

Summary

This research report has been prepared by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) at the request of the Commonwealth Steering Group on Teacher Qualifications following an earlier study on the recognition of teacher qualifications (SAQA and Commonwealth Secretariat 2006), and a pilot study on a teacher qualifications comparability table (SAQA 2007).

The 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 research is located within the cross-section of two current discourses: one on the international migration of highly skilled labour, specifically teachers, and the other concerned with the cross-border provisioning of education and training. In this regard, the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol (Commonwealth Secretariat 2004) constitutes an important frame of reference wherein both discourses are interpreted.

The research is limited to primary and secondary teacher qualifications offered within 35 Commonwealth countries.

The research is located in the context of the global development of outcomes-led qualifications frameworks (nationally, regionally and transnationally), but is critical of the extent to which outcome statements on their own can be seen as adequate proxies for educational quality across borders.

Teacher professional status is regarded as distinct from teacher employment status, where the former requires not only minimum qualifications, but also dimensions such as continuing professional development, licensing and criminal record screening. While this report is primarily concerned with minimum qualifications for teachers, an emphasis is placed on the adoption of a holistic approach to teacher professional status required in Commonwealth countries.

In developing a conceptual framework for the research, the notion of 'comparability' is critically investigated, resulting in a recognition that meaningful comparison is near impossible using existing technologies. Despite the limitations, however, the research attempts to contribute to an ongoing search for new technologies that will make comparison more meaningful than is possible at present.

The language of comparison is refined to differentiate between different levels of transparency (the lowest being 'comparability', the highest being 'equivalency'). The resulting conceptual clarity informs the design of a comparability table based on the seven levels of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) developed by UNESCO and the OECD (UNESCO 2006b), and a set of agreed criteria that includes contextual data, information of professional requirements, duration of qualifications, and practical components.

An analysis of different aspects based on the comparability table yields the following findings:

- ◆ The populations of the 35 participating member countries vary considerably, even within specific regions. Ranging between 80,000 for Seychelles and 1,065 million for India, with an average of 47.22 million across the 35 countries, this single factor contributes to a huge diversity in the need for teachers, the different teacher qualifications offered and the approaches to teacher professional status.
- ◆ Education expenditure as a percentage of GDP across the 35 countries clearly highlights the different priorities at different periods within the countries. This ranges from 2.4 per cent in Bangladesh to as high as 17.7 per cent for The Bahamas.
- ◆ The average learner enrolment (as a percentage of the relevant age group) is 91.9 per cent for primary, 70.2 per cent for secondary and 22.4 per cent for tertiary education. The global emphasis placed on primary enrolment through Education for All and other initiatives is reflected in the data as expected. Of concern however, is the lower than average secondary and tertiary enrolment figures for South and West Asia (47.5 per cent and 9.0 per cent), and for Sub-Saharan Africa (49.9 per cent and 8.9 per cent). The Latin America and Caribbean region also stands out as having very low tertiary learner enrolment (14.4 per cent).
- ◆ Data on un- and under-qualified teachers were very limited, and since this was not the main focus of the current research, it was not further pursued. The lack of available data on qualified teachers does, however, signal a weakness in many national systems, which is further compounded if it is considered that qualifications constitute only one component required for fully qualified status. In this regard, the role of professional bodies and councils can be of great value in assisting education ministries.
- ◆ The available number of foreign teachers (i.e. teachers employed in countries other than their own) across the 35 participating countries totalled only 2,323. This number is clearly not a realistic indication of the situation and warrants further investigation.
- ◆ The majority of initial primary teacher qualifications are pegged at ISCED 4 (post-secondary non-tertiary) (57 per cent), while for initial secondary teacher qualifications the preference is for ISCED 5 (first stage of tertiary) (54 per cent).
- ◆ In general, and for both initial primary and secondary teacher qualifications, there are two qualifications pathways and three qualifications are available in the 35 participating countries. Twelve of the 35 countries (34 per cent) offer only a single pathway to achieve qualified primary teacher status, while eight out of 35 countries (23 per cent) offer only a single pathway to achieve qualified secondary teacher status. Nigeria (six) and Canada (four) stand out as offering a high of number of primary pathways, while Jamaica (five), the Maldives (five) and Sierra Leone (five) stand out as offering a high number of secondary pathways.
- ◆ The average duration for teachers to reach fully qualified status across the 35 countries ranges from 2.6 to 3.8 years for primary teachers and between 2.9 and 4.1 years for secondary teachers.
- ◆ The average number of weeks set aside for practical/workplace training to reach qualified status across the 35 countries ranges from 11.4 to 20.4 weeks (primary) and 12.0 to 21.0 weeks (secondary).
- ◆ A preference for ISCED 4A and 5A qualifications (more theoretically based and which give access to higher level programmes) is evident across the 35 countries for both primary and secondary initial teacher qualifications, while ISCED 4B and 5B (with a more occupational focus and which do not necessarily give access to higher level programmes) is less preferred.
- ◆ With due consideration for the fact that the naming of qualifications is influenced by a wide range of factors across the Commonwealth, eight main qualifications are offered.
- ◆ In 19 of the 21 countries (91 per cent) that offer the Bachelor Degree, an additional professional qualification such as a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (four countries) or a Graduate Diploma in Education (three countries) forms part of the qualifications pathway. Only two countries (Bangladesh and Mauritius) regard a Bachelor Degree on its own as sufficient for fully qualified status.
- ◆ The Diploma in Education on its own is regarded as sufficient for fully qualified status in 12 of the 16 countries in which it is offered (75 per cent). Likewise, the Certificate in Education on its own is regarded as sufficient for fully qualified status in 14 of the 16 countries in which it is offered (88 per cent).

Qualification type	Qualification	Average duration (years FTE)	Average practical Component (weeks)	ISCED level in the majority of countries	Number of countries that offer the qualification
Academic	Bachelor Degree	3.43	0.7	5A	21 (60%)
Professional	Diploma in Education	2.07	15.2	4B	16 (46%)
	Certificate in Education	2.08	11.5	4A	16 (46%)
	Bachelor Degree in Education	3.57	15.8	5A	26 (74%)
	Graduate Diploma in Education	1.20	10.2	5B	5 (14%)
	Associate Degree in Education	2.13	12.5	4A	5 (14%)
	Postgraduate Diploma in Education	1.00	9.5	5B	6 (17%)
	Postgraduate Certificate in Education	1.00	16.5	5B	3 (9 %)

- ◆ The Bachelor Degree in Education is the qualification offered in most participating countries (26 out of 35, 74 per cent), although with some variations in the naming. In 23 of the 26 countries, the Bachelor Degree in Education on its own is regarded as sufficient for fully qualified status (89 per cent). In five countries, the Bachelor Degree in Education forms part of a qualifications pathway that includes other qualifications.
- ◆ The Graduate Diploma in Education (five countries), the Associate Degree in Education (five countries), the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (six countries) and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (three countries) are offered in only a few of the participating countries.
- ◆ Only eight (23 per cent) of the 35 participating countries enforce comprehensive professional requirements that include minimum qualifications, continuing professional development and professional licensing. Thirteen countries (37 per

cent) have limited professional requirements, while 14 countries (40 per cent) require only minimum qualifications for fully qualified status.

Further research is recommended in the area of outcomes-led developments and the extent to which this new technology can contribute to increased transparency of qualifications across borders. In addition, further research on quality assurance, professional requirements, migration and cross-border provisioning in relation to the comparability table is recommended.

The comparability table is attached as an Annex to the report.

In conclusion, the comparability table is put forward as a modest contribution to the ongoing development of new technologies that can be used to increase the transparency and recognition of qualifications across borders.