological Centre</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>Self-Assessment</td>
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<td>TVET</td>
<td>Technical and Vocational Education and Training</td>
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The expert likes to thank all the stakeholders in the TVET-field in Mongolia and the dedicated staff and Key-Expert 2 of the STVET-1 project for the support to make his mission a success.

The contents of this draft policy document is the sole responsibility of the expert and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the MoLSP, the STVET-1 project or the European Union.
Introduction

To assure the quality of TVET provision in Mongolia and to continuously improve this quality a Quality Assurance and Quality Management policy is necessary. This report outlines the essence of such a policy, it defines the key policy statements and procedures which define the proposed QA and QM policy.

The legislative requirements for a fit-for-purpose QA has been stated clearly in the VET law (Jan2016) and the National TVET Development programme (2016-2021), which was approved by the cabinet. The latter has outlined six (6) specific objectives to reform the TVET sector in the country through a comprehensive quality embedded strategy:

1. Establish National Qualifications Framework;
2. Improve governance of Quality Assurance and Institutional management;
3. Develop Competency based Training and Assessment System;
4. Provide human resource, management and teacher’s development in the sector on continuous basis, and strengthen capacity;
5. Expand social partnership and cooperation, and upgrade reputation of the sector;
6. Improve financial system.

The policy report is drafted as part of the STVET-1 project. It is based on the QA and QM model developed for this project.
In the TVET system and thus in the QAMS model there are 6 key areas of which quality should be assured and managed;

1. **Licensing**
   This is the authority given by the State Administration Central Organisation in charge of Vocational Education, to operate as an official VET organisation. The criteria for Licensing are like those for accreditation but not as comprehensive.

2. **Accreditation**
   Accreditation means simply the achievement of certain standards, which are nationally set and agreed. Within each standard there will be a list of criteria or indicators which the institution must meet to satisfy the external officer/team carrying out the accreditation activity. Based on a positive accreditation a licence can be given by the State Administration.

3. **Validation of Qualifications**
   Validation ensures that a qualification is *fit for purpose*. It mainly deals with *new* qualifications. The focus of validation on proving that there is a demonstrated need for the new qualification in the labour market. Once the qualification has been validated, the qualification may be accredited and included in the NQF.

4. **Teaching and Learning**
   These are core activities which take place in a VET school. In a competence based curriculum the focus is in describing Outcomes (i.e. this is what the student must know and can do). The quality of Teaching and Learning lies in focusing on how and what the student learns and not only on the information and practical work demonstrated by the Trainer.
   It is very important that trainers themselves have the appropriate technical and learning facilitating (pedagogical/teaching methodology) skills, knowledge and attitudes for the sector for which they are training and that they undertake regular updating of these.

5. **Assessment and Verification**
   Accurate assessment of student performance is critical to the success of any quality management system for VET. It informs the student about progress and achievement, it tells parents and guardians how well their son/daughter is doing and it enables employers to decide about whether the graduate has the necessary skills and knowledge for employment.
   Assessment therefore must be reliable, valid and practicable.
   Verification of assessment is a necessary ‘checking process’ in the quality management system. A first step in the verification is the internal verification, a second less frequently taken step is external verification, where the “check” on a sample of the assessment is made by external expert. An assessor’s judgement must be verified by another subject-competent person, external to the organisation. Both to assure that the assessment is valid and reliable.

6. **Certification**
   In terms of quality assurance every Certificate issued, whether to an institution (as in accreditation of licensing) or an individual (as reflecting the outcomes of assessment of competencies), must be based on accurate information, which in turn is based on the accurate and monitored judgement of professionals, so that the description on the Certificate matches what the individual or the institution can perform.

Recently (sub) policies and procedures for:

- Accreditation of TVET (by the MNCEA) and for the
- Validation of Qualifications (by STVET-1) have been developed.

The related policies are drafted for
The draft policies for these are discussed with the MOLSP and the field in a meeting with stakeholders, in combination with the policy proposed in this paper. The final policy report has considered the comments and recommendations that have were made on that feedback meeting at the end of March 2017.

This paper describes a set of policy statements and procedures for the execution of the policies. In a separate chapter recommendations for the implementation of the QA and QM policies are given.

