

Analysis of international experience in national and European Qualifications Framework issues

Introduction to Qualifications Frameworks

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National qualifications frameworks are:

- not new and not always a top priority
- seen as a tool for wider reform, especially integrating a series of reforms
- the subject of attention by international bodies (OECD, UNESCO, ILO, EU and G8)
- not the same in different countries (scope, levels, inputs/outputs, occupational standards, credit, quality assurance, legal status)
- organic and need to be managed

What is an NQF?

A national qualifications framework is an instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for levels of learning achieved

Aims of NQFs

- To establish national standards of knowledge, skills and wider competences.
- To promote the quality of education and training provision.
- To provide a system of coordination and for comparing qualifications by relating qualifications to each other.
- To promote and maintain procedures for access to learning, transfer of learning and progression in learning.

Issues leading to NQF development

- out of date programme content
- qualifications not being developed to meet emerging social and economic needs
- lack of involvement of social partners, particularly in the development of standards
- lack of flexibility in delivery systems
- inconsistent application of standards
- poor linkages with academic qualifications
- low public esteem

NQF design

- Levels of achievement
- Level descriptors
- procedures and criteria for accrediting and registering qualifications on the NQF, and ensuring that assessment leading to the award of NQF qualifications conforms to national standards

Level	Qualifications and indication of competences
8	Doctorate / Senior Manager
7	Masters degree/ Senior Manager
6	Honours degree/Bachelors degree / Middle Manager
5	Higher Education Certificate and Diploma / Technician/Specialist / Para-professional / Advanced Vocational
4	Upper Secondary School / Advanced Craft / Supervisory
3	Lower Secondary School / Intermediate Craft / Skilled Artisan
2	Basic Craft / Foundation / Semi Skilled
1	Basic Skills / Literacy & Numeracy

2	Any certification which is linked to basic workplace routines.	<p>Ability to perform basic tasks and exercise repetitive skills in a controlled environment.</p> <p>Ability to deploy general and basic (limited) workplace knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Ability to work satisfactorily where actions are governed by rules defining allowable routines and strategies.</p>	<p>Completion of compulsory education which includes an induction to work. Basic knowledge of work can be acquired at an educational establishment, in an out-of-school training programme, or in an enterprise.</p> <p>Generally it is not occupation specific.</p>
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Critical factors for the development of a NQF

- Learning outcomes
- Peer review and mutual trust
- Inclusion of all national stakeholders
- Systematic coordination between national ministries and authorities
- Systems for validation of non formal and informal learning
- Robust quality assurance mechanisms

Some advantages

A management tool (during decentralisation)

Coordination of separate education and training sectors

Modernisation of VET (occupational structures and standards - a coordinating effect, sensitivity to labour market needs)

Transparency through learning outcomes (lifelong learning and social and economic factors, inward and outward migration)

Articulation with trading partners (globalisation)

Some issues

Long term project requiring infrastructure, consultation, management, financing, policy learning

Policy coordination between ministries and authorities

Quality assurance processes and assessment infrastructure needed

Employment sector differences

Instability during introduction

NQFs around the World

Albania Austria Belgium (Flanders) Bulgaria
Croatia Czech Republic Denmark France
Germany Greece Hungary Ireland Lithuania
Malta Norway Poland Portugal Romania
Slovak Republic Slovenia Spain Swiss
Confederation United Kingdom Turkey

Australia Canada Hong Kong India Malaysia
Mauritius Mexico Mongolia Mozambique
Namibia New Zealand Philippines Pakistan
Singapore South Africa South Korea Sri
Lanka Thailand Trinidad & Tobago Vietnam

