

A Comparative Research on Qualification Systems in Selected Countries

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In this study, the researchers tried to analyze the qualification system in six countries, namely UK, Germany, France, Australia, Japan and USA. Attempt was made to understand the background of the development of certification, vocational education system, and national qualification in each country to draw lessons that may be adopted in reforming the Korean qualification system.

The researchers primarily relied on literature on and from the six countries sample countries in understanding the different qualification systems found in them. Reports produced by international organizations and institutes such as the OECD and the CEDEFOP were also used as reference. Although the ideal method of research for this project would have been to visit each country so that the researchers could have a first-hand grasp of the environment and existing conditions, and problems, the researchers were limited by budget constraints to visiting US and incorporating the views of experts in Germany, France and Japan without actually visiting the countries.

As a result, the following characteristics were identified in the education systems, the development and the present conditions of qualification systems, and policies on qualification systems of the six countries:

First, a variety of testing methods are used for qualifications testing, which are generally conducted in the forms of the written test, the practice test and the interview. The specifics of the testing procedures may vary according to countries and the existing circumstances.

Second, most of the six countries manage a qualifications testing system based on expert knowledge and current technologies being used in the workplace. Employers and

experts from industries participate in developing the curriculum, the qualification standard and the process of testing in these countries.

Third, the quality management of certification are carried out effectively by organizations with the special mandate of managing the qualification system. The UK, for example, has independent and cooperative organizations such as the QCA, Awarding body, Lead body and testing center. Australia has similar organizations such as SRA, RTO, ARF and ANTA.

Fourth, vocational education and qualification system are closely linked in these countries. UK has the national occupational standards, and USA and Australia have the national skill standard as tools for closely linking vocational education and national qualification. France, Australia and UK have recognized certificates as academic credits when certificate holders want to pursue higher education in the school.

Fifth, non-governmental qualifications are becoming more visible and influential in some countries like Japan. Japan recognizes certificates officially after screening some of the private qualifications. Meanwhile, in the US, professional societies serve as the basis for private qualification system, and thus dominate the management of most qualifications in the country,

Sixth, as one of the main agents, industrial enterprises have participated actively in the process of qualification management, such as in establishing standards, making curriculum documents and questions.