Quality Assurance and Quality Management

Rationale:
The credibility, the social recognition and the economic value of certificates and diplomas of the TVET system and the individual TVET providers is closely linked with Quality Assurance. Through that TVET proves that it delivers the quality society needs and demands. That they provide society and the economy with a well-qualified workforce that will be employed after graduation.

Through that it can also prove that it is worth to be financed by the state, that tax-payer’s money is well spend and contributes to the advancement of the country.

Quality Assurance mechanisms in the TVET sector is based on the following fundamental principles:

- The aim of the Quality Assurance and Quality Management is the continuous improvement of quality;
- Quality assurance development and management are result-oriented;
- TVET providers are primarily responsible for the quality of their provision, services, and quality assurance;
- TVET providers’ internal quality assurance will be supported through guidance, availability of tools and information and through external verification;
- Self-assessment is carried out in an annual quality cycle of “plan – do – evaluate – review”, concluding with a self-assessment reports;
- The interests and needs of learners and all other stakeholders are considered;
- The existence of efficient and effective organisational structures within which those learning programmes can be provided and supported
- Transparency of processes and qualifications are essential;
- External evaluation is implemented for the validity of the self-assessment process;
- TVET providers should demonstrate their accountability.
- Processes used should not stifle diversity and innovation

Quality assurance

“Quality assurance refers to planned and systematic processes that provide confidence in educational services provided by training providers under the remit of relevant authorities or bodies. It is a set of activities established by these relevant authorities or bodies to ensure that educational services satisfy customer requirements in a systematic, reliable fashion”¹

Quality Assurance is a coherent set of activities through which TVET providers:

¹ Bateman et al 2009, p. 8
• Assess their quality (through self-assessment and continuous evaluation of performance) against chosen benchmarks, (institutional assessment and accreditation) and/or
• Assess the quality of specific programmes (programme assessment) they offer
• Develop and implement planning for improvement,
• Are accredited, per nationally agreed criteria for education institutions and programmes by an external authority and
• Are licensed to offer TVET programmes in certain sectors and/or occupations for validated and registered qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework
• Are licensed/accredited to assess students’ performance summative and to issue certificates or diplomas on behalf of the relevant authority.

**Quality Management**

Can be defined as the organisation of processes that make the quality assurance activities possible as part of managing the TVET centre. On the level of the institute this implies that for QM staff have been assigned specific tasks, such as monitoring performance of teachers and of output, organising the process of self-assessment etc.

In the Mongolian context with relatively small TVET providers quality management has also to be part of the work of the TVET centre support system, such as RMC’s on the regional level and the TVET policy implementing department (also referred to as the “Agency”) and the Mongolian National Council for Education Accreditation (MNCEA)
Quality Assurance and Quality Management, structures and arrangements.

The basis of QA lies in ongoing assessment of quality and performance as part of the policy of a TVET centre. This self-assessment and its effects in terms of actions to improve when quality is not what the centres management and team want, or is not yet on the level of quality as defined by a set of benchmarks or performance criteria defines the value of Quality Assurance. QA is more than just an annual or bi-annual report on performance in terms of output (number of graduates etc.) of the centre to the financier of the TVET centre. QA must be embedded in the management of the centre. This implies that staff must be assigned to do that. Each TVET centre needs to have a group of staff responsible for QA, the QA team led by the QA manager.

This QA-team monitors programmes, performance of teachers and output in terms of graduates and provides systematic information on this to the stakeholders.

This assessment can be done against benchmarks for the various criteria. The TVET provider may choose its own benchmarks referring to either national or international data/performance criteria to measure its performance against recognised standards. Benchmarks may also be defined on national level and thus serve as a set of performance criteria, linked to licensing and financing.

Based on the monitoring information and the draft Self-Assessment report at a discussion with the stakeholders is organised to assess this and to come to proposals for improvement. Stakeholders in this context are: Centre Management, Teachers, Students, Employers for the occupations the centre offers training for and not in the least Graduates of the TVET centre.

TVET providers, certainly the smaller ones do not have the means to execute a full QA policy and thus they will need support to manage QA from the RMC’s on regional level. The TVET policy Implementation Department can provide this support in terms of providing tools and trainings to centres and RMC’s staff involved in QA.

