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**Beyond Primary Education:  
Challenges and Approaches to Expanding Learning Opportunities in Africa**

**Parallel Session 7B**

**National Qualification  
Frameworks, Recognition of  
Prior Learning  
and Competencies**

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**Creating Flexible and Inclusive Learning Paths  
in Post-Primary Education and Training in Africa:  
NQFs and Recognition of non-formal and informal learning  
The Key to Lifelong Learning**

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**Working Document**

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# Contents

<b>1. SUMMARY.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>4. FEATURES OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5. NQFS IN AFRICA.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>6. CROSS-NATIONAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>7. LIFELONG LEARNING: THE CONTEXT FOR NQFS AND RPL .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>8. VALIDATION AND VALUATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING .....</b>	<b>20</b>
8.1 Definition of terms: Learning from International practice .....	20
8.2 Country examples .....	21
8.3 What is it that is recognized and assessed?.....	22
<b>9. INSTITUTIONAL AND STRUCTURAL DIMENSIONS .....</b>	<b>23</b>
9.1 School based work-oriented programmes.....	23
9.2 Complementary basic education programmes that are equivalent to formal education .....	24
9.3 Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET).....	24
9.4 Further Education and training (FET).....	24
9.5 TVET .....	25
9.6 Workforce development programmes.....	26
9.7 Higher Education .....	27
<b>10. CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS.....</b>	<b>29</b>
10.1 Attaching a new meaning to lifelong learning .....	29
10.2 National qualifications framework.....	29
10.3 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning .....	30
10.4 Institutional and structural dimensions .....	31
<b>11. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>32</b>

## List of Tables

## List of Graphs

Box 1: NQFs and legal structures

Box 2: The rationale for establishing qualification frameworks

Box 3: Key competencies in different learning environments

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AC	Area Coordinators (Namibia)
ACE	Adult and Continuing Education (Kenya)
APCL	Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning
APL	Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (UK)
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning (United States)
ACE	Adult and Continuing Education (Kenya)
AQF	Australian Qualifications Authority
BLK	Bund-Länder Kommission (Germany)
BOTA	Botswana Training Authority
BMBF	German Federal Ministry of Education and Research
BNVQA	Botswana National Vocational Qualifications Framework
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
CED	Certificate in Education for Development (Namibia)
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CLGS	Certificate in Local Government Studies programme (Namibia)
COTVET	Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Ghana)
CPE	End of Primary education cycle (Seychelles)
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme (Namibia)
DECs	Distance Education Coordinators (Namibia)
EAEA	European Association of the Education of Adults
EFA	Education for All
EMT	Executive Management Team
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETQAs	Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies
EVC	(the Netherlands)
EVC	European Curriculum Vitae
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
FETC	Further Education and Training Certification (South Africa)
GCE 'O'	General 'O' Level (Mauritius)
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate (South Africa)
GNQQ	General National Qualifications Framework (UK)
GPRS	Ghana Poverty Reduction Scheme
GSQF	Gambia Skills Qualifications Framework.
GTZ	Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit.(Germany)
HRD	Human Resource Development
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate (Mauritius)
IBAC	International Baccalaureate (Mauritius)

ICCES	Integrated Community Centres for Employable Skills (Ghana)	IIEP	UNESCO	International
Institute for	Education Planning and Administrative			
ILO	International Labour Organisation			
INEA	Mexican National Institute for Adult Education			
ISO	International Standards Organisation			
IT	Information Technology			
IVTB	Industrial and Vocational Training Board (Mauritius)			
KMK	Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the State.			
MEVyT	Mexican Model of Life and Work			
MLS	Manager Learner Support (Namibia)			
MQA	Mauritian Qualifications Authority			
NACVET	National Co-coordinating Committee for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Ghana)			
NAMCOL	Namibia College of Open Learning			
NSB	National Standards Bodies (South Africa)			
NTA	National Training Authority (Gambia)			
NQA	National Qualifications Authority			
NQA	Namibia Qualifications Authority			
NQF	Non-Governmental Organization			
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification (UK)			
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development			
PAFPNA	Project for the Vocational Education and Training of the Newly Literate (Senegal)			
PALCs	Public Adult Learning Canters (South Africa)			
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (Ethiopia)			
PASEC	Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs de la ConfeMen (French Speaking Monitoring of Educational Quality)			
PDC	Portfolio Development Course (South Africa)			
PEL	Prior Experiential Learning			
PLA	Prior Learning Assessment (Canada)			
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning			
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework			
RSA	Republic of South Africa			
RUEESE	Rhodes University Environmental Education and Sustainability (South Africa)			
SAQMEC	South African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality			
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authorities (South Africa)			
QAA	Quality Assurance and Assessment (Botswana)			
SADC	South African Development Cooperation			
SADCQF	South African Development Cooperation Qualifications Framework			
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority			
SGBs	Standards Generating Bodies (South Africa)			
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework			
STEP	Skills Training Employment Placement Programme (Ghana)			
TVC	Telesecondary schools (Mexico)			
TVET	US Agency for International Development			
UVQF	Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework			
UIE	UNESCO Institution for Education, now UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning			
UNDP	United Nations Development Program			
UPE	Universal Primary Education			
UWC	University of Western Cape (South Africa)			
VAE	Validation des acquis de l' expérience (France)			
VPL	Valuation of Prior Learning			
WBL	Work-Based Learning			
WPL	Workplace Learning			
ZIMQA	Zimbabwe Qualifications Authority			
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization			

## 1. SUMMARY

1. An increasing number of African governments are developing accelerated plans for poverty reduction and knowledge-based industrial development, but are confronted with a situation of lacking frameworks conducive for comprehensive capacity building and lifelong learning.

2. Until recently, policy debate on education was predominantly focused on basic education and little attention was placed on other sub-sectors of the education system. With the emergence of sector strategies, *a renewed interest is being placed on all sub sectors*, particularly TVET and improving the skills and formal qualifications of the workforce, as well as on adult and continuing education.

3. The increasing demand for post-primary education is pushing African countries to improve the efficiency, performance and relevance of their systems. African governments are seeing in *NQFs a way to reform their education and training systems, addressing flexibility, widening participation, and enhancing mobility*.

4. The democratization of primary and basic education, which translates into an expansion of post-primary education, manifests itself not only in the pressure on secondary education, but is also leading to the *growth of school dropouts*. In such a situation, governments are seeing the need to reform qualification and recognition systems within the framework of integrated lifelong learning policies so that dropouts and out-of-school graduates may be given a second chance to continue into the formal system of education and training, and bridges can be built between formal, non-formal and informal education and training.

5. Within the context of African countries' aim to develop comprehensive capacity building in post-primary education and training, this article will highlight the importance of four interrelated strategies and their underlying conceptual underpinnings. These relate to:

1. Lifelong and Life wide Learning
2. National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
4. Institutional and structural dimensions

6. The paper will examine the above aspects by highlighting international good practice. Developing countries, such as African countries can benefit from the experience with developing national qualification and recognition systems and promotion of integrated lifelong learning strategies in other parts of the world, both in the context of globalisation and poverty reduction. If countries share experiences, the application could be much swifter. We already find that a snowball effect is taking place.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

7. The emphasis on “post-primary education and training” as contributing to poverty reduction, job-creation, and progression to knowledge-based societies, is one for which there is a broad agreement in many African countries. Given the situation of education in African countries, universalisation of primary education is not sufficient. While Education for All (EFA) is good, it is not possible to wait for the achievement of universal coverage of primary education, especially as many children and youth in marginalized, and rural and urban contexts, need to develop alternative access programmes for individuals to progress into TVET, skills development and adult and community educational programmes.

8. Through the importance being given to post-primary education, governments in Africa are emphasizing continuity, lifelong and life wide learning, which are perceived as key to increase the *vertical* and *horizontal* integration of education systems and thereby social inclusion and integration especially of people at risk, disadvantaged communities and vulnerable sections of society. Instruments such as national qualification frameworks are crucial to lifelong and life wide learning, which includes the recognition of experiential and prior non-formal and informal learning.

9. The introduction (**Chapter 3**) raises some key issues that African governments perceive as important in the context of introducing national qualification frameworks. These include

- *Limited pathways* between the different education sectors;
- *Difficult transitions* from non-formal, informal learning and work-based learning environments to formal programmes;
- *Ever-growing number of dropouts* below the 10th grades with restricted options for continuing education and training;
- *Tenuous links* between TVET and general and higher education;
- Limited information on *learning goals* and learning achievements and job-related learning contained in certificates and qualifications
- *Limited access* of adults and out-of-school youth to *flexible* recognition systems for reentering the system of further education and training;
- *Fragmentation of training* related to problems concerning the variety of providers and the existence of different levels alongside one another;
- Problems of *certificates not equivalent* to the certificates and qualifications in the formal system.
- *Uncoordinated mechanisms of quality assurance*, certification and standards;
- Limited qualifications and career routes;
- *Limited mechanisms for recognizing knowledge and skills* acquired outside formal institutional settings.