European qualifications framework

Functions of the EQF

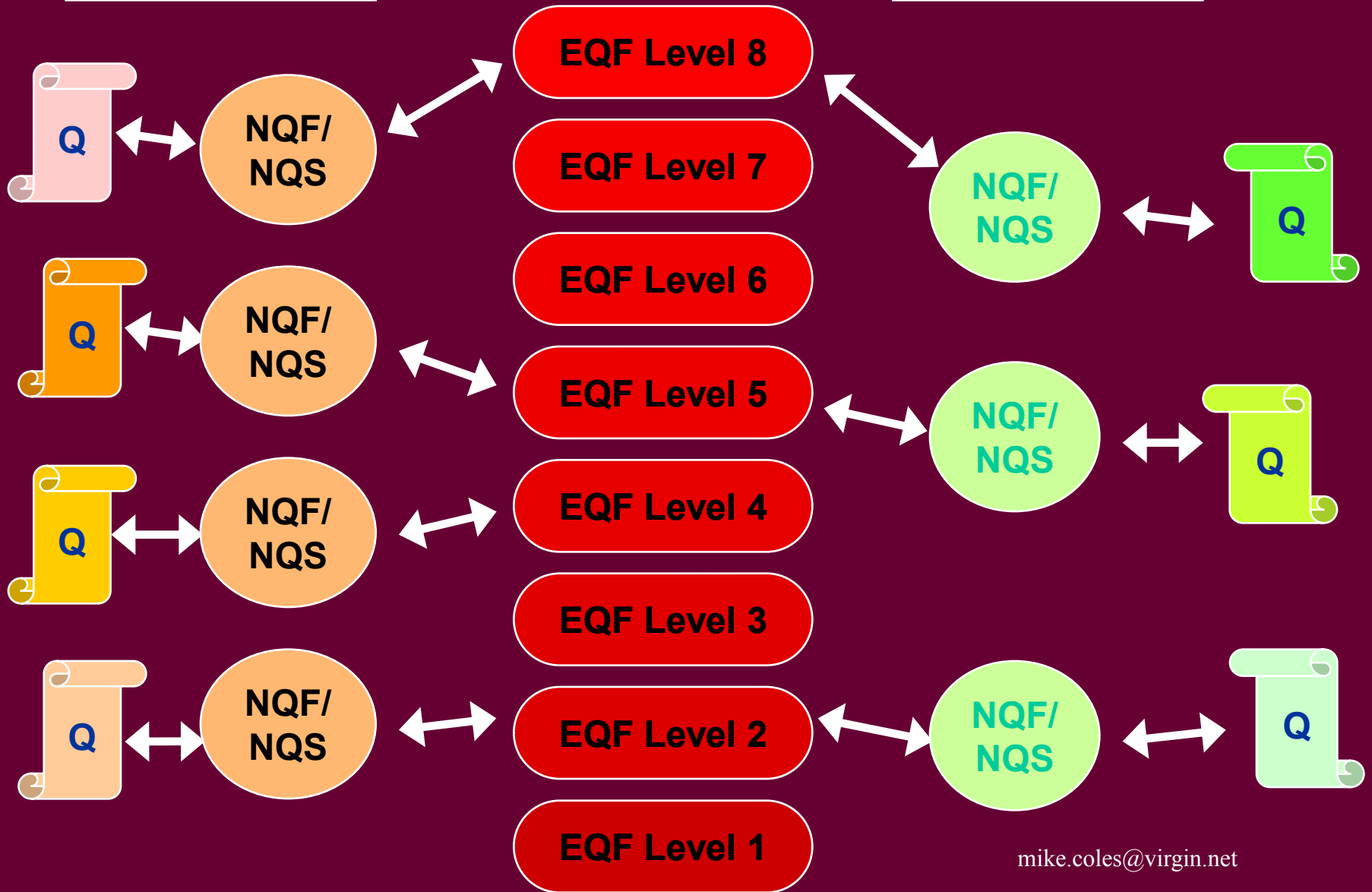
Translation device
for comparing qualifications