This implies that the RMC’s will need funds and staff for that and that in their legal attributes QA/QM as task should be secured. An additional plus for this is that the RMC can arrange for schools in the region to cooperate, to do peer-assessment and thus learn from each other.

On the national level the basis of the quality assurance lies in the accreditation and licensing of TVET providers. Any TVET centre that offer Education and Training to achieve nationally recognised and validated qualifications must be accredited. To be accredited the TVET centre must demonstrate that it “does the good things in the good way”. This is to be assessed by an external authority. In the case of Mongolia, it seems evident that this is the NMCEA. The criteria, specific for TVET that the NMCEA developed in 2016 form the basis for this.

Furthermore, TVET providers that are financed by MOLSP must comply to performance criteria, as part of the contract they have. Both the obligation to be accredited and the performance criteria are an important incentive for TVET providers.
Policy Statements.

1. **Quality assurance is compulsory**

   for each TVET centre that graduates students in TVET courses that are registered in the National Qualifications Framework of Mongolia or any other recognised and validated qualifications in Mongolia.

   This implies:
   
   a. TVET providers will have systems and staff in place to conduct ongoing self-assessment and following that annual planning to improve quality. A short quality report (based on a standardised format, see Annex 4 for a good example) will be delivered to MOLSP annually, as part of the performance report. For this the management of the centre will install a QA team of management, staff and teachers. The participation of students, graduates and employers in any form of this SA is strongly recommended.
   
   b. For the Self-Assessment TVET providers will follow the criteria, as set by the NMCEA² (see Annex 3)
   
   c. TVET providers will receive adequate methodological support with the SA and the strategic planning from the RMC of their region. This implies that the RMC will be able to mobilise the quality and qualified staff to provide this support

It is recommended to make this obligation part of the performance contract the centres conclude with MOLSP, which are the basis of their financing. As such the policy, will be laid down in the law on VET and considered in the arrangements for the financing of TVET providers and the regional support structure.

2. **External assessment and accreditation**

   by an external authority must take place at least every 5 years. Based on this accreditation the license to teach of a TVET centre will be renewed.

   a. Every five years a more extensive self-assessment of quality, following the criteria of the national accrediting body, with the active participation of employers the centre works with and the same of students and graduates will be done and reported as first step in the accreditation of the institution.
   
   b. The NMCEA will start the accreditation procedure and thus the TVET providers will be accredited and licensed to teach, based on the SA and their strategic planning and any other relevant criteria the accrediting organisation (the MNCEA) wants to set. An accreditation is valid for a period of 5 years.
   
   c. If the TVET centre does not (yet) meet the criteria, it must deliver an improvement plan and request to postpone the accreditation for 1 year. The former accreditation and licence will stay valid till the new accreditation has taken place.
   
   d. The accreditation will provide the centres with a license from the government that defines in which sectors/occupations they can offer vocational education and training. The license has the same validity as the accreditation, but can be changed if the institution can demonstrate that there is a strong demand from!

² It is recommended to add sets of quality criteria on (summative) Assessment of learners (now only reference is made to formative assessment in par 2.6) and the verification of that and criteria regarding Certification. For reference see the draft policies for these 3 area’s (presented on 31 March 2017)
the labour-market for validated qualifications that are not licensed in the current period.

3. Benchmarks

*Self-Assessment and External Assessment will take place against agreed benchmarks for quality of TVET.*

a. Benchmarks serve as a standard of quality to be achieved. They can be defined both in quantitative terms and in qualitative terms. Examples of quantitative benchmarks/standards are:
   i. Participation rate (as % of school leavers primary education)
   ii. Vulnerable student rate (as % of student’s participation)
   iii. Completion rate (as % of number of students entering programme that completed the programme successfully)
   iv. Pass-rate (as % of students that entered final assessment and passed)
   v. Employment rate (as % of graduates after graduation)
   vi. Drop-out rate, as % of learners that leave school before assessment in a given year.
   vii. Number of contacts with industry per programme

These can be set in absolute terms as performance criterion, or as targets to strive for. In that case the measurement can be done in relative terms, such as the increase in performance.

b. In the NMCEA accreditation criteria (see annex 3) are defined in relative terms such as the percentage of increase in the number of graduates that found employment.