10. NQFs are instruments of articulation, access and equivalency. Most importantly they are frameworks that classify and *map qualifications*, according to a set of nationally agreed standards/criteria for levels of learning/skills obtained and provide a reference of equivalence that allow progression and mobility. National qualification frameworks are based on competencies or *learning outcomes required* or expected outcomes. **Chapter 4** highlights the features of NQFs

11. **In Chapter 5** a three-fold typology has been presented as a possible categorization of NQFs in African countries: (1) countries with explicit qualification frameworks; (2) countries without a national qualifications

framework but with certification activities that follow the formal national curricula; (3) countries with ad hoc programmes. However, since much of the NQF in African countries is work-in-progress and its application in a nascent stage, it is difficult to allocate countries rigidly into one or the other group. Instead NQFs in Africa are described according to the existence of legal frameworks, national bodies for quality assurance, scope, rationale, extent of the strength and comprehensiveness of the frameworks.

12. **Chapter 6** examines the growing significance of cross-national and regional frameworks in a variety of contexts.

13. The shift from mere education and training policies to comprehensive lifelong – life-wide policies, has been a key stimulus for the development of NQFs. At the same time, NQFs facilitate lifelong learning because they give clear and transparent reference for individuals who plan to start, or move to, different learning and career paths, as well as to education and training institutions that attempt to accredit individual’s prior learning as part of the requirements for obtaining a qualification. **Chapter 7** describes lifelong learning as an important context for the development of NQFs.

14. **Chapter 8** highlights international practice with regard to recognition, validation and accreditation of experiential and prior learning and examines its linkages with national qualifications frameworks. In Africa, some countries, such as Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa, have piloted projects on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

15. **Chapter 9** examines the institutional and structural dimensions that need to accompany the establishment of NQFs at all levels of the educational and training system, as well as in relation to experiential and prior non-formal and informal learning

16. **Chapter 10** concludes with a presentation of the major challenges and prospects:

- NQFs need to be perceived as “enabling” rather than as regulatory and prescriptive frameworks. They should be seen as instruments for effectively mapping progression routes.
- Qualifications should correspond more realistically to existing capacities. This is important for ensuring that NQFs are tackling the problem of exclusion.
- Teachers and educators of adults should be involved in the debates about the development of NQFs.
- There should be a better balance between qualification development and standards development. Standards cannot be oriented according to formal school criteria alone, but should be oriented to criteria and references drawn from work, culture and society.
- Outcome-based approaches need to be supported by the enhancement of teaching and learning process, provision and quality assurance.
- Validation processes should be useful and relevant from the perspective of learner at every level of each education and training sub sector: helping potential dropouts, for example, to complete secondary school, or to proceed to vocational education, or entry to work.
- Ways need to be found to integrate work-related, experiential and prior informal and non-formal learning into the national qualifications frameworks.



### 3. INTRODUCTION

#### Issues

17. At present there exists in Africa only very *limited pathways* between the different education sectors. Transitions from non-formal learning environments to formal programmes are particularly difficult. After completing the 10th grade, students are assigned either to the general education tract or to the vocational education tract. Transferring from Technical Education and Training to higher education or vice versa is possible only to a very limited extent.

18. There are large and *ever growing numbers of dropouts* below the 10th grade. They have access to non-formal education and training programs, but these offer only very restricted options for continuing general or formal education. The problem of developing a strategy to *eradicate the problem of young people not in education or training* is an acute problem throughout the African continent.

19. Post-primary education includes a *broad range of forms of learning*, modes of delivery and types of settings. They include non-formal settings, workplace learning, apprenticeships, open and distance learning as well as individual learning. However, these exist as fragmented programs, lack quality assurance, and institutional frameworks and financial sustainability.

20. For learners that have acquired knowledge and skills outside formal institutional settings, access to recognition and *certification is not easy*. This can hamper access to employment and adequate wages in general, and to certain jobs in particular. The absence of certificates is also likely to limit access to further learning.

21. Many of the *qualifications delivered* in the formal learning sector are known not to be very good. In such a situation, employers have to rely on their own networks.

22. Where adults have relevant experience, they do not have access to recognition systems that would facilitate re-entry to the system of further education and training, or give opportunities for complementing their practical experience with theoretical skills.

#### NQFs as drivers of reform

23. Many governments see National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) as *key drivers for reforming education and training systems*, and addressing several challenges and problems of the education system, such as the problems concerning the variety of providers, the existence of different levels alongside each other, the fragmentation and uncoordinated mechanisms of quality assurance, certification and standards; the limited qualifications and career routes; limited information on learning achievements contained in certificates; and the fact that existing systems, created by previous racist regimes, have been used primarily by the elites (Swartland 2005).

24. Because qualifications are provided on the basis of obtaining or proving competencies or 'expected learning outcomes' by a set of agreed standards or criteria, this means that learning can take place anywhere and that gaining a qualification is not bound to a traditional education setting. Many African countries are seeing the *benefits* of recognizing learning outcomes regardless of where they have been acquired.

- Recognition and certification of prior informal and non-formal learning and experience enable the learner's entrance into formal systems of further education or training; it is a motivating factor for individuals to continue to learn;
- It improves the learner's eligibility in the labor market; by creating awareness in society about the value of non-formal and informal learning several countries have been able to make migrants and immigrants more attractive for the labor market. In the same way, improving the employability of redundant workers, the unemployed and those with no official recognition for

their trades is an important benefit from recognition; recognition also addresses the issue of skills shortages in the labor market;

- For enterprises, recognition and certification of prior learning may be of importance because it increases their potential for effective human resource management; companies are better able to organize self-organized training by getting support from continuing education institutions;
- For a society as a whole, identification, assessment and recognition of learners' acquired competencies may simplify the transfer of skills between different spheres such as education, work and home, and therefore improve the allocation of a society's resources.

### **International Conventions and Agreements**

25. International conventions and agreements have highlighted the importance of establishing NQFs and mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and experience. The General Conference of the International Labor Organization (ILO) recommended that “Members should develop a national qualifications framework to facilitate lifelong learning, to match skills demand with supply, guide individuals in their choice of training and career and facilitate the recognition of prior learning and previously acquired skills, competencies and experience; this framework should be responsive to changing technology and trends in the labour market and recognize regional and local differences, without losing transparency at the national level.” (ILO 2004: para 59).

26. Similarly, UNESCO has recommended that Member States should “establish criteria and standards, subject to periodic review and evaluation, applying to all aspects of Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) including, to the greatest extent possible, non-formal education (...) for all forms of recognition of achievement and consequent qualifications” (UNESCO 2001, recommendation 15). Resolution 5 of UNESCO 32nd General Conference stated, «Lifelong learning is accompanied by the demand that high quality systems are put in place for the “Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of non-formal and Informal Learning”. As part of its activities to establish an observatory of models and practices, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong learning extended the international survey (Singh 2005) on Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal learning and Experience to all African countries. While the research at UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning is international in nature, the focus on Africa is intended to take into account the specificities of African countries, and try to address the question of how can educational strategies in African countries go beyond the conventional educational frameworks to integrated lifelong learning strategies (UNESCO French National Commission 2005 and 2007).

27. Taking into account the above considerations, the broad objectives of the current paper are to present national policy and practice with regard to the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and lifelong learning, including the recognition of experiential and prior learning in African countries.

## 4. FEATURES OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS

28. NQF is an instrument of integration, access and equivalency. NQF is a framework, which classifies and *maps qualifications*, according to a set of nationally agreed standards/criteria for levels of learning/skills obtained and provides a reference of equivalence that allow progression and mobility. National qualification frameworks are based on competencies or *learning outcomes required* or expected outcomes. The discourse on competence models has led to a greater awareness of the relevance of learning outcome descriptions. There is a distinctive change *from input to output models* as a basis for the validity of equivalences in learning outcomes assessment.

29. A national framework of qualifications provides a *set of benchmarks* against which any learning can be assessed in terms of its potential contribution to a qualification. In principle, qualifications as part of an NQF are designed: to be achieved by credit accumulation and transfer; to be transportable - units of one qualification can be used for other qualifications; to be transparent - learners know precisely what learning outcomes they are required to demonstrate to achieve a qualification (Young 2007a).

30. That qualifications are provided on the basis of obtaining or proving competencies or ‘expected learning outcomes’ means that learning can take place anywhere and that gaining a qualification is not bound to a traditional education setting. In formal education and training a standard of achievement are set by *norm referencing*, which implies testing of knowledge according to the setting of a group. Another principle for establishing a reference point is to relate a given performance to a given criterion. *Criterion-referenced testing* implies that competencies are measured from given criteria (Bjørnavåld 2001). In national qualifications the criterion references testing is commonly used. The above functions are carried out by teams of experts from business and industry in collaboration with those from education/training institutions coordinated by a legally constituted National Agency.

31. The processes of introducing National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) entail primarily redesigning of existing qualifications to fit the criteria of the framework, and *developing new qualifications* based in the framework criteria in occupations and at levels have they may not have previously existed (Young 2007a: 5). A case in point is the social care sector and the new customer service occupations in the Tourism and Heritage sectors in countries such as South Africa and the UK (Young 2007a: 5). These are occupations where employees have been low paid and often lack formal qualifications.

32. The objective of national qualification and recognition systems is not only to accredit non-formal and informal learning, but also *transfer that learning to a further stage and promote the integration into the formal education and training system*.

33. According to Young (2003) all frameworks serve as mapping and communicative tools; they give some indication of a *progression routes* between levels and, across sectors. This serves to help learners to makes career and training choices. On the other hand, some frameworks have a more regulatory function, relying on agreement and the level of prescription.

34. The NQF concept has been criticized from the point of view of its hierarchal, complex, and multidimensional nature, making it increasingly difficult for international comparability. According to Blackmur (2004) “far from informing governments and markets efficiently a structured, leveled NQF distorts information about qualification to such an extent that serious consideration needs to be given to abandoning the NQF classification system as a viable instrument of public policy.” (p.1).