Neutral reference point
based on
learning outcomes

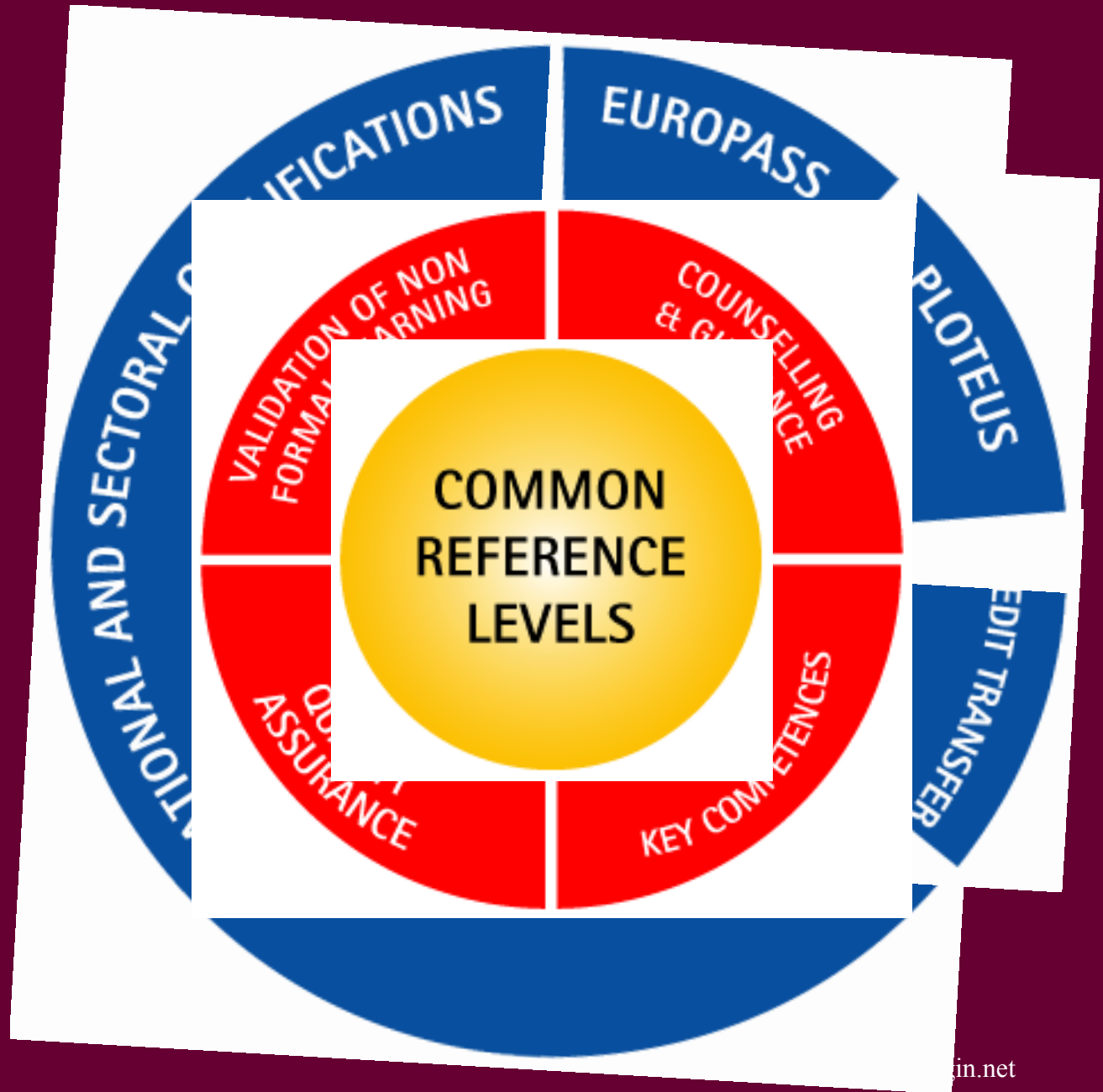
A meta framework

Country A

Country B



The Main elements of the EQF



The Eight EQF Levels

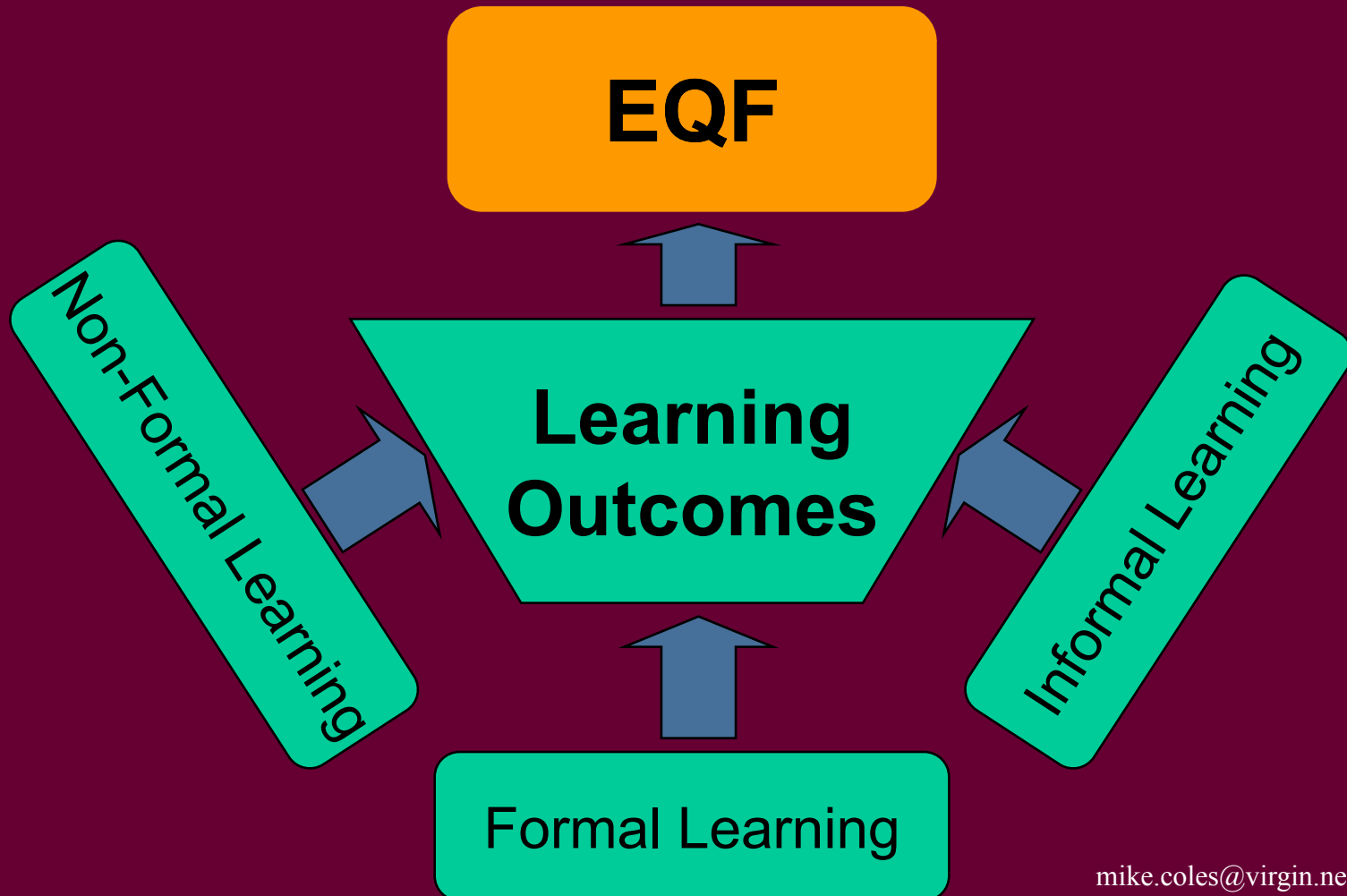
Knowledge

Skills

Competences

**Each
EQF
Reference
Level**

Focus on Learning Outcomes



Advantages of using learning outcomes

- form a comprehensive set of statements of exactly what a learner will have achieved after successful study
- benefit employers, higher education and civil society by articulating the achievement associated with particular qualifications
- increase transparency and comparability of standards between qualifications
- provide the capacity to link vocational educational and training and higher education