c. It is noted that three critical rates to assess the effectivity of a TVET centre’s teaching and assessment: the completion-rate, the pass-rate and the drop-out rate do not figure in the NMCEA criteria.

d. Performance criteria, as in the contracts the TVET providers have with MOLSP are absolute quantitative as in the % of graduates that find employment after a certain period.

e. Measuring the relative increase in performance over a certain period is more effective than to set absolute targets. It shows what still must be done to achieve the benchmark.

f. A baseline can be defined from various studies that have been done recently. The ADB baseline study in 2016 among 25 TVET providers makes a good source for defining this baseline. Furthermore, the STVET-2 project assessed the institutional capacity of training in 30 TVET providers, mainly working for the vegetable, livestock and textile sector. This can also serve as a source to define a baseline.

g. Once this baseline is defined benchmarks as benchmarks/targets can be set for the first accreditation/licence period.

h. Those TVET providers that are already ahead of the baseline can set farther reaching benchmarks off course. The key is that targets are set that are realistic but worth to strive for as a first step to reach higher the next period.

**Recommendations**

1. Introducing performance criteria in the relation between MoLSP and the TVET provider is an interesting first step in the development of arrangements through which the provider, its
board and the management, is held accountable for the output, the “production” of the school and thus for the assurance of quality. A next step will be to give the provider also the autonomy for running the school, including hiring staff, paying salaries, maintaining buildings, purchasing equipment etc. In the long run this may lead to a system of “lump-sum” finance, where the state provides funds to the schoolboards. A proportion of the total funds for the school can be based on the schools-performance, as to create an incentive to deliver good quality. On the other hand, the state, as financing authority, will not interfere in management, staffing and running the school if the school performs per the criteria.

2. In the licence TVET provider’s performance criteria are defined. It is recommended to add 3 essential criteria to assess performance to this. The completion rate, the pass-rate and the drop-out rate

These rates are relatively easy to calculate, provided the provider has proper data. They may be a better indicator than the 65 or 70 % of graduates that have found employment within a certain period after graduation. The problem with this indicator is that it is partly influenced by factors which are out of control of the institutions’ management. The influence an education provider has on the labour-market is limited to delivery of well-trained “employable” graduates, whether these will be indeed employed is out of the influence of the education institute. However, the institutes quality can be measured by using the above-mentioned rates. Pass-rates, Completion-rates and Drop-out rates can be influenced by the school management. An institution with a low completion-rate (as compared to a defined base-line or average for all TVET providers) or with a low pass-rate and/or a high drop-out rate must improve its quality and cannot hide behind, factors that are out of its influence.

3. The actual criteria in the performance contract must be reviewed to bring them in line with the criteria for accreditation, as set by the NMCEA

4. It is recommended to add 3 essential criteria to assess performance to the Accreditation Criteria. The completion rate, the pass-rate and the drop-out rate

5. A study on benchmarks/standards that may serve as ‘targets’ for the coming years must be done, as part of the implementation of the QA system.

6. These benchmarks need to be renewed every period of 5 years (accreditation/licence period)

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3 As modality one can think of a lump-sum based on unit-prices. A proportion of the lump-sum based on number of students plus a proportion based on performance, such as output in terms of numbers of graduates and/or drop-out quota or any other criteria one wants to define.

4 Completion Rate: the learners that complete the course with a certificate in less than 150% of the notional learning time as % of enrolment in the first year of a course. Pass-rate: the learners that pass in the final exams as % of those who were assessed in a final year of the course. Drop-out rate: the learners that leave the school before graduation (or participation in any assessment), as % of the total learners in a given year

5 Completion Rate: the learners that complete the course with a certificate in less than 150% of the notional learning time as % of enrolment in the first year of a course. Pass-rate: the learners that pass in the final exams as % of those who were assessed in a final year of the course. Drop-out rate: the learners that leave the school before graduation (or participation in any assessment), as % of the total learners in a given year
Implementation.

Conditions:
To implement the Quality Assurance Policy successfully the following conditions must be assured:

1. The policy for QA will be taken up as important element in the legal framework and regulations for VET.
2. The law and the regulations that effect the functioning of TVET providers must create conditions for the stability and continuity of management and staff. One possibility to achieve this is to decentralise decision-making on nominations of staff and leave that more to local school-boards or any form of governing stakeholders, such as the local sector councils.
   Where directors and sometimes their staff are replaced every year, or even every six months no systematic quality assurance and management, let alone long-term strategic planning for improvement can be executed.
3. TVET providers and their support organisation (primarily the RMC) must have adequate resources and staff to manage quality.