## 5. NQFs IN AFRICA

35. Not all African countries have a single unified national qualifications frameworks. Three groups of countries can be categorized (Singh 2005)

(1) Countries with explicit qualification frameworks that underline the importance of an existing legal basis for recognition, though some of them still face an enormous discrepancy between policy and practice. While some of these countries highlight the importance of enabling access to the formal system, others point out the necessity of simplifying the process of recognition and validation of prior learning.

(2) A second group of countries are those without a national qualifications framework but with certification activities that follow the formal national curricula. With regard to countries without qualification frameworks, there is a growing request from learners and adult education providers alike that certificates should be nationally recognized and be validated i.e. given the same value as formal education. This would offer a “second chance” opportunity to re-enter the formal education system or achieve an equivalent’ certificate for the different levels of education and training. National qualifications frameworks are considered to help to improve economic competition and promote equality.

(3) A third group of countries are those with ad hoc programmes.

36. However, since much of the NQF in African countries is work-in-progress and its application in a nascent stage, it is difficult to allocate countries rigidly into one or the other group. Instead NQFs in Africa are described according to the existence of legal frameworks, national bodies for quality assurance, scope, rationale, extent of the strength and comprehensiveness of the frameworks.

37. NQFs originated in the UK, Australia and New Zealand. They are being gradually introduced in Asia, the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa (Kerre and Hollander 2008).

### Legal structures

38. National Qualifications Frameworks are usually anchored in the existing legal structure to facilitate a comprehensive and all encompassing understanding. Through this legal basis, it becomes possible to give the framework its credibility, and to bring stakeholders and social partners together to come to an agreement and to collaborate with educators/trainers to develop, organize and provide qualifications, curricula or programs and assessment procedures that encompass the standards identified.

### Box 1: NQFs and legal structures

The **South African** Qualifications Act (RSA 1995), which proposed the development and establishment of a National Qualifications Framework designed to integrate education and training provision through a common set of qualifications. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is a body appointed by the Ministers of Education and Labour. It provides an institutional framework for the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (SAQA 2000)

The Act of Parliament (Act 29) was taken in 1996 as a first step to establish a National Qualifications Authority (NQA). **Namibia** has a blueprint for a competency-based modularized Vocational Education and Training (VET) system, in which employment outcomes are to be rationalized for all courses.

The **Mauritius** Qualifications Authority was set up as a corporate body following enactment of the MQA Act 2001 and became operational as from 08 May 2002. The process of introducing National Qualifications Framework (NQF) began by commissioning a study to the Scottish Qualifications Authority to advise the then Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development on the establishment of a Mauritius Qualifications Framework. A Project steering Committee under the leadership of the Ministry of Training, Skills Development and Productivity was set up to develop a National Qualification Framework according to international standards. Mauritius is also taking a multi-stakeholder approach towards the development and implementation of the NQF, which involves several

relevant ministries, representatives of employers and business as well as of training and education institutions and bodies.

A bill establishing **Zimbabwe** Qualifications Authority (ZIMQA) was drafted in 2004; it aims at creating a Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS). The establishment of the Department of Industrial Training and Trade Testing made recognition of prior learning possible.

### National Bodies

39. It is common practice to have a national body with a legal mandate that coordinates the development, establishment and management of the National Qualifications Framework system Countries where the qualification system is unified through the region..

40. In **South Africa**, the quality assurance system is organized by the so-called Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs), which are accredited by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), and by learning providers, which have been accredited by the Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies. These Bodies are structured in three sectors: the economic sector, the social sector and the education and training sub-system sector. These Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies sustain the quality of learning outcomes and standards by registering assessors and by accrediting providers. Accredited providers, in turn, are responsible for their learning programs. The bodies evaluate assessment and make recommendations to the National Standards Bodies on new qualifications and modifications to existing qualifications. The South African Qualifications Authority system is also supported by Moderating Bodies that ensure that fair and reliable assessment is carried out across the National Qualification Frameworks. (ILO [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/hrdr/topic\\_n/t18\\_sa.htm#7](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/hrdr/topic_n/t18_sa.htm#7) )

41. The South African Qualifications Act (No. 58 of 1995) indicates that one of the functions of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is to ensure that standards and qualifications registered on the NQF are internationally comparable.

42. Quality assurance in **Namibia** is judged on the principle of equity, flexibility and accessibility; the aim is to generate access to the Vocational Education and Training System for industrial worker, school leavers, unemployed youth and the socially disadvantaged; The Ministry of Education established a Quality Assurance and Assessment (QAA) Unit, which is the secretariat under the supervision of the Board of Management. Two sub-committees were also established to augment the functions of the Quality Assurance and Assessment (QAA). The Assessment Committee was established to monitor the Quality Assurance and Assessment (QAA) Unit's arrangements for external final assessment and ensure its effectiveness. The Quality Assurance Sub-committee was established to ensure that the Quality Assurance and Assessment (QAA) mechanisms are effective.

43. In **Mauritius**, the MQA works together with another body, the National Accreditation and Equivalence Council, in the recognition of vocational qualifications and all aspects of quality of accreditation.

44. The establishment in 2006 of the COTVET has been helpful in coordinating **Ghana's** currently fragmented skills development system. This is welcome because in Ghana there are real concerns about the politicization of training schemes, the neglect of the low cost public training providers ICCES and the proposed formalization of traditional apprenticeships. COTVET's function is to coordinate TVET provision across the formal, informal and non-formal arenas and to harmonize the skills strategies across multiple ministries. There remains however serious challenges to the successful functioning of COTVET; one of these is inter-ministerial cooperation. (King, Korboe, Palmer 2006: 1).

45. . In the East African region, it is only **Uganda** that has embarked on the development of a Vocational Qualifications Framework (UVQF) with the support of GTZ. **Kenya** and **Tanzania** do not yet have such a system. They only have *national examination bodies* responsible for setting exams and awarding of certificates in both the formal and informal sectors (Palmer 2007).

### The rationale and purposes of establishing qualification frameworks

## Box 2: Rationale for establishing qualification frameworks

**South Africa:** Facilitates access and progression into different education and training programs, adopts an integrated approach to education and training, addresses issues of social justice and redressing the effects of apartheid. (SAQA 2000; French 2005:54). With regard to post-apartheid South Africa, the increasing demand for post-primary education is pushing the government and stakeholders to improve the efficiency, performance and relevance of its education and training system. Democratizing and deracialising in terms of gross enrolment (Akoojee and McGrath 2005) is not enough. Net Enrolments Rates show the high levels of inefficiencies lurking behind gross statistics. Dropout and repetition rates continue to be high, and weaker students tend to be discouraged from sitting the matriculation exams. Whilst total passes have fluctuated, those qualifying for higher education have fallen (Akoojee and McGrath 2005; Perry and Arends 2003; Kraak 2003).

**Namibia:** Address injustices created by the previous racist regime (Swartland et al. 2005: 13-21). Avoid fragmentation and uncoordinated mechanisms of quality assurance, certification and standards.

**Mauritius.** Overcome deficiencies in the existing certification system. Improve coordination of the wide variety of public and private providers in varied fields and at different levels existing side by side, with varied duration and quality. Improve the relevance and meaning of the many certificates so that they give more information on learning achievement. Improve the number of qualifications and career routes. Increase Portability of qualifications and articulation of qualification improve access and permeability to groups denied entry into reputable institutions. Focus on the harmonization of school/institute-based and workplace-based vocational training. For this purpose, the Industry Training Advisory Committee was set up by the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) with the aim to ensure that the content of the training courses is relevant to the labor market and reflects the changing needs of the economy. The Mauritius government also aimed to articulate the vocational training in the institutions and industry, i.e. the workplace.

**Ethiopian.** The Ethiopian Ministry of Education will be establishing a comprehensive national qualifications framework. One aim is to make the full range of the relationships of qualifications within the Ethiopian education system transparent for learners and employers, so that the former know what they have to learn and the latter know what they can expect. A second aim is to enable flexibility, transferability and progression between different educational and occupational field and between learning venues and, in doing so, eliminate barriers that currently block horizontal and vertical pathways. The third aim is to establish and maintain a framework of levels for the development, recognition and award of qualifications based on standards of competence, comprising knowledge, skill and ability acquired by learners. A final aim is to create a single, nationally and internationally accepted entity, through which all learning achievements may be measured and related to each other in a coherent way, and which defines the relationship between all education and training awards (GTZ 2007).

Based on this framework, qualifications from each of the different educational streams are to be made comparable, thus creating the possibility for pathways between the different streams.

**Zimbabwe.** In 1999, the Qualification Framework was used in Zimbabwe as a tool to rationalize the Technical and Vocational Education System structured at five levels: operative, skilled operative, the artisan grade, skilled worker class 1, the technician, and equivalent to a general degree. Later it became possible for the polytechnics to upgrade TVET qualifications to graduate and postgraduate levels (ZQF 2004)

### Development of Standards

46. In **South Africa**, there are two sets of bodies responsible for the development of standards – National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs). There are twelve National Standard Bodies for each qualification field of the NQF. These twelve fields are formulated from a standard-setting point of view. NSB is not a standard generating body, but it plays a monitoring role for its field. Each field is subdivided by industry and job category and sub-fields are formed. Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) are created in each sub-field and are responsible for generating standards and for making recommendations to National Standards Bodies (NSBs) (ILO [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/hrdr/topic\\_n/t18\\_sa.htm#7](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/hrdr/topic_n/t18_sa.htm#7)).