Advantages of using learning outcomes

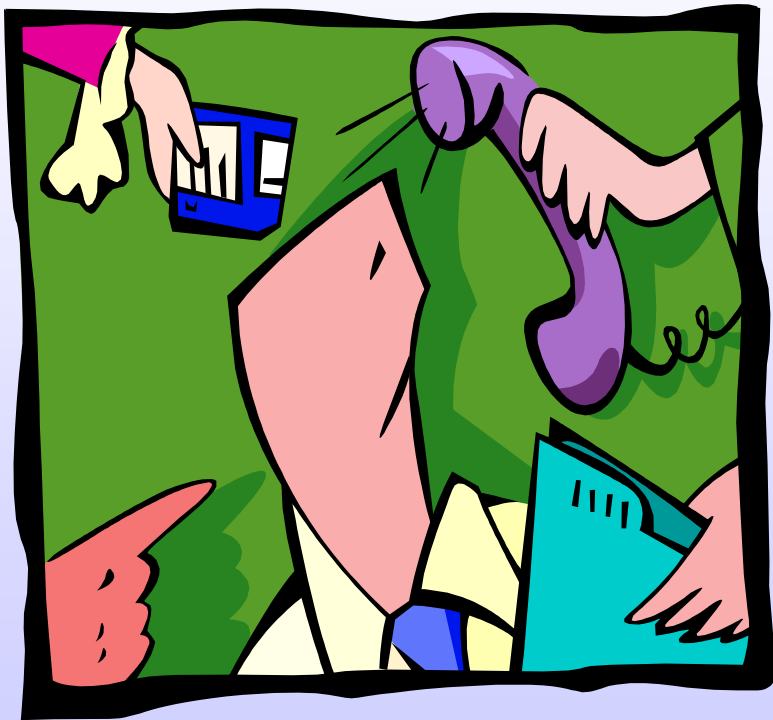
- aid curriculum design by clarifying areas of overlap between modules, programmes and qualifications
- retain a focus on the key learning purposes of a programme and maintain a good relationship between teaching, learning and assessment
- promote reflection on assessment, and the development of assessment criteria and more effective and varied assessment
- play a key role nationally and internationally by acting as independent points of reference for establishing and assessing standards and facilitating mobility

Learning inputs to learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner knows, understands and/or is able to demonstrate after a completion of a process of learning

- Programme definition
- Focus and coverage of assessment
- Duration of programmes
- Confidence in competence