Strategy.
In the study visits the consultant noted that most the TVET providers interviewed had experience with some form of self-assessment, either through participating in donor projects on the issue or through training for staff. Through the Singapore project several school staff in the Darkhan and in the Ohron region participated in training on the issue. Some of these carried on after the project and in some cases, it was stopped, because a lack of resources. But it all demonstrates that the area of QA is not new to most of the TVET providers in the country.

This will facilitate the implementation of the proposed policy.

In terms of implementation work on the following strategy is recommended:

1. Institutional
   a) Each TVET provider will form a team of staff that is made responsible for Quality Assurance. The team is assigned the task to conduct self-assessment, using the tools as provided by the NMCEA. The members of the team will receive adequate training through the RMC and they could be twinned with another centre in the region to exchange experiences.
   b) The management of a TVET centre will, if not already present, install a monitoring/data collection system through which base data, required for SA are collected. The criteria set by NMCEA describe which data and resources are needed.
   c) TVET providers can receive support from the RMC and also from the MNCEA through training, the provision of handbooks an guidelines etc.

2. Regional/Local
   a. RMC’s will train school QA teams of staff. They will support an active exchange between schools on this issue which may lead to schools organising beside the self-assessment they do some form of peer-assessment by other schools.
   b. RMC’s will receive support for this from the MNCEA in the form of training, the provision of handbooks etc.
   c. Some TVET providers in the region are invited to be pilot schools, as an example for the other schools. They will receive support from the RMC and from the STVET-1 project. The experiences of the pilot schools will be transferred widely in the region and across the country. It is recommended to have in each RMC region at least 3 pilot schools.
3. National

a. To assure that the conditions referred to above will be met the law needs to be amended. MOLSP is recommended to set this in motion as soon as possible.

Important here is how responsibility for quality, quality assurance and quality management are shared in the system. Besides the important question “which institution has to do what” also the question “who is responsible for which decision” must be answered in a clear manner. This implies that the roles and the attributes and the decision-making space of all the stakeholders and their organisations must be clearly and well defined.

(see the table in annex 1, it tries to clarify this. It is the outcome of the discussion held during the feed-back meeting on this first draft of the QA policy)

In the articles on State central administrative organization responsible for VET issue and its authority:

Recommendation 1
Eliminate the clause 8.4.23

Recommendation 2
To add: endorse a policy and procedure for conducting Quality Assurance in VET.

Recommendation 3
Clause # 8.4.9 should be amended as follows: “organize activities for ensuring implementation of the policy and procedure on quality assurance for VET, for assessing and making conclusions.

b. QA should be taken up as one of the performance criteria in the performance contract between MOLSP and the TVET providers.

c. The TVET policy implementation department will develop a systematic implementation strategy in which training of school management and staff of RMC’s and providing tools for self-assessment are the central elements.

d. The NMCEA will be the institution for external accreditation of TVET-providers. This needs to be laid down in the law on TVET, similarly as it is regulated in the law on Higher Education for HE Institutions.

e. Accreditation criteria, as set by the NMCEA and the criteria as set in the performance contracts need to be coordinated and it is recommended to add completion, pass rates and drop-out rate as performance indicators.

f. In the financial arrangements with TVET providers resource must be made available for systematic quality management in TVET providers and in the arrangement with RMC’s adequate resources needs to be made available for providing support to TVET providers to develop an internal QA system. For this every RMC, will need a qualified member of staff who can assist schools in self-assessment and the application for accreditation.

On all these 3 lines work, (at provider level, at regional level and at national level) can be done in the same period, but a good training of staff that will form the core of the QA teams in the TVET providers is a first step. Following that the QA terms in schools can start their work and the RMC can build up more capacity to support the work in the centres. In the meantime, on the national level important legal arrangements can be drafted and implemented.
Annex 1: Defining the roles and authority of Stakeholders in the different components of the QAMS model

Defining the roles and authority of Stakeholders in the different components of the QAMS model

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