47. The **Namibia** Qualification Authority takes the overall responsibility of defining standards in all sectors where education and training take place, and establishes policy and procedures for the evaluation and accreditation of qualifications in education and training and which establishes policy and procedures for accrediting providers of courses aimed at national standards. The development of standards is firmly the responsibility of industry and it is done so in consultation with designated National Standard Setting Bodies

(ILO [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/hrdr/topic\\_n/t18\\_nam.htm#7](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/skills/hrdr/topic_n/t18_nam.htm#7)).

#### **Financial strategy.**

48. In **Namibia** NQFs are also used as a way to broaden the funding base of the Vocational Education and Training through cost-sharing with all stakeholders, cost-recovery methods of training, cost effectiveness in training and combining income generation with training.

#### **Governance**

49. The Namibian Qualification Authority (NQA) is democratically governed by a Council of 37 members who appointed by and report to the Minister of Education, including representatives of almost all industry in the country, government, professional associations and the education and training sectors (Swartland et al. 2005: 13-21)

#### **Partial frameworks – building blocks**

50. The South African Qualifications Framework is a comprehensive framework, because it includes both academic and vocational types of qualification. It also includes all qualifications level such as university qualifications as well as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET). On the other hand, the **Namibian and the Zimbabwean** qualification frameworks are partial in scope because they deal mostly with vocational qualification, and do not include all levels yet. Furthermore, some NQFs have a predominantly industrial and vocational orientation, whereas others integrate education and training into a single comprehensive qualifications framework.

51. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in **Botswana** is in the process of developing. In Botswana, the development of a NQF is underway and draft legislation and some structures are already in place. In the area of vocational training, a framework is already operational under the leadership of the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA). The Vocational Training Act No 22 of 1998 established Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) and outlined the requirements of the Botswana National Vocational Qualifications Framework (BNVQF). The BNVQF is an integrated system of nationally recognized qualifications and nationally endorsed standards for the recognition of vocational skills, knowledge and competencies, which will eventually link to a broader National Qualifications Framework (BOTA <http://www.bota.org.bw/html/aboutBNVQ.shtml?page=2>).

52. **Uganda** is in the process of establishing a Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework. The programs and schemes towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning considered stepping-stones towards establishing national qualifications frameworks are: development of learning modules; occupational standards; competency based systems; competency standards; assessment standards and quality assurance schemes. These schemes aim to achieve direct access to a certificate or qualification, recognition at the vocational level for remaining in the current job or possibility of changing a job, and provision of equivalent certificates to re-enter the education system (Kerre and Hollander 2008).

53. The **Ethiopian** Ministry of Education is in the process of developing a National Qualification Framework. A first step towards achieving this has already been made with the design of the Ethiopian Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Qualification Framework, which is to be integrated into the comprehensive National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as stated in the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Strategy. This allows for horizontal, vertical and diagonal progression within Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (GTZ 2007)

54. The **Gambia** Skills Qualifications Framework (GSQF) is not a ‘full’ framework including both academic and vocational learning. It is a partial qualification framework, concerned with technical,

vocational and literacy skills. The GSQF promotes horizontal integration because it includes formal and informal learning of skills, post-school college or centre based and on-the-job learning, full-time and part-time learning. It includes provision for illiterate learners, apprentices (both formal and informal) with weak or even no formal educations.

55. **Gambia** has prepared a policy document prepared under the auspices of the National training authority with the guidance of European Union (EU) consultants. Support was got from the Standards Panels for hotels, motor mechanics, Electrical Installations, ICT users, Horticulture and Key Skills. The GSQF specifies that it has wide applicability including school leavers, adult learners, employed, self-employed and unemployed. The National Training Authority (NTA) Act 2002 gives the NTA the mandate to provide a system to regulate national vocational qualifications and coordinate the quality of delivery of TVET as well as TVET relevant to all occupations skills artisans, and to occupations classified in the unskilled category (GSQF 2006)

### **Weak and strong frameworks**

56. Another distinction is the one between strong and weak frameworks. A strong framework like the Southern African NQF is more demanding. Governments tend to want strong frameworks, because they have a greater potential for better coordination and accountability. On the other hand, strong frameworks are less likely to include a wide diversity of learning needs (Young 2007a: 7-8).

### **Benchmarking international models**

57. The Gambia Skills Qualifications Framework (GSQF) has drawn heavily from other African systems (Botswana, Ghana, South Africa, Senegal and Namibia), but it is benchmarked also with other international and in particular UK practices and the emerging European Qualifications Framework (GSQF 2006)

### **The scope of NQFs in Africa**

58. The national qualification frameworks aim to seamlessly unify qualification *levels* in schools, VET and the higher education sector, and also integrating the recognition of prior learning into the system. In **South Africa**, SAQA has adopted an eight-level framework, with levels 1 and 8 respectively being regarded as open-ended. Learning outcomes in the form of qualifications or unit standards are registered and against which their quality is assured (Atchoarena and Delluc 2002). In **Namibia**, the NQF consists of 10 levels. Further, there are seven qualification types, in hierarchical order: certificates, diplomas, bachelor degree, bachelor honors degree, master's degree, doctoral degree (Swartland et. al. 2005: 17). The **Ghana** National Qualifications framework consists of a single hierarchy of qualifications nationally recognized for employment and further education. These are: Levels 1 & 2 Proficiency assessment only; Level 3 is equal to a Certificate 1; Level 4 is Certificate 2; Level 5 is Diploma; Level 6 is equivalent to a Higher National Diploma; and Level 7 B.Tech..

59. In most African countries, national qualifications and related mechanisms are either missing or fledgling if present. Major causes of this problem include the lack of purposeful legal frameworks, lack of appropriate manpower to undertake such broad and encompassing responsibilities, lack of qualified technical personnel in respective occupational areas, and lack of financial support (Kerre and Hollander 2008).



## 6. CROSS-NATIONAL AND REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

60. One of the problems facing African countries is that pupils and students are studying in systems that have internal assessment only; no external or cross-national validation is available. In order to move vertically to proceed up the educational ladder, or horizontally to get employment, the students need a certificate that is valid anywhere; A method of establishing compatibility with other certificates is usually necessary. Immigrants and refugees, for example, who already have certificates need them to be recognised (Sesnan, 2008). Refugees may have prior studies which they would like to be assessed so they do not repeat years in school. Some sort of universal recognition is therefore needed.

61. But external validity is necessary not only in situations where refugees and immigrants are affected; in order to produce a workforce with comparable and competitive knowledge, skills and values, in a regional context (Valmonte and Park 2008), it necessary to have regional accreditation bodies who are able to harmonize and standardize qualifications cross-nationally. Cross-national and regional frameworks can serve as meta-framework for the recognition of qualifications and competencies across national borders.

62. One of the driving factors behind National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) is the aim to develop a regional qualifications framework (RQF) for the **South African Development Community (SADC) region**. In 2005, the SADC Integrated Council of Ministers decided, “the development and implementation of the SADCQF would proceed in tandem with the NQF development in SADC Member States.” (Samuels 2003; Swartland et al. 2005: 11). Outside of the SADC region, only a very few other African countries have taken steps towards National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs).

63. Reforms in qualifications and assessment are also a topic of discussion within the context of the **Indian Ocean Region**, consisting of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania, Qualification reforms are aiming towards reconciling general education with technical and vocational education, and thus bringing more parity of esteem among subjects. It is intended that each of the streams (general, technical and vocational) will contain the fundamentals of the other to enable the gap between them to be bridged (IIEP 2004).

64. **The European Union (EU)** has taken comprehensive steps to improve the mobility of labor between EU countries (Shah and Long 2007). The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) consists of a set of eighth reference levels spanning all education and training acquired at the end of compulsory education, including non-formal and informal learning. The framework helps to describe a person’s qualification in terms of learning outcomes regardless of where it was acquired. Shifting the focus to learning outcomes supports a better match between the needs of the labor market ( skills, knowledge and competences ) and education and training provisions (European Commission 2006).

65. The European Association for Education of Adults (EAEA) has set up common guiding principles on validation of non-formal and informal learning. The principles include making visible the full range of qualifications and competencies; respecting individual issues such as privacy; confidence and trust requires well-defined standards; impartiality and credibility and legitimacy (EAEA 2004).

66. One of the aims of the European Qualifications Frameworks is to improve the quality of vocational education and training. Young (2007c); argues that unless countries first learn from the experience of introducing national frameworks, a Europe-wide qualifications framework will be bogged down in jargon and will not be able to achieve its goals. The same would go for African experiments with the SADC qualification frameworks.

## 7. LIFELONG LEARNING: THE CONTEXT FOR NQFs AND RPL

67. The shift from mere education and training policies to integrated lifelong and life-wide learning policies has been a stimulus for the development of National Qualifications frameworks. The idea of lifelong learning rests upon integrating education and training not only vertically across sub-sectors, but also horizontally, across family, community, study, work, leisure, and life spaces.

68. It is not non-formal and informal learning which is beneficial per se, but its social recognition i.e. its use, acceptance and recognition in the personal, the educational, the occupational and public domains that gives non-formal and informal learning added value.

