Triennale on Education and Training in Africa
(Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, February 12-17, 2012)

Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa: How to design and implement an effective response by education and training systems

Sub-theme 1
Common core skills for lifelong learning and sustainable development in Africa

Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, and NQFs: critical levers for lifelong learning and sustