



University of
Zurich^{UZH}

The global quest for credentials and the role of national qualifications frameworks

Markus Maurer, University of Zurich

Conference on "Policy Transfer in Vocational Skills Development Revisited"

Friday, 14 September 2012
Hotel Krone Unterstrass, Zurich



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

1 Introduction



1.1 Why NQFs are so puzzling

A super macro curriculum reform in vocational skills development,

with potential consequences for most aspects of these systems,

- instruction and testing
- infrastructure and equipment
- training of trainers
- governance
- financing



1.1 Why NQFs are so puzzling

... that is subject to a very rapid global diffusion

see Allais, 2010; also Meyer & Ramirez, 2009

Years	Countries
1980ies	The core England, Wales and Northern Ireland
1990ies	Countries of the Commonwealth (examples) Scotland (incremental) Australia (1995) New Zealand (1991) Transition countries (examples) South Africa (1995) Mexico (1995)
Post-2000	EU / partner countries of the EU Economically less developed countries (examples) Botswana (2004) Bangladesh (2008) Sri Lanka (2005)



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

What is the reason for this rapid diffusion?



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

2 Skills standardisation in development cooperation: a short review



2.1 Why is skill standardisation needed?

(see e.g. Rauner, 2009)

Training organisation's perspective

- Training needs curricular guidance

Trainees' perspective

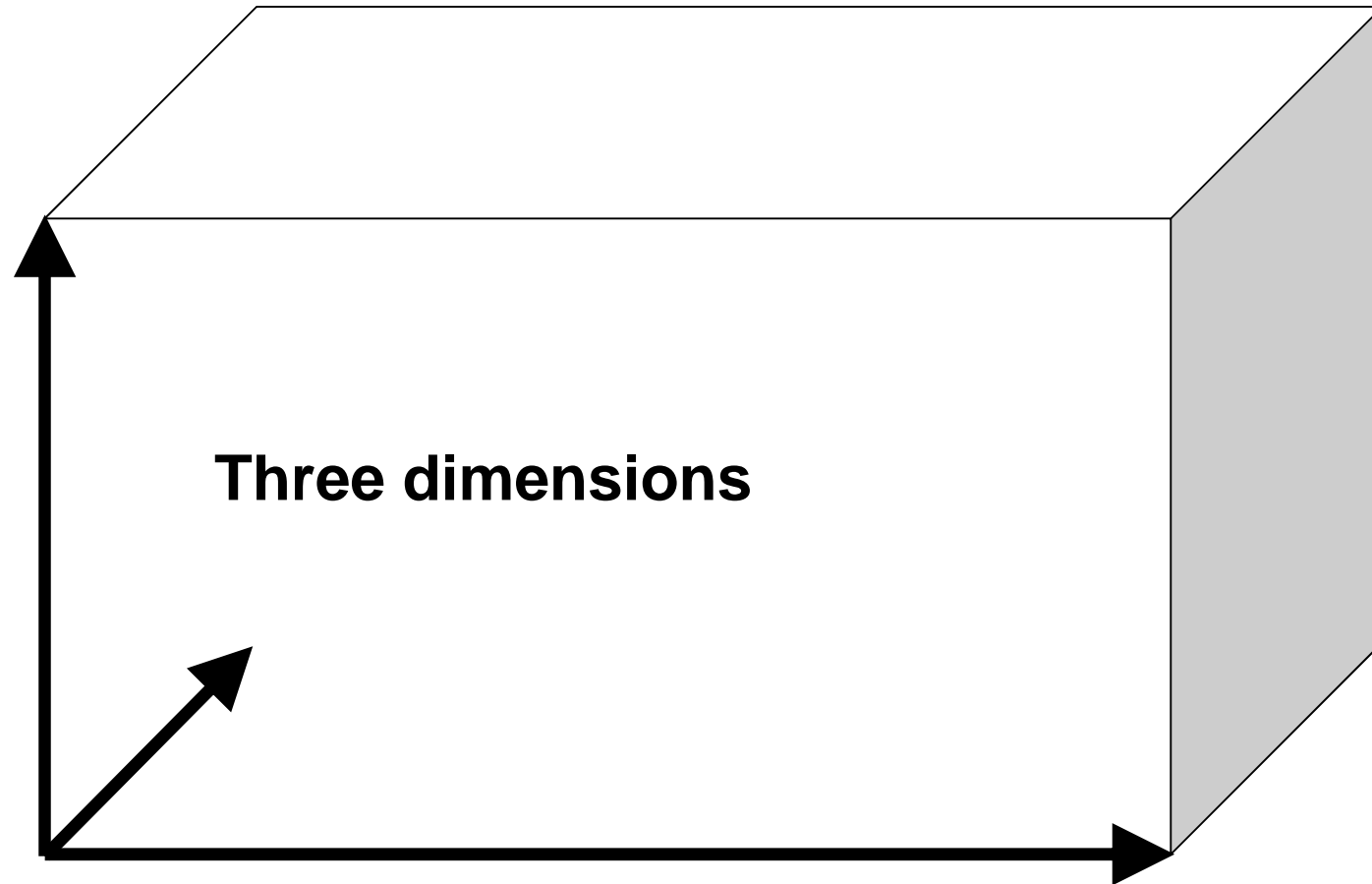
- Basis for certification
- Enhancement of mobility in labour markets

Employers' perspective

- Skill standards as proxy for skills of new employees, thus serving as signals in the labour market



2.2 Potential scope of skills standard frameworks

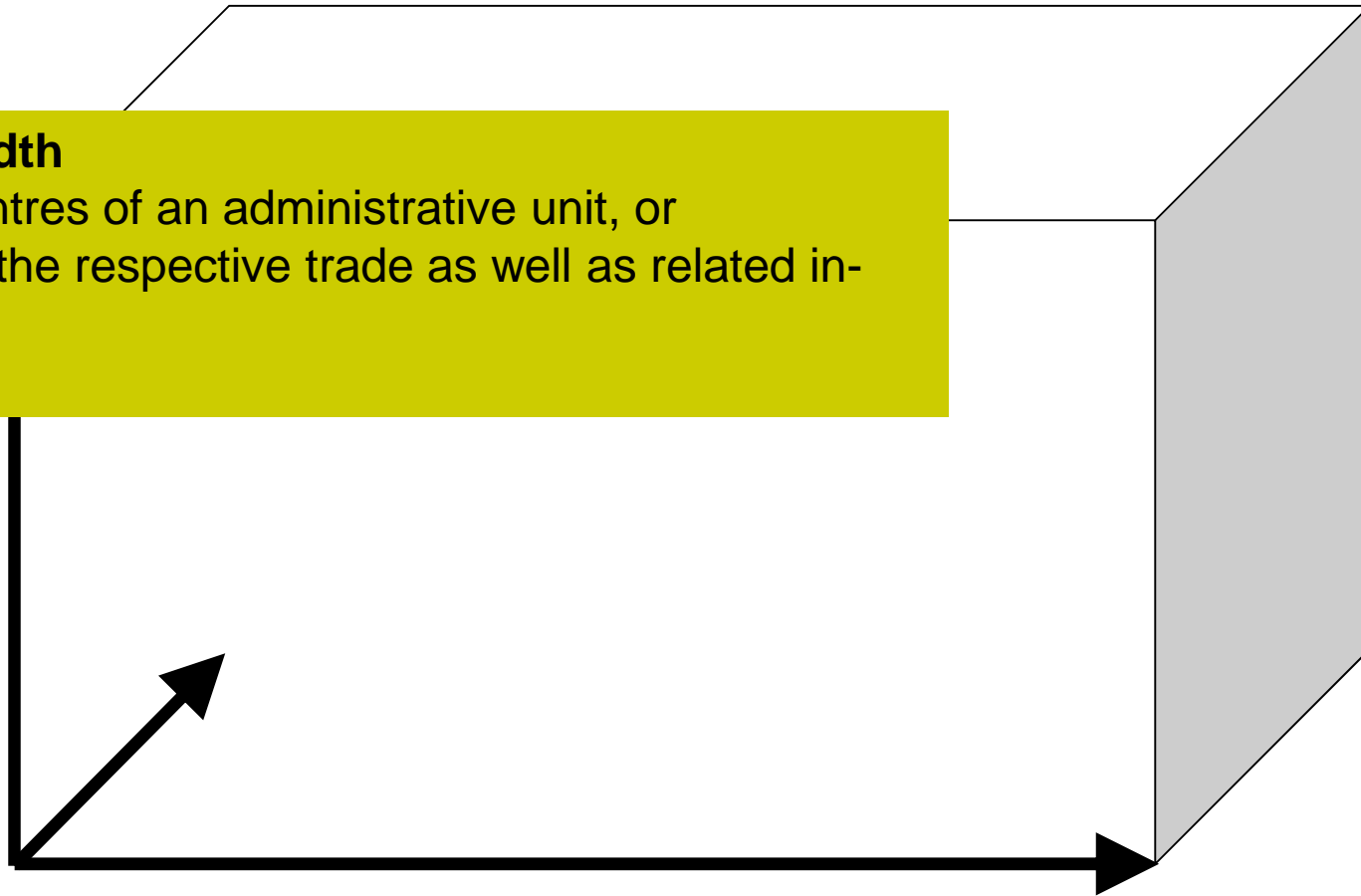




2.2 Potential scope of skills standard frameworks

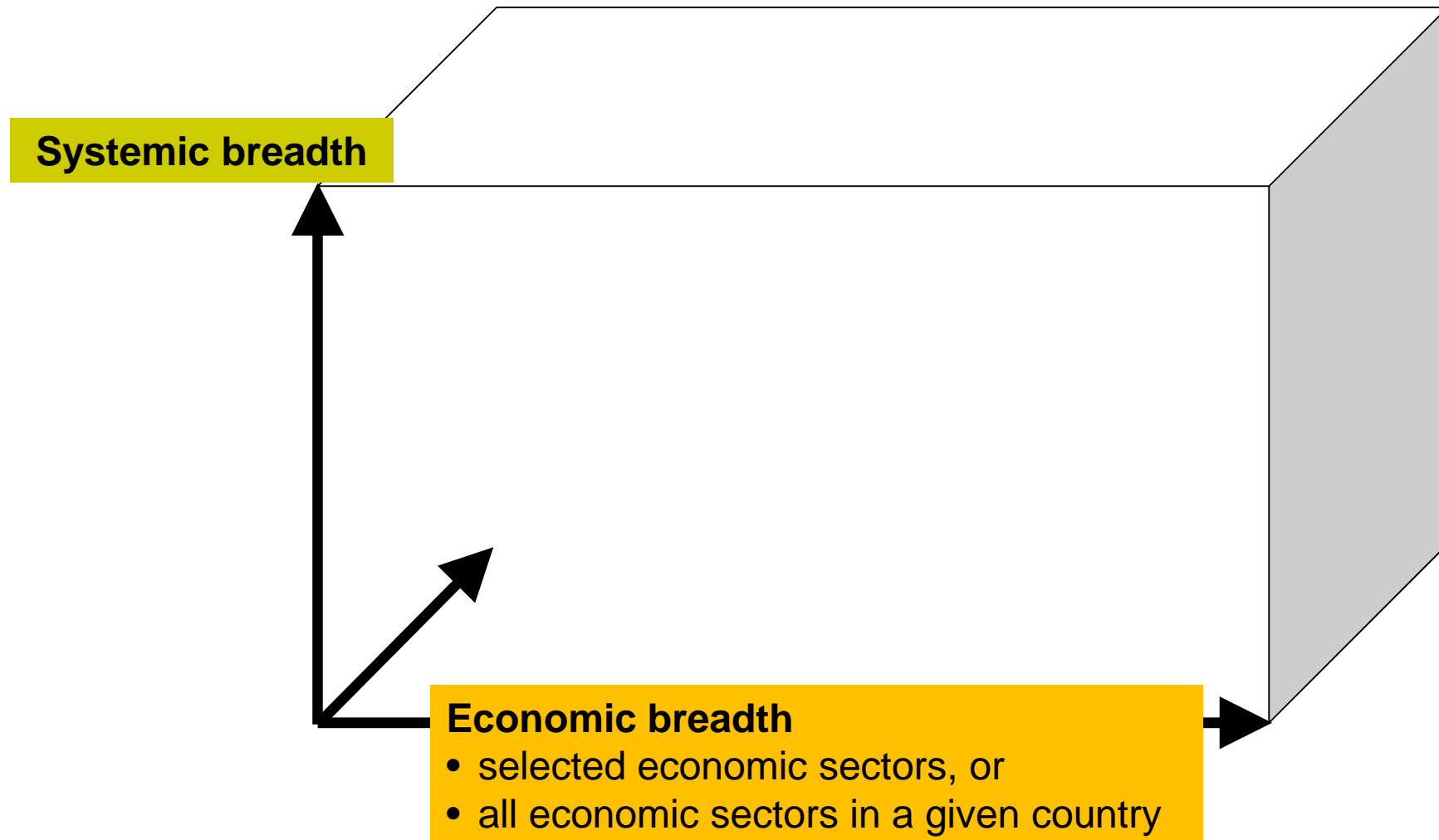
Systemic breadth

- all training centres of an administrative unit, or
- all courses in the respective trade as well as related in-house training



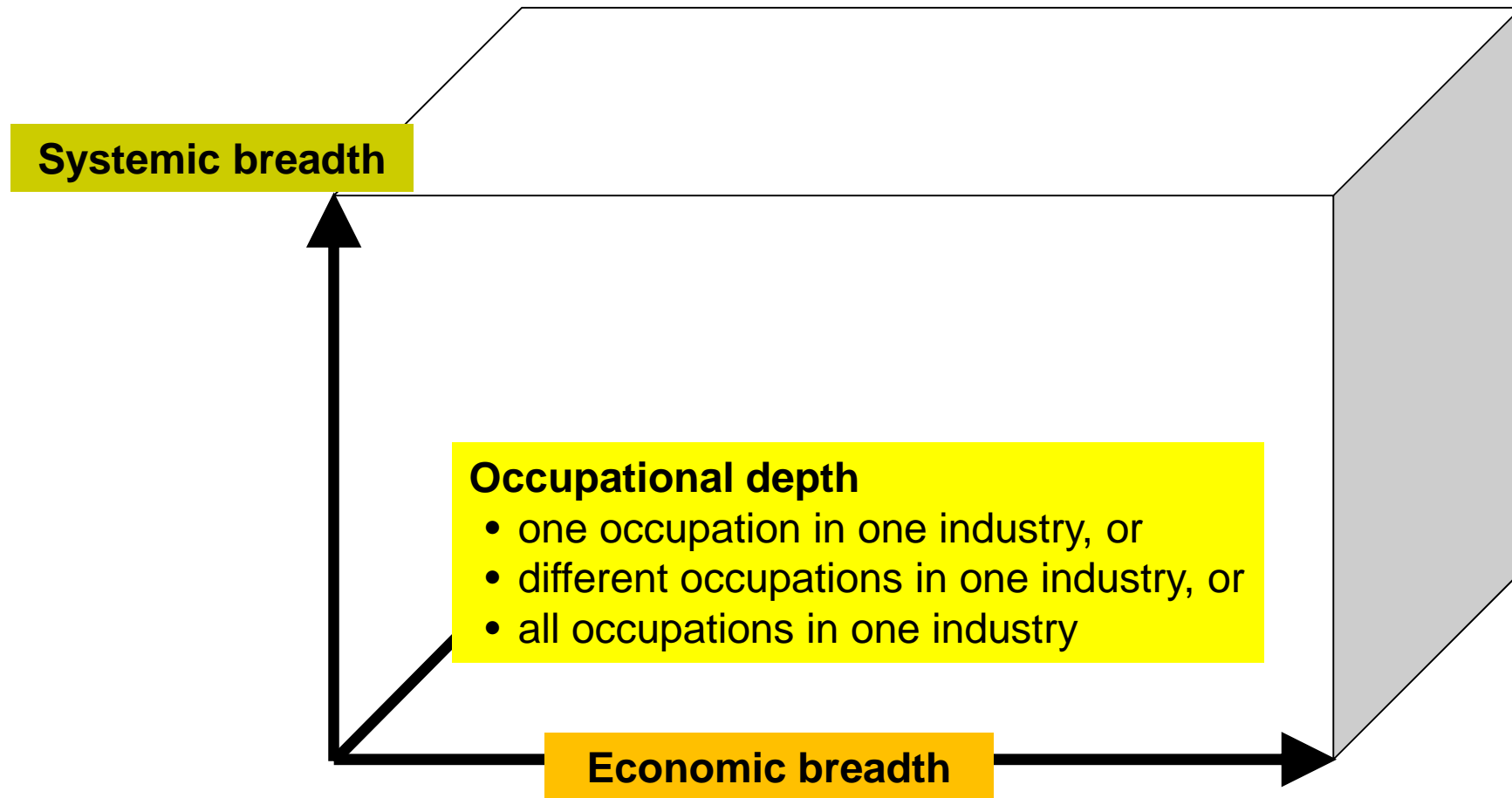


2.2 Potential scope of skills standard frameworks





2.2 Potential scope of skills standard frameworks



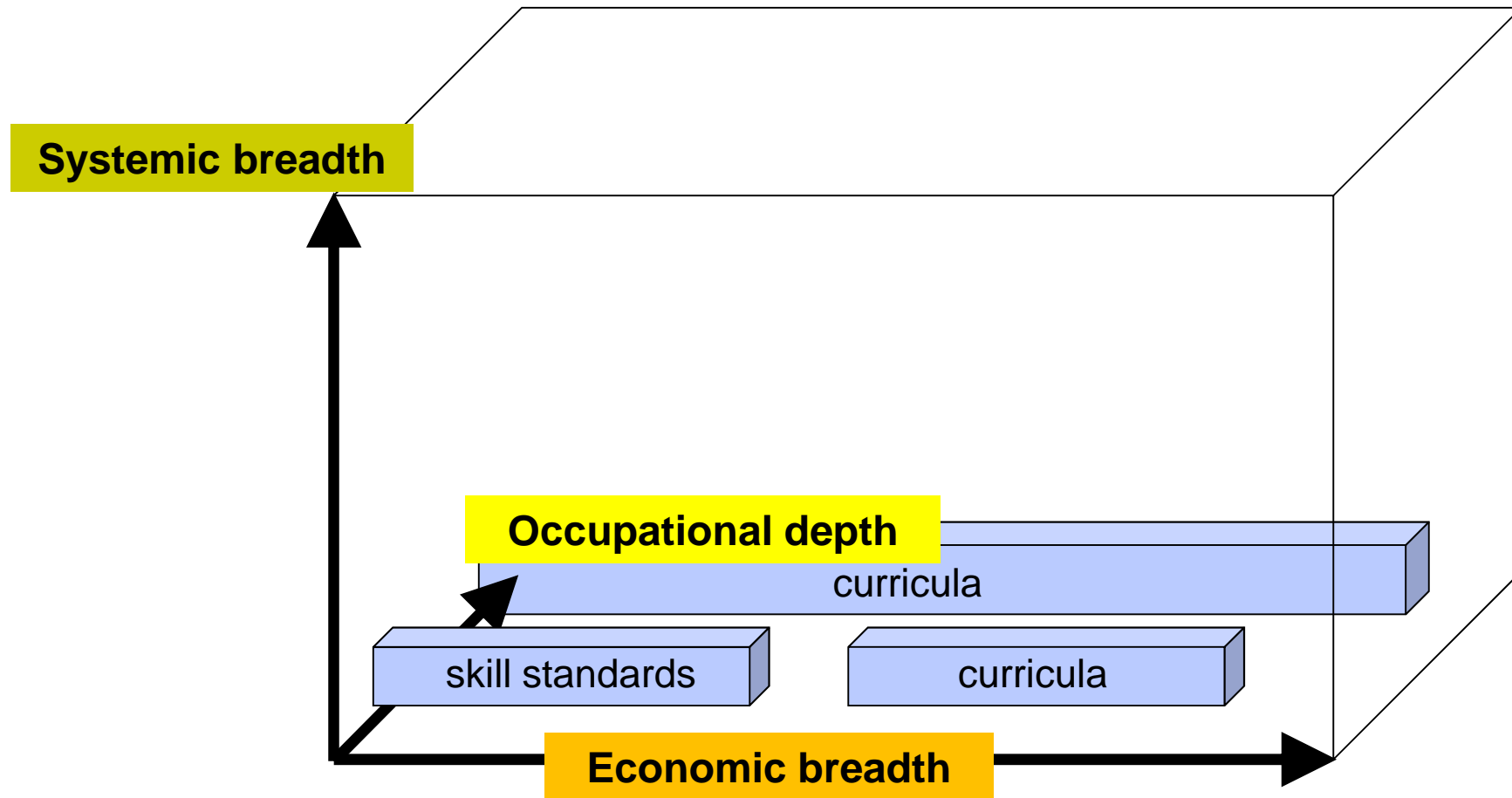


**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

2.3 Skills standard frameworks prior to the NQF era



From the 1970s until the NQF era



see e.g. NAITA, 1997; Pang, 1995; VTA, 1998.



2.4 Limits of early skills standard frameworks

Lacking systemic breadth

➔ Skill standards mostly only used by one administrative agency

Lacking occupational depth

➔ Programmes not accessible to the poor

No link to higher education

➔ Lacking social demand for skill programmes at intermediary level because of missing links to higher education



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

3 Why are qualifications frameworks so appealing?



3.1 Competency-based skills standardisation

- In theory, strong orientation towards needs of employers.
- Change from being input-led to being outcome-led.
 - Focus is on skills employed in the labour market and not on contents of training programmes.



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

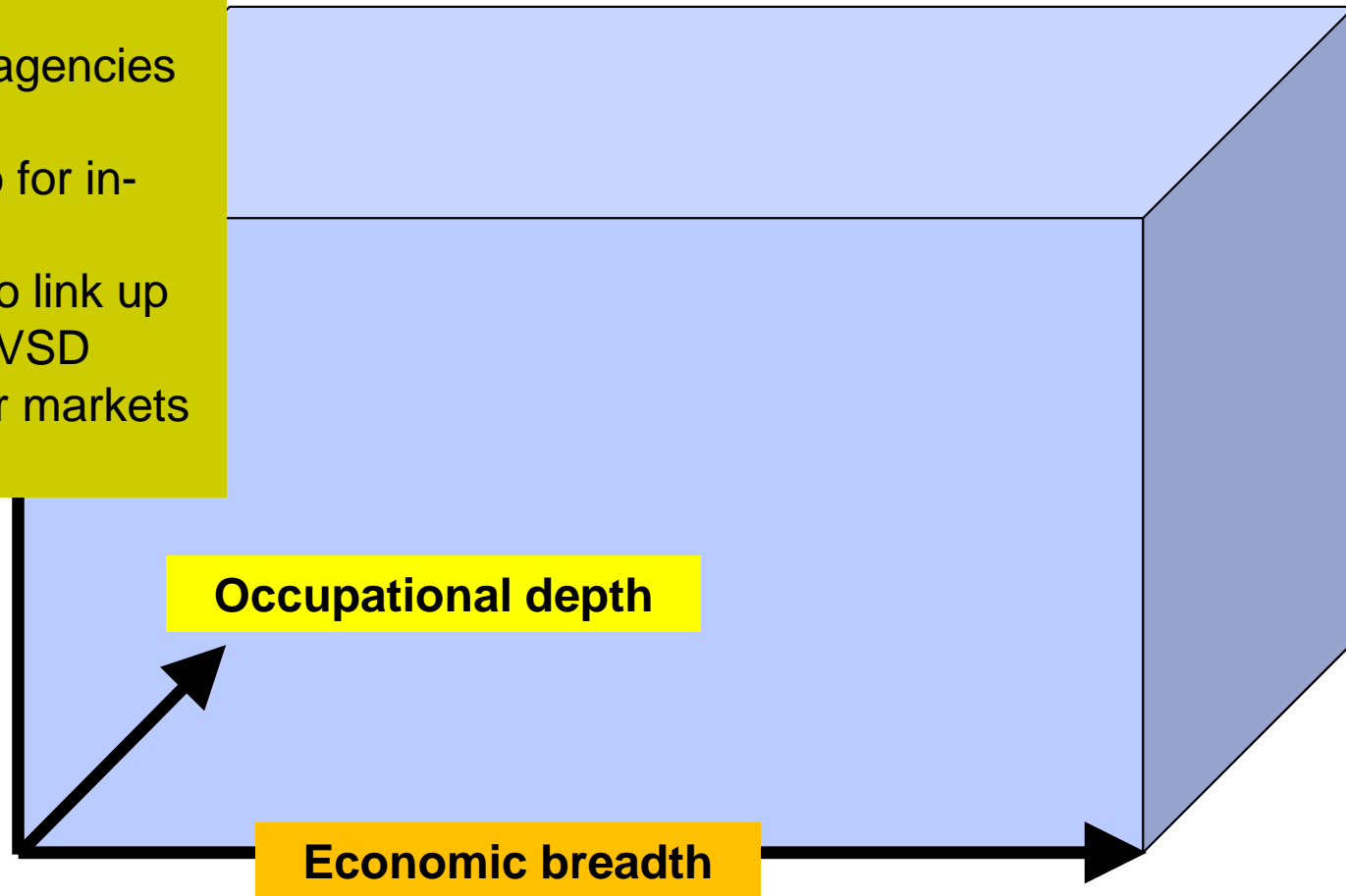
3.2. The broad scope of qualifications frameworks

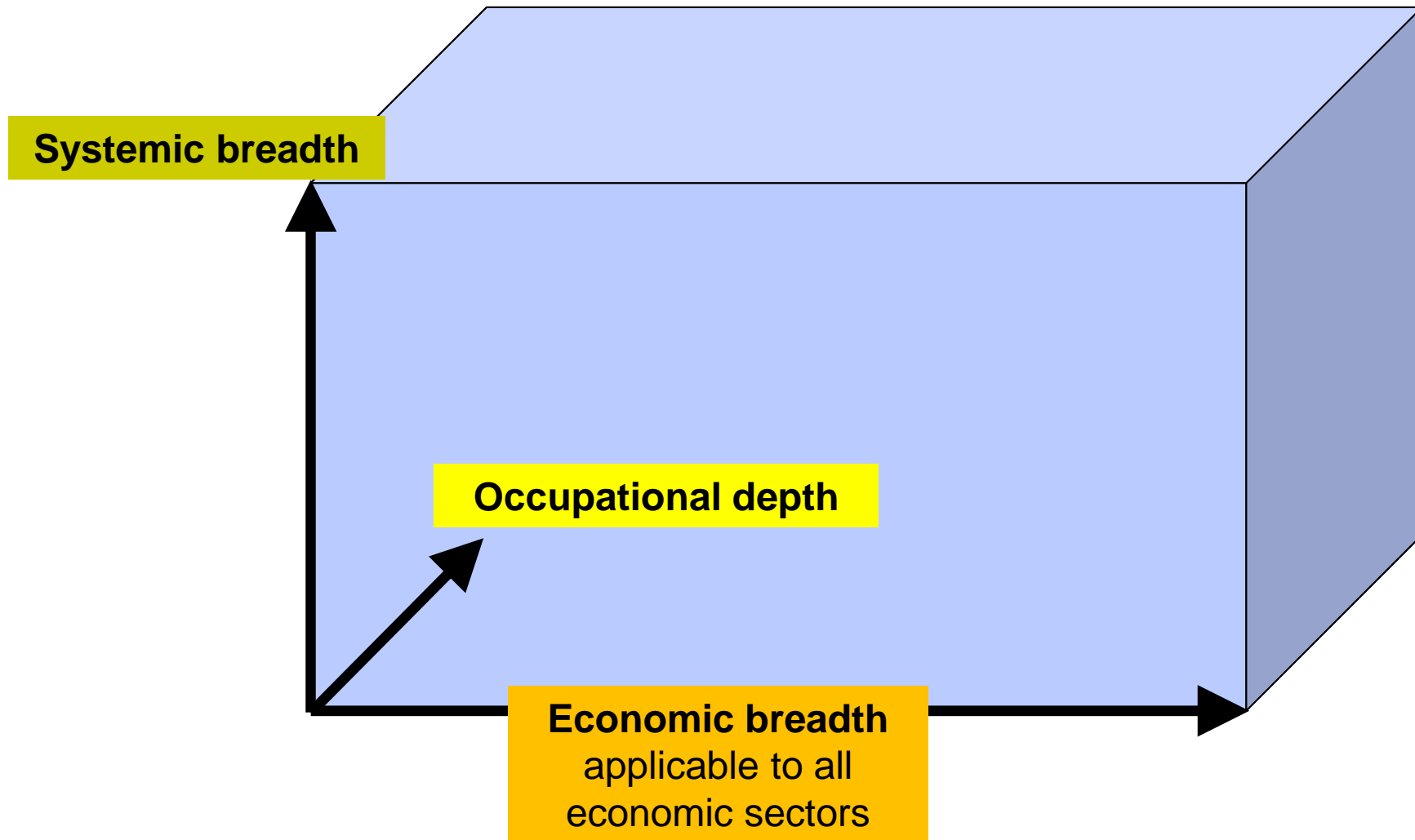


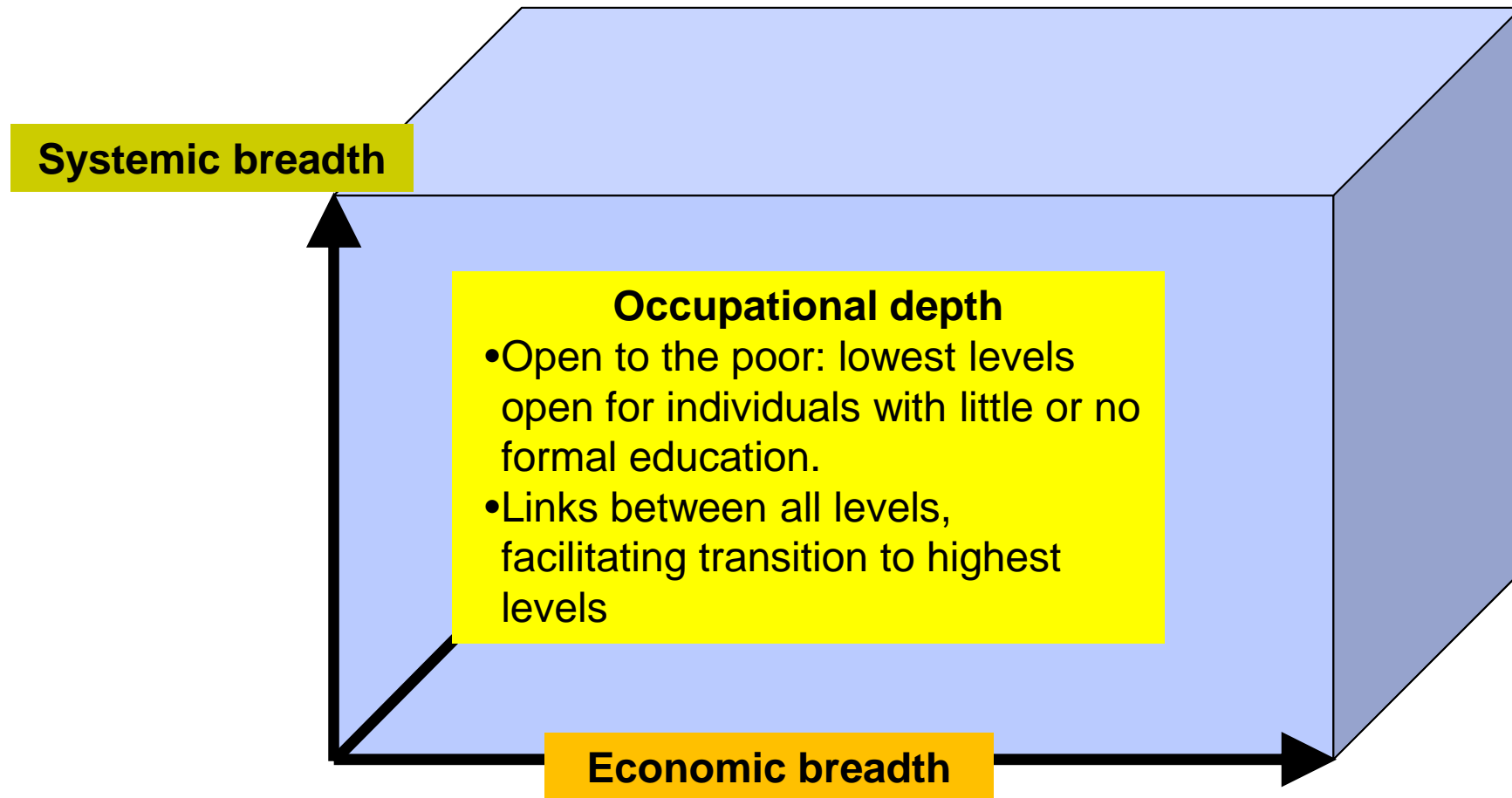
Systemic breadth

NVQs ..

- for all training agencies involved
- applicable also for in-firm training
- with potential to link up with overseas VSD systems/labour markets









3.3 The basis of NQF's attractiveness

I.

**Skills standardisation
becomes relevant
for poverty reduction.**



3.3 The basis of NQF's attractiveness

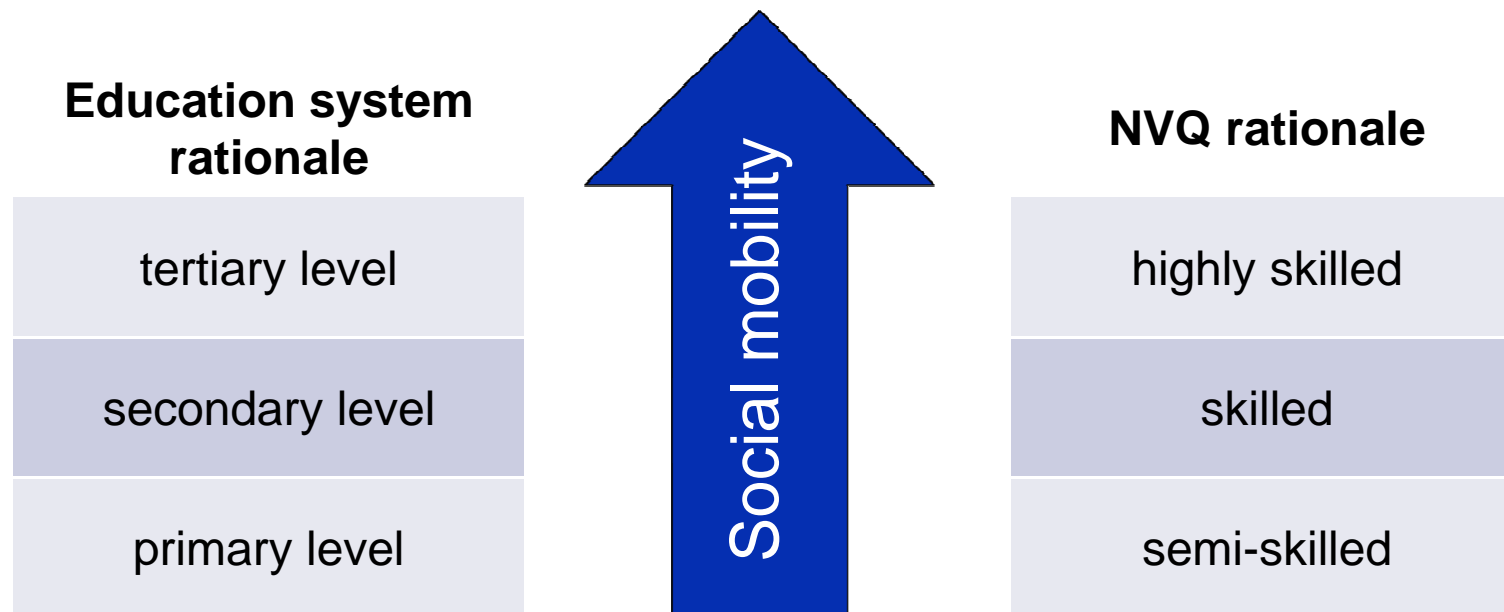
II.

**Skills standardisation
becomes an instrument for
handling the quest for
educational credentials.**



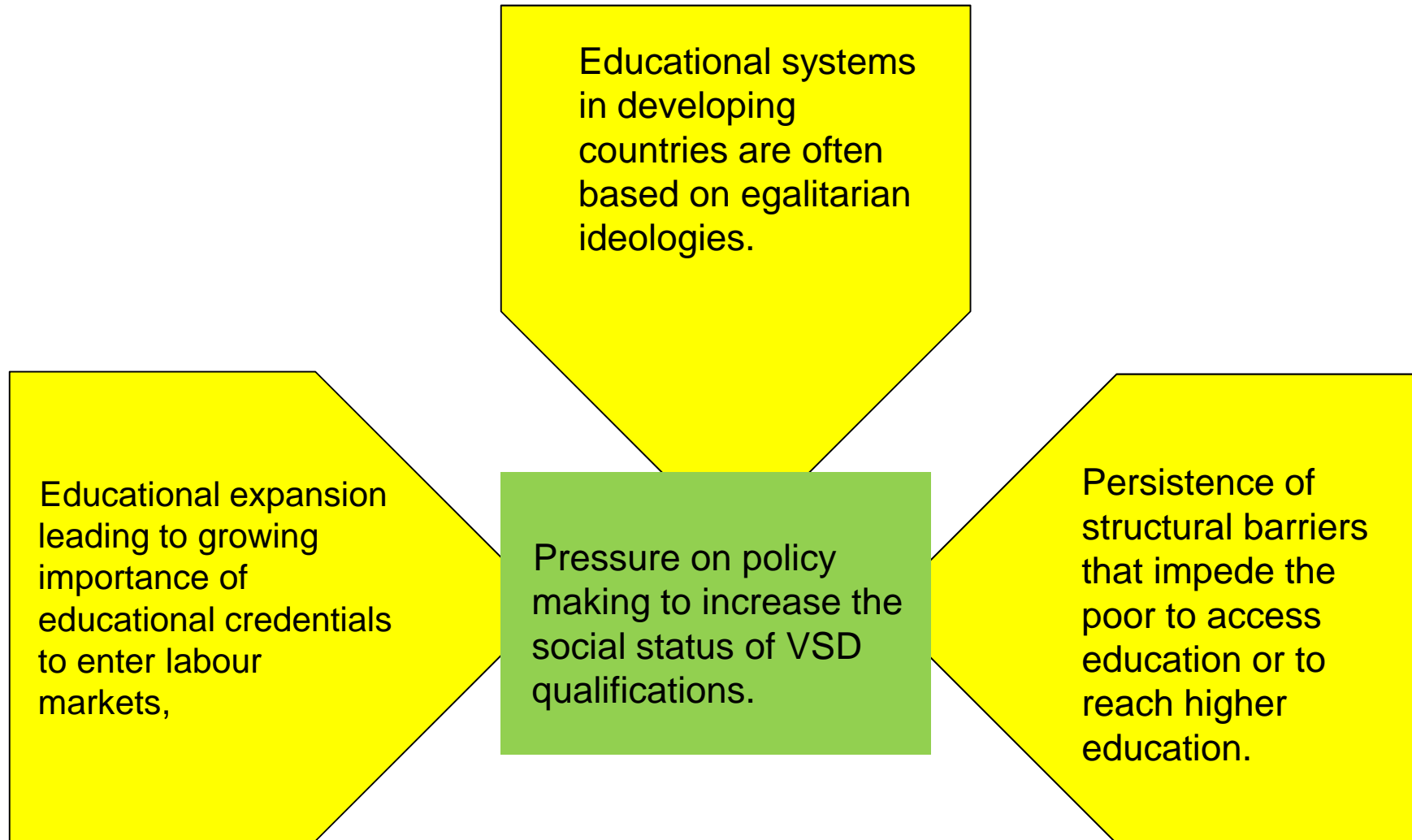
The quest for credentials

The NQF rationale links the idea of skills standardisation with the ideal of educational and upward labour market mobility.





The quest for credentials



see e.g. Brown, 2001; Collins, 1979; Lange & Topel, 2006; Maurer, 2011



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

4 Challenges in implementing National Qualifications Frameworks:

**The example of training for Industrial Sewing
Machine Operators (ISMO) in Sri Lanka**



4.1 Skill standard and curriculum for Industrial Sewing Machine Operators (ISMO)

Skill standard

- ... covering four levels
- ... focussing on 12 different types of machines

Curriculum

- ... specifying the skill standard for use in the classroom.
- ... including tremendous amounts of academic knowledge.
- ... covering a length of more than 300 pages.

see Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training, 2006; NAITA, 2005; NITE, 2003.



4.2 The statistics 2005-2010

Number of trainees in courses for Industrial Sewing Machine Operators (ISMO)	approx. 8'900
Number of certificates (any level) for Industrial Sewing Machine Operators (ISMO) awarded	0
Contribution of ISMO skill standard to poverty reduction (e.g. increased wages)	0
Contribution of ISMO skill standard to educational mobility	0



4.3 Difficulties in implementing skill standard and curriculum

Training administration

- Logistical problems to take documents to the schools
 - Ignorance of the entire document
- Lack of adequate practical resources (machines)
 - Training on one / two types of machines
- Obvious desinterest at all administrative levels to resolve these problems

Trainees

- Limited social demand for the programme, despite considerable promotion with reference to the NQF
- Limited perspectives for upwards labour market mobility for those with little formal education

Private sector

- High demand from the labour market for trainees with just basic operational skills
- No interest of firms to support operators to get a NQF-certificate



5 Synthesis

- Rapid diffusion of NQF model in developing countries is rooted in the fact that its approach to skills standardisation is in line with poverty reduction strategies and the quest for credentials.
- To reach the core goals of the NQF model (upward labour market mobility / poverty reduction) is challenging.
- Competency-based NQF standards may not necessarily be relevant for the actors in the implementation context.



6 The way ahead

- Focus on those economic sectors, where it is realistic that both firms and employees are interested in training programmes that are based on NQF skill standards.
- To really contribute to upward labour market mobility, implementers of NQF must address the issue of general education.
- The involvement of firms into implementing NQF skill standards is often not realistic. This requires a careful analysis of the infrastructural consequences of such skill standards..



**University of
Zurich** ^{UZH}

Thank you.



Literature

Allais, S. (2010). *The implementation and impact of National Qualifications Frameworks: Report of a study in 16 countries*. Geneva: International Labor Organization.

Brown, D. K. (2001). The Social Sources of Educational Credentialism: Status Cultures, Labor Markets, and Organizations. *Sociology of Education*, 74, 19-34.

Collins, R. (1979). *The Credential Society: A Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification*. New York: Academic Press.

Lange, F., & Topel, R. (2006). The social value of education and human capital. In E. A. Hanushek & F. Welch (Eds.), *Handbook of the economics of education* (pp. 469-508). Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Maurer, M. (2011). *Skill Formation Regimes in South Asia: A Comparative Study on the Path-Dependent Development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training for the Garment Industry*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Meyer, J. W., & Ramirez, F. O. (2009). The world institutionalization of education: origins and implications. In J. Schriewer (Ed.), *Discourse formation in comparative education* (pp. 111-132). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.



Literature

Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training. (2006). *Competency Based Assessment Record Book for Industrial Sewing Machine Operator*. Colombo: Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training.

NAITA. (1997). *National Skill Standard for Trainee Occupation of Sewing Machine Operator*. Rajagiriya: National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority.

NAITA. (2005). *National Skill Standards for Industrial Sewing Machine Operator (Skill Standards Code D18S001)*. Colombo: Ministry of Skills Development, Vocational and Technical Education.

NITE. (2003). *Curriculum Outline Document: Industrial Sewing Machine Operator*. Ratmalana: National Institute of Technical Education/Skills Development Project.

Pang, C. L. (1995). *The Malaysian Skill Standards System - Development and Operation*. Paper presented at the Global Competencies - Workplace Outcomes.

Rauner, F. (2009). Overview: TVET Curriculum Development and Delivery. In R. Maclean & D. Wilson (Eds.), *International Handbook of Education for the Changing World of Work* (pp. 1578-1591). Dordrecht: Springer.

VTA. (1998). *Skill Standard for Industrial Sewing Machine Mechanic*. Colombo: Vocational Training Authority.