69. Many terms are used in the field of non-formal and informal learning. There are nationally agreed definitions emerging. Terms such as Recognition of Experiential Learning (Merle, 2005), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and sometimes Recognition of Informal Learning (Eraut et al., 2000; Eraut, 2004; Livingstone, 2005) are used interchangeably to emphasize the importance of validation, defined as the process of identifying, assessing and recognizing a wider range of skills and competencies which people develop through their lives in different contexts (Colardyn & Bjørnavåld 2004). What is at stake is what counts as valid knowledge and learning rather than the site of the knowledge production and learning alone.

70. Lifelong learning includes both experiential learning and recognition of prior learning. Experiential learning is learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential learning first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a short cut for Non-Formal Education and Informal prior learning (OECD 2007). **Informal Learning** (unstructured learning) results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured. Typically, it does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases, it is non-intentional (or 'incidental'/random) (European Commission 2001). **Non-formal learning** (structured learning that is not certified and recognized). While formal learning is usually understood as intentional learning that occurs within an organized and structured context (pre-school, primary and secondary school, technical colleges, university education, and in-company training) leading to qualification.

71. The aim of recognition of non-formal and informal learning is to make visible a person's knowledge, skills, values and behaviour and attitudes. "Competencies have to be made visible if they are to be fully integrated into such a broader strategy for knowledge reproduction and renewal." (Bjørnavåld 2000).

### Defining key competencies

72. National Qualification Frameworks are based on competencies or learning outcomes required, or expected outcomes. According to the definition of the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) of the most industrialised countries, competency can be defined as "the ability to successfully meet the complex demands in a particular context", which "implies the mobilization of knowledge, cognitive and practice skills, as well as social and behavioural components such as attitudes, emotions and values and motivations"(OECD 2005).

2. Key competencies can also be cast in terms of Sen's "capability" approach (1993), which is more useful in the developing countries context. Capabilities, include both states of being (well-being) and other, more complex capabilities like agency or the ability to decide and act within externally set constraints (Sen 1993).

73. Life *skills* is another important notion that has been gaining in importance since the Dakar goals on basic education for all. The United Nations Educational Framework for Action (UNESCO 2000:36) asks governments to ensure " that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes" within the first decade of the twenty-first century.

74. *Work-skills* is a neglected field and not adequately underscored in the international discussion on life skills. King (2007) maintains that work skills are different from life-skills. ‘While life skills refer to all kinds of capacities, from literacy and numeracy to behavioural skills or communication skills; Work skills need to pay attention to the different targets and contexts for skills’ (King 2007).

75. Outcome-oriented thinking in which generic skills are promoted is not a realistic one unless these skills are contextualized. Knowledge, skills and competencies, need to be contextualized in different learning environments (Young 2007a; Kurtz 2007)

### **Box 3: Key Competences in different learning environments**

*Within the context of Education and training, life skills in domains such as health, ecology, citizenship and peace could for example, be incorporated in the teaching of foreign languages at the secondary level (Kurtz 2007). Another example is the importance of generalized capabilities (key qualifications) that could be built into vocational skills.*

*At the organizational level: Basic competencies within the workplace include oral communication skills, collaborative skills (interpersonal relations, teamwork, and negotiation), communication skills, development skills and adaptability skills.*

*At the level of a branch or sector of the economy, it may be necessary to promote cross-sectoral skills in order to assure transferability skills, so that mobility could be fostered from the informal to the formal economy or from one branch to the other.*

*At the society and culture level, which may comprise household, community or voluntary work etc. recording and evaluating the social skills gained within one domain, such as family work, could be made use of in another domain, such as by companies (Sass and Sass, 2002).*

76. In Europe, Governments are placing a strong emphasis on promoting integrated lifelong learning strategies. In **Germany**, it is the responsibility of the federal states to integrate lifelong learning in education and training systems (*Bund-Länder-Kommission* BLK 2004). The **Norwegian** Ministry of Education has also introduced a clear strategy of lifelong learning through its *Competence Reforms* launched in 1999. The strategy addresses, (1) basic competencies at all levels; (2) validation of non-formal and informal learning; (3) promoting flexible learning methods and areas; (4) improved quality of and access to career guidance; (5) More emphasis on working life, non-formal education and voluntary sector, as a learning domain; (6) the updating of knowledge, competencies and skills necessary to improve competitiveness and increase flexibility in a changing working life (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research VOX 2002).

77. From the perspective of skills development, lifelong learning means that training becomes shorter, happens more frequently and its contents are more relevant, responding to the market demand. This implies that formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning coexist and are recognized; that dividing lines between general and vocational education become blurred and that National Qualifications Frameworks and open assessment become essential elements of national systems (Huber 2007).

78. Lifelong learning is not without its problematic aspects. According to Field (2006) the development of lifelong learning has continued to support the “haves” rather than the “have nots” and driven by market-led demands. For the developing countries, Mwiria (2007) says that given the paucity of resources, the unequal levels of achievement across regions, groups and gender, and the huge diversity of language/cultures, lifelong learning policies are unrealistic in the Third World context. However, despite some of these concerns, lifelong learning implies a broader concept of education and aims at bridging formal, non-formal and informal.

## 8. VALIDATION AND VALUATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

79. Two features of the National Qualifications Framework are particularly relevant to enhancing lifelong learning

- One is the *competency standards* for qualifications at different levels, which provide a clear and transparent reference for individuals who plan to start, or move to, different learning and career paths
- The second is education and training institutions that attempt to accredit individual's prior learning as part of the requirements for obtaining a qualification.

80. In the Memorandum of Lifelong Learning (European Commission 2000) particular interest in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is expressed, which shows the increasing political awareness of learning taking place outside of formal education and training institutions.

81. Lifelong learning includes both recognition of prior learning as well as recognition of experiential learning.

### 8.1 Definition of terms: Learning from International practice

82. The concept of RPL is understood differently in a range of contexts. The commitment to greater flexibility in the training model and in meeting client needs has meant that the concept of RPL has continued to evolve and change at the international level.

83. *The Valuation of Prior Learning (VPL):* The Leonardo Network developed the Valuation of Prior Learning Model (Duvekot et al. 2007). The aim is to make visible what has been learned and to create reflexivity in learning. The model uses assessment records for better access to the labour-market and the improvement of self-esteem, e.g. after long-term unemployment or family work. Assessment records are also used for access to formal learning procedures within the national vocational education and training sector.

84. *The CEDEFOP model of Identification and Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning:* CEDEFOP has developed the Common European Principles. They include purposes of validation, individual entitlements, responsibilities of institutions and stakeholders, confidence and trust, impartiality, credibility and legitimacy. In 2003 the CEDEFOP established the Virtual Community on the Identification and Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning. CEDEFOP has also produced the European Inventory on Validation of non-formal and informal learning in 2005 (CEDEFOP 2005).

85. *Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL):* Originating in the United States, it is the generic term used for the award of credit-based on demonstrated learning that has occurred at some time in the past. APL can be said to be an 'umbrella term' and includes APEL and APCL, which are explained below.

86. *Accreditation of Prior Experiential learning (APEL):* RPL for supporting transition, or for gaining credit, focuses on *summative* recognition (to gain entry to, or credit within, a formal programme of study). Summative recognition involves a formal assessment of prior learning as part of the credit rating process of that course of study. The main characteristic is that APEL always and necessarily assesses the *individual competences*. In the case of intersectoral credit transfer, the main question is to which extent the individual's competences are equivalent to the required learning outcomes, competences or standards in qualification of a specific course or study programme in higher education.

87. *Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL):* Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) can be described as process, through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered as appropriate, recognized for academic purposes. APCL is developed in two directions (A) the

accreditation of individual claims for certified learning and (B) the accreditation of certificated learning as a formal process of credit transfer.

## 8.2 Country examples

88. In **Scotland** RPL can be undertaken by learners for *personal and career development*; to support the transition between informal and formal learning; or for *gaining credit* (for entry to and/or credit within formal programmes of study). RPL for *personal/career development* focuses on *formative* recognition (supporting a continuing learning process through identifying a learning pathway). Formative recognition may result in a mapping, or a notional leveling, of an individual's learning within the context of the Scottish Qualifications Framework (SCQF) as part of an educational guidance or personal development planning process. RPL for supporting transition, or for *gaining credit*, focuses on *summative* recognition. Summative recognition involves a formal assessment of prior learning as part of the credit rating process of that course of study. This can only take place within the context of clearly defined quality assurance mechanisms and by SCQF credit rating bodies. (SCQF 2000).

89. RPL needs people to facilitate the process of assessment and accreditation. These are assessors and facilitators. The *advisor or facilitator* is the person who communicates to the learner the different options that can be offered to him/her, provides assistance to learners in presenting evidence in a coherent and systematic manner, and translates the discourse of candidate's everyday or work environment into the learning discourse. The *assessor* is a subject specialist, who is involved in the preparation of the candidates claim, decides whether the assessment will be through written work, practical or oral presentation, reviews whether the applicant wholly or partially meets the certification requirements, and finally is the one, who checks the evidence to ensure their relevance, sufficiency, authenticity, reliability within the context.

90. **Austria** does not have a comprehensive national qualifications framework, but is in the process of contributing to the development of one. It is doing this by collecting important approaches of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and developing a typology of examples. Three types of non-formal and informal learning have been identified: 1. Certificate equivalent to certificate of the formal education system, with summative assessment on a legal basis. These qualifications will entail problem-free integration into the Austrian NQF because of equivalence; 2. Certificate not equivalent to certificate of the formal education system. These kinds of certification have problems with terminated validity of certificates as also problem with inclusion of partial/additional qualifications into the NQF (Some examples of these certificates are language certificates, as well as certification of trainers in adult education; and awarding the profession title of *Ingenieur*; 3. Portfolios and individual skills assessment. These concentrate on formative assessment, project-based approaches. These certificates have problems with integration into NQFs (Examples of these would include the European Language Portfolio and the Competence Portfolio) (Schneeberger et al. 2007).