A broad demand for the EQF



- **Necessary and relevant**

- **First and foremost a translation device**

- **Added value at national and sectoral level**

- **25 countries broadly accept the 8 levels**

EQF Level 8

EQF Level 7

EQF Level 6

EQF Level 5

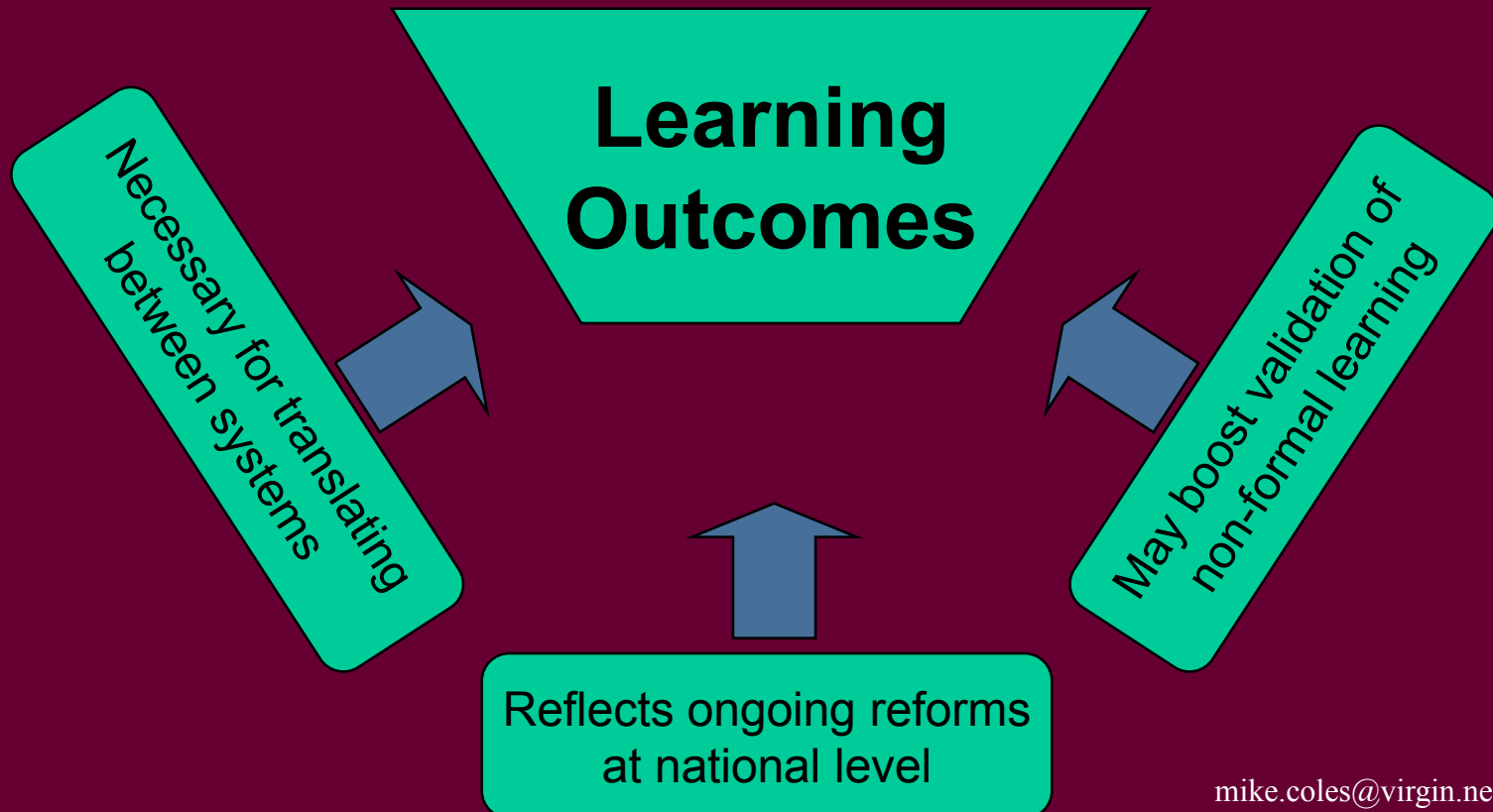
EQF Level 4

EQF Level 3

EQF Level 2

EQF Level 1

A shift in focus towards Learning Outcomes



Qualification Frameworks

- Increased interest from Governments
- Employment sector, general education and higher education activity
- Credit accumulation and transfer systems developing
- Huge diversity of approaches to framework design
- Not necessarily associated with competency based approaches.
- Tool for system reform a common goal

NQFs as a tool for wider reform

- Australia - federal issues
- New Zealand - coordination
- Scotland - credit transfer
- South Africa - redressing discrimination
- UK/Ireland - mobility
- UK - stepping stones
- France - link to economic planning
- EQF - articulation between qualifications systems

Thank you

Mike Coles