91. In **France**, new procedures for the accreditation of experiential learning (*Validation des acquis de l'expérience*) have been legislated. Professional experience is enlarged to include experience in non-paid activity or voluntary work; Minimum duration of work experience has been reduced from 5 to 3 years. The area of certification has been expanded to cover a wider range of diplomas and certificates; The jury makes a decision on a portfolio put together by the candidate, eventually followed by an interview (obligatory for a diploma related to higher learning), or, in some case based on real-life situations or simulated ones. If the jury does not give the full diploma, it draws up a statement about the nature of knowledge and skills, which could serve as a basis for a supplementary learning program followed by an examination (Labruyère 2003)

92. Strategies for the validation of experiential learning were integrated in the **Norwegian Competence Reforms**, launched in 1999, which formed the basis of a National system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The validation procedures are relevant to the *employment sector*, to the *third sector*, to *upper secondary* education and *higher education* (Mohn 2008).

93. **Sweden** has made it an obligation for all higher education institutions to assess prior and experiential learning of applicants who demand such an assessment and who lack the formal qualifications or the documentation of such qualifications. As early as 1998, 570, 000 adult education and higher education institutions use methods to assess adults life (Freitag 2006)

94. In 2002, the **German KMK** (Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the States - *Laender*) published a Resolution. “Learning Outcomes from prior learning can be accepted as equivalent up to 50% of the Higher Education Program. In Germany, there are 80 state-wide recognized Further Education certificates, and, Germany has a well-developed dual system of education training. The Ministry of education has also funded several projects in order to identify operational good practice with a focus on the implementation of accreditation of prior learning procedures, policies and infrastructure in Germany higher education sector. The focus will be on the development of APL, on credit transfer with articulation agreements and advanced standing (Freitag 2006).

95. On the African continent, South Africa, Mauritius and Namibia have piloted projects on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). In **South Africa**, non-traditional students and adults use RPL to gain access to high education, thus broadening the social base of universities. The University of the Western Cape’s (UWC) Portfolio Development Course is a non-formal education programme through which learners are assisted to present their informal and non-formal learning to gain access to the university’s formal programs (Osman 2004a and 2004b). In **Mauritius** RPL is linked to helping workers made redundant in the the sugar industry, to find work in the country’s fast expanding tourism industry. In order to develop a national approach to RPL and to validate and recognize experiential learning, the Mauritius Qualification Authority (MQA) has developed in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the UIL a policy that encompasses an institutional framework for validation of prior experiential learning. The RPL process requires facilitators, advisors and assessors (MQA 2007). In **Namibia**, RPL is being piloted by one of its renowned open and distance learning colleges, the Namibian College for Open Learning (NAMCOL), to facilitate access to its distance education certificate courses, and alternative courses in primary and secondary education. NAMCOL has developed a policy framework to provide guidelines for the use of RPL to enable learners to gain entry into programs or exemption from some program requirements offered by the College and to ensure that consistent practices and standards are applied: Candidates seeking assessment of prior learning for access into NAMCOL programmes must be at least 23 years of age with at least 5 years relevant working experience (NAMCOL 2007)

### 8.3 What is it that is recognized and assessed?

96. The **Australian** system of Recognition of Prior Learning includes previous study work experience (both work that is paid or unpaid); (3) Life experience (for example, leisure pursuits or voluntary work). In **France**, the law of 1992 and decree of 1993 extends the rights of every citizen in France to request validation of experience, including non-salaried family work and voluntary activities. (Labruyère (2003). A range of evidence is used to assess informal or non-formal learning. This may include forms of evidence such as an applicant’s employment history including records of workplace training, confirmation of relevant unpaid or volunteer experience, references from current or previous supervisors, trainers, managers, testimonials from customers or clients, and certification and work samples.

97. **Norway** has different assessment procedures within the ‘Competence Reform’ for different education levels and settings, from prior learning assessments of a an ad hoc kind in higher education, dialogue-based methods and assessment of portfolios in Upper Secondary Education, to “testing”, interview and demonstrations at the vocational level, and charting, documenting and self-assessment in non-formal education course (Mohn 2008).

98. Within the context of the European Union’s Leonardo da Vinci Model on the Valuation of Prior Learning (VPL) Duvekot et al. (2007) highlight the following assessment principles: continuing development of the individual; transparency of the process; utilization of all learning environments; accessibility; separation of the functions of training and assessment; and a good guidance during assessment; low-threshold provisions for upgrading the population in general; and law and regulation

## 9. INSTITUTIONAL AND STRUCTURAL DIMENSIONS

99. The general understanding of National Qualifications Frameworks is that it separates qualifications from educational institutions so that it can also accredit learning outcomes, including learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings. However, it would be unrealistic to focus on outcomes independently of the *institutional context*, involving teaching and learning processes and thematic content.

100. Young (2007b) points out that the focus on outcomes independently of their institutional and programmatic context must be treated with caution. He highlights two approaches to reforming systems of education and training. One is the *qualifications-led approach* to the reform of education and training. The other is the *institution-led approach* to reform, where qualifications are not treated as separate policy instruments. Young states that it is by no means clear that a qualifications-led approach is superior to the latter in promoting higher quality education and training (Young 2007b).

101. The view adopted in this paper is that both approaches are necessary and complement each other. An institution- and programme-based approach alone would be equally unrealistic as it would lead to greater fragmentation of learning.

102. The establishment of NQFs need to be accompanied by structural and institutional reforms in order to:

- increase flexible transitions between the different education and training sectors, as well as between non-formal and formal education and training;
- interlock general, political, cultural and vocational education and training to a greater degree;
- reinforce cooperation between education policy, employment policy, labour market and other fields in order to foster people's personality development and enhance their employability.
- Link qualifications to social effects or use, i.e. skills, knowledge and competences need to be transformed into development outcomes (personal, organisational, occupational, and social).
- Foster exchange and cooperation among the actors (educational institutions, partners of the world of life and work) which facilitate access to education, especially the disadvantaged; as well as foster services that promote lifelong learning.
- Include content compatible with local conditions should guide training providers who design curriculum according to learning outcomes stipulated at various levels of the NQF.

103. There are a diversity of learning initiatives for which recognition programmes have been designed.

### 9.1 School based work-oriented programmes.

104. School-based work-oriented programmes include “bridge programmes” that help *potential dropouts* to complete secondary school through structured work-based programmes such as internships and work experience. *Standards contained in school qualifications are* made more relevant by orienting criteria not only to the formal school criteria, but also to references drawn from work, culture and life experiences.

105. Work experience as part of the school curriculum has expanded in a number of **OECD countries**. These programs help at-risk youth to stay in school, provide services off-setting learning deficiencies, and enable pupils them to continue into further training or enter the labour market. Evidence shows that these programmes are certification and qualifications-bound (Adams 2007). In **Sweden**,

vocational studies involve unpaid internships in structured work placements occupying 15 per cent of the student's time. Recruiting employers to offer internships has proven challenging. In **Australia**, school-industry programs have been introduced to provide students with structured learning in a workplace during the senior year of secondary school. This learning is assessed and accredited as part of their schoolwork (Adams 2007). In **Germany**, under the *learning regions- Learning Network* works program (Thinesse-Demel 2007), there are several *accredited programmes*: that combine “Social and pedagogical remedial support” and work oriented programmes for pupils upper and junior secondary schools. Such as tele secondary schools that *operate within the normal education system*, though they constitute a relatively autonomous model (Pieck 2007).

106. Diversification of secondary school education offers *alternative pathways* to those pupils aspiring for preparing entry to the workforce. But often these programmes fail because very little is done to develop *coherent framework for assessment and certification of vocational competences* (IIEP 2004).

## 9.2 Complementary basic education programmes that are equivalent to formal education

107. Complementary Basic Education programmes offer primary school-aged children and youth the opportunity of *reintegration into the formal system* through participating successfully in non-formal education programmes. In order to cater to primary school-aged children and youth who are out of school, Tanzania initiated COBET (Complementary basic Education). COBET is built on primary school curriculum with some mediation. It provides learners with eligibility to sit for primary school leaving examinations and gain equivalency (Levira and Gange 2007). This programme is helping over 2.5 million school-aged children who did not have the opportunity to enroll in primary school for various reasons.

## 9.3 Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)

108. Similar non-formal programmes exist for adults. **South Africa** has incorporated Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) as a new learning context within the National qualifications Framework. In **Mexico**, outcomes of informal and non-formal learning of adults and young people can be equated with learning outcomes in the formal sub-system. In Portugal too, the Adult Education and Training (AET) model provides a new way of envisaging the learning construct, admitting, that informal and non-formal learning, developed in life contexts, should be taken into account when assessing peoples competencies and skills, as apposed to the traditional solve value of formal learning (Gomes et al. 2007). Thus not only do accreditation processes stimulate supplementary programs, but the **informal or non-formal route to qualification** make a **difference to the learning standard that is certified**. While the mode of validation is different, the result is the same.

109. In **Norway**, there has been a statutory law since August 2002, which states that, adults who need primary and lower secondary education have a statutory right to such education. This education must be adapted to the individual's needs and life situation, such as when and where the education is to be provided and the rate of progression. The municipal authorities are responsible for this education (Mohn 2008).

## 9.4 Further Education and training (FET)

110. Like ABET, Further Education and Training (FET), is a new institutional learning context, in which training is more oriented to standards taken from the world of work (McGrath and Akoojee 2007; Petersen 2007). In **South Africa** Further Education and Training (FET) takes place from grades 10 to 12, and includes work-oriented education and training offered in Further Education and Training institutions – technical colleges, community colleges and private colleges. Diplomas and certificates are qualifications recognized at this level. In South Africa, the main categories of FET are Learnerships and short courses through the Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and the National Skills Fund (NSF), all under the Department of Labour DoL's jurisdiction.



111. FET needs to be seen in the context of a new institutional framework for skills development, in which there is a high level of co-ordination at a national level (via the National Skills Authority NSA) and at a sectoral level (via the 25 Sector Education and Training Authorities - SETA) (Kraak 2004). Incorporating Senior Secondary schools in the FET system is an important institutional development. The 50 large institutional units grounded in FET system (DoE 1999) envisaged better collaboration and articulation with higher education, stress on partnerships with government and the private sector, greater focus on access for learners with special needs, mixture of specialization and multi-purpose institutions (DoE 2001:16-20 in Akoojee and McGrath 2005). Akoojee and McGrath(2005) point out that the policy recommendations, however, remain only partially acted upon.

112. Learnerships are a contractual agreement of a fixed period between the learner, the provider and the employer in realising a qualification. Beyond the formality of the agreement, this relationship requires high levels of co-operation to between the three parties. There is also a strong commitment to learnerships for pre- or un-employed. In this model, *the employer commits to a period of employment during the time span of the learnership, but not to subsequent employment* (Akoojee and McGrath 2005).

113. In addition to establishing the legal framework for learnerships, the Skills Development Act also makes provision for the development of Skills programmes, which would comprise an occupationally-directed learning program that leads to a *credit towards a partial qualification* rather than a full qualification. The purpose of the skills programmes is to allow learners access to short programs that could be combined towards a qualification, thus allowing more flexibility and mobility.

## 9.5 TVET

114. One of the strengths of national qualifications frameworks is that it has the capacity to supply graduates with courses that are in demand in the economy and industry. National qualifications frameworks are effective in institutional environments with strong links to industry. As part of their attempts to reform TVET African countries are including work-based and enterprise-based training and flexible training programmes as part of their attempt to make TVET institutions more relevant to the labour market, as well as with a view to making training more flexible to respond to learner's training needs. This can be seen in a variety of learning contexts, which are usually categorized in the following way (King and Palmer 2007)

- *School-based* Vocational Education (like diversified secondary ; The qualifications emphasise both vocational as well as academic learning.)
- Publicly provided vocational training *centres* and industrial training *institutes*
- *Second-Chance* - Non-Formal public/private/NGO pre-employment vocational training – for young people who drop out without qualification

115. One of the problems of publicly-provided vocational training centers and industrial training Institutes in African countries is that they have weak institutional links to industry. However, African countries, like other developing countries, can learn from flexible ways of training that are being adopted in other contexts. Vocational Training Centres and Industrial Training Institutes in Latin American countries, for example, are relatively independent of government, close to industry; and have maintained good quality provision. They provide qualifications that are recognized by industry and commerce. These are increasingly being *incorporated into wider occupational standards*, and can be competency-based and demand driven. They are effective in many countries precisely because they are not seen as a substitute for general secondary education. In Latin America, the *flexible ways of training implies implementation of courses and projects by subcontracting public and private agencies to offer various types of training*. In such a situation, the State plays a role on the supply side by organizing social policies (with regard to institutions, human resources, equipment and infrastructure) with regard to adopting mechanisms – both “open-market” and subsidized programs depending the situation of the target groups (Jacinto 2007).

116. Publicly provided formal industrial training centres are not the sole option for youth in African countries. A different kind of training – flexible, short-term, oriented to job-opportunities, is usually

provided to youth who, for example, have *been unsuccessful in making the transition from junior to senior secondary school and are who are currently unemployed*. In **Ghana**, the Integrated Community Centres for Employable Skills (ICCES), offer students a three-year vocational course in traditional trades such as carpentry, masonry, dressmaking and hairdressing and leads to a *National Vocational Training Institute trade certificate*. Other short-term short-duration courses are the Skills Training and Employment Placement programme (STEP) which has been renamed to Skills Training and Entrepreneurship Program (Palmer 2005), as many trained were compelled to start their own businesses because of the lack of job opportunities.

While NGOs provide programmes that have shown to have more positive outcomes for the trainees in the labour market; often these programmes are not accredited and do not lead to certification, nor integration to the formal qualifications system.

## 9.6 Workforce development programmes

117. Workforce development programmes. These are of several kinds.

118. Some are for low qualified workers in trade and industry, particularly workers entering the labour market without completing the 10h class and thus not being eligible to take up further formal education or skills training. (The Netherland's Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2007).

119. Other are concerned with developing new qualifications in upcoming sectors. **Germany** is a good example of doing this in the IT sector. Thirty-five qualification programs on three different qualification levels (IT specialist, operational profession, and strategic professional) were developed (Meyer 2007). Some innovative elements of this system: (1) The transparency of the IT sector and the resulting certificates make qualifications comparable; (2) A basis for improving human resource development in companies and on the IT labour market; (3) Creation of career paths; (4) Connection to other European and international education systems is guaranteed by a credit-point scheme that reflects vocational skills and even serves as an entry to higher education, leading to bachelor and masters degrees. Qualifications are being developed for company personnel as well as learning process advisors and professional counselors. *Qualifications* are also being broadened to emphasize coaching and advisory skills. Even at the institution level, educational institutions and companies, especially small-and medium-sized enterprises need to confront the didactic approach and curriculum of workflow-oriented learning as providers of advanced training measures. This example is interesting one for developing countries, such as countries in Africa.

120. Such examples have great relevance for developing countries, such as countries from Africa. The comparative advantages enjoyed by developing countries like countries in the Africa, due to comparatively low labour costs is seriously threatened by globalization. The relevance of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies to workers will depend on new skills and continuing vocational education, as well as on developing new qualification requirements closely related to the demand in a particular sector.

121. Workforce development programmes also include programmes that *recognize and certify previously acquired skills in the informal economy*, leading to further training, entry to a better job, or transition to the formal economy. While this area has not got the attention it deserves, the big challenge here is developing mechanisms of documentation and prior learning assessments of competencies, as well as developing skills accreditation strategies that *recognize and accredit the multiplicity of education and training paths*.

122. Many African governments such as **Ghana** are attempting to formalize traditional apprenticeship by linking this mode of skills development to a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). However, as Palmer (2007a) points out, the potential benefits of formalisation are often dependent on a range of additional inputs, such as modern technologies, creation of dynamic industrial environments, promotion of linkages with the formal training system as well as the improvement of both training and working conditions and increasing portability of skills (King and Palmer 2007)

## 9.7 Higher Education

123. One of the problems in African countries, like in most developing countries, is that students are assigned to either the general education tract or the vocational education tract. Because of lack of qualifications frameworks, transferring from TVET to Higher education or vice versa is possible only to a very limited extent. The organizational structure in the Ministry of Education (MoE) is also rather problematic. In **Ethiopia**, for example, the MoE is divided into three sectors: general education, higher education and TVET. Interaction between these three sectors within MoE is not yet systematic or regular. Mutual recognition of qualifications is sporadic (GTZ 2007).

124. Another problem is the narrow social base of higher education. In Sub-Saharan Africa, like in most developing countries, the enrolment rates are lower than 5 per cent. Regarding access to quality higher education, it is now agreed that there is need to ensure enrolment rates of 40 to 50 per cent of the relevant population group in order to enable a country to perform effectively in a competitive world (UNESCO 2006). Several developed countries have already achieved this percentage.

125. Adults face even grater difficulties in entering higher education. Even where there is a demand for getting formal qualifications at the higher education level, admission to higher education is still an obstacle for adults with prior learning but not sufficient formal education.

126. Below are some *institutional* challenges that national *qualification* and recognition systems would have to address in order to combat the issues of equity, quality, relevance and financing facing higher education in African countries.

- *Credit transfer* programmes: These programmes create pathways between Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education. In Germany, for example, master craftspeople, technicians, business and health care managers get formal access to higher education institutions (Universities of Applied Science or *Fachhochschule*) and the university laws in federal states allow for access examinations.
- *Recognition Prior Learning*: RPL programmes aim to broaden the social base in Higher Education by allowing access to non-traditional students and adults, as well as to address issues of gender and regional disparities. RPL in tertiary institutions is usually implemented by offering exemption or advanced placing through some kind of official recognition of non-formal and informal learning. In South Africa RPL at a policy level is driven by moral and political imperatives to broaden the participation in higher education of adults who were excluded from it and disadvantaged by apartheid and on the other by economic imperatives to enable adults to compete in the global economy (Osman 2004b). SAQA has developed two documents to guide and facilitate the systemic implementation of RPL (SAQA, October 2001). In Norway, the 2001 amendment of the Act allows adults above 25 years to have their non-formal and informal learning assessed in order to gain admission to a specific study program. In higher education, the individual university or University College assesses applications for admission based on non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The procedure is free for the individual applicant. (Mohn 2008).
- *Work-based learning (WBL)*: WBL is understood as learning outcomes achieved which form the context of work or the workplace. It entails developing partnerships with employers, maximizing knowledge creation; learning how people learn in work-based contexts; developing work-based learning pedagogy; and understanding the potentials for WBL in academic courses (Freitag 2006). *Work-based learning* is a way to address issues of relevance and the mismatch between skills acquired by university graduates and those demanded by the industry. Work-based learning has great potential in dealing with the problems that currently exist in the workforce in African countries, where more than 3/4ths of the existing work force do not meet the demands of the existing economy and society.
- *Preparatory studies and access courses*. **Sweden** are trying to strengthen support system for non-traditional students into higher education. Sweden for example has implemented (1) preparatory

studies aimed at applicants who lack specific qualification for a given program, (2) a college year as a bridge between adult education and upper secondary education and higher education; (3) part time courses, evening courses, new courses. These courses match the demands of students with varying backgrounds better. These institutional /structural dimensions are very important and have an impact on the number of claims for RPL. At the same time these alternative routes such as bridges, preparatory studies and access courses are perceived as competitive routes to the recognition of prior learning.

- *New modules and certified courses for in-service teacher training and adult educators.* If reforms in assessment and competencies need to be introduced then it is necessary to upgrade the professional level of teachers. Wedgewood (2007) has shown that a major limiting factor on the quality of primary education has been the narrow post-primary education system. The low number of secondary leavers with good grades has meant that those enterprising teachers have a very low level of competence in their subject areas, in order to establish a good foundation on which to build quality universal primary education (UPE).

## 10. CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

127. The current section will highlight challenges and prospects in relation lifelong learning, NQFs, RPL and institutional and structural dimensions.

### 10.1 Attaching a new meaning to lifelong learning

128. Validation processes are crucial to enhancing lifelong learning. The question of *what it is that should be validated, what learning should be recognized, for whom and by who and for what purpose should be made crucial to the lifelong learning policies.*

129. While lifelong learning is gradually becoming a guiding principle in the education policies of several countries, more attention should be given to informal types of education so that people can reflect experience and be able to make wise choices in life. In lifelong learning it is critical to recognize the crucial role of life wide learning.

### 10.2 National qualifications framework

130. *NQFs need to be perceived as “enabling” rather than prescriptive framework:* Standards need to be set in a ways that bring them closer to the realities of existing practice with more attention being paid to developing people’s capacity to meet higher standards, rather than to adhering to the paper standards themselves. Centrally imposed standards frameworks and performance targets should be advocated to provide a common sense of direction and yardstick for accountability.

131. *Recognizing problems in introducing NQFs:* Governments and stakeholders must recognize problems in introducing NQFs. (1) Political problems, such as interdepartmental tensions and lack of clear division of responsibilities. (2) Administrative problems such as the proliferation of new agencies and committees concerned with quality assurance, standard setting and assessment. (3) Educational problems such as checking comparability of assessor judgments, or converting outcomes into teaching programs; getting used to a completely new language of standards, units and levels (Young 2007).

132. *Ensure that NQFs are tackling the problem of exclusion:* Exclusion has to be tackled not through qualifications-led reforms alone, but most importantly through availability and affordability of education, training and skills development programmess. This implies the need to lower entry requirements and access barriers and to define *multiple exit and re-entry points* from and into skills development as well as to develop special facilities responding to difficult personal conditions.

133. *Developing an incremental approach: Building blocks in the development of national qualifications framework:* National qualifications framework should be built incrementally. In the process of developing national qualifications framework, three important building blocks have been identified in the Sub-Saharan context: (1) Competency based approaches; (2) occupational standards; (3) and modular courses (Kerre and Hollander 2007).

134. *Bottom up approaches:* Many countries, such as Austria, that are in the process of developing comprehensive national qualifications frameworks are relying on bottom-up approaches, by collecting important approaches of recognition of non-formal and informal learning, and developing a typology of examples. (Schneeberger et al. 2007).

135. *There should be a better balance between qualification development and standards development:* Standards cannot be oriented according to formal school criteria alone. Standards should be oriented to criteria and references drawn from work, culture and society. But standards are not a substitute for learner-oriented educational work; they must try to help to extend participants’ possibilities of success.

136. *Certificates should be valued for their relevance and quality of learning:* In many developing countries adult learners do not question the relevance and quality of what is being taught in adult education centres. In Kenya, for example, often the main concern is the value of the certificates that they receive at the end of the adult education course. Learners do not question the fact that they do not achieve a level of functional literacy (Westman, 2005).

137. *NQFs with specified specific outcomes, assessment criteria and performance indicators, should not hinder imagination and creativity:* Johnson (2007) expresses the same concern. He argues that we should be thinking less about qualifications than about the recognition of dispositions that already exist, and that these dispositions and competencies should be harnessed by creating new learning contexts and new curriculum learning areas integrated into the educational and qualification systems. Kurtz argues that an overemphasis on outcome-oriented thinking, and the pressure to produce measurable results, is leading to a neglect of culturally sensitive issues and growing fragmentation of learning (Kurtz 2007: 14).

138. Collier (1988) has suggested that assessment should provide opportunities for students to engage with their inner motives and real values, through an authentic understanding developed through 'existential' responses to issues. He argues that reflecting upon inner intentions and motives can only take place in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect because such an approach suggests the agency of the learner: movement towards autonomy; development and growth; and the active search for meaning as an intrinsic motivation (Harris 2000, p.4). This puts higher priority on recognition and accreditation of learning that takes place outside the formal system. The values associated with these concepts are more nuanced and express the essence of paideia. They are denied through the hegemony of the formal system where distinctions are made between teacher-student, liberal and vocation, and knowledge and opinion (Allen & Axiotis, 2002, p. 40–41).

139. *Teachers should be drawn into the debates about NQFs:* The introduction of standards, curricula, learning materials and tests for learners should not happen without first raising the expertise of teachers, who are often called upon to undertake the assessment activities (Nelson, 2005). The complexity of the competence-based approach will require teachers to develop new competencies in the field of evaluation, calling for adjustments in the pre-service and in-service-training programs. The emphasis on "competencies" will raise questions from teachers and parents, who may not see how learning objectives are attained through this new approach. In addition, schools may be perceived as serving the needs of industry and the work market instead of preparing students for higher studies and education for citizenship.

### 10.3 Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning

140. *Increase professionalisation of Identification, Documentation and Recognition of Non-formal and Informal learning and Experience:* It is necessary to professionalize the identification, documentation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning and experience. For example, the portfolio is an important tool, which is available to the facilitator or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning or APEL-advisor. There is need for the facilitator to have knowledge on how learning outcome description relate to the step to identify equivalences. Process models need to become mores sophisticated, such as documentary proof, information, guidance and counseling, and quality assurance. Guidelines for quality assurance are being developed through stakeholder consensus and through regional consultations (Konrad and Duvekot 2007) . Similarly, diagnostic tests are important to enable the learners to know their own standards and placing them accurately on the educational and training ladder.

141. Recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning is an approach that has the ability to have an effect on learning and enhance pedagogical practice in education; it is challenging way to renew continuing and lifelong learning.

142. *From assessment to accreditation:* Lifelong learning entails both experiential and prior learning. But despite this double emphasis there is very little strengthening of structured credit transfer or formalized qualification linkages between vocational education and training and higher education. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and particularly work-based learning are key for knowledge transfer between world of work and the world of education (Freitag 2006)

143. In African countries , assessment takes place at such an informal level that it is almost impossible to monitor it. It is necessary therefore to shift from assessment to accreditation and try to make certification compatible and comparable with those in the formal system.

144. *Costs of RPL must not be overlooked:* Most of the benefits of RPL are making skills visible. There are costs for the individual and for the system, in terms and information and guidance, assessors, facilitator's auditors and awarding bodies.

145. *Ways need to be found of recognizing and updating the skills acquired in the informal economy:* The challenges in the domain of the informal economy are many. Mechanisms are needed to document more effectively, what skills and competencies are actually being learned in the informal economy. Strategies need to be developed for facilitating the transition of workers with skills relevant to the knowledge economy into the formal economy through prior learning assessments.

146. *Right to quality certification for all:* All children, young people and adults have the right to a record of what they have learned or prior learning and results obtained. The right of access to examination or assessment processes which are validated by relevant authority or educational institutions is necessary in order to continue, resume and complete schooling as well as attain access to further learning opportunities and employment opportunities.

147. *Better balance between qualification development and standards development:* Standards cannot be oriented according to formal school criteria. Standards should be oriented to criteria and references drawn from work, culture and society..

#### **10.4 Institutional and structural dimensions**

148. *Outcome based approaches need to be balanced by teaching and learning processes, provision and input:* The focus on outcomes independently of their institutional context cannot produce efficient reforms of education and training systems. Input and provision are crucial elements for training providers in African countries. Many have very small budgets, out of date instructors and antiquated equipment.

149. *Recognizing different target groups:* It is necessary to recognize that assessment and certification affects several groups each in their own way : (1) those who are catching up (Youth out-of-school; adults), but need different kinds of skills and post-basic complementary education programmes than those progressing through the system on time; (2) those who need to complete the end of primary or secondary in order to proceed up the educational ladder, (to certify the end of primary and secondary; (3) those who need certificates and supplementary programmes in subjects or through foreign languages (Swedish for immigrants); (4) adults who are learning through self-study, studying by correspondence or distance; health workers, temporary teachers, volunteer teachers, teachers upgrading courses conducted by NGOs, teachers trained on the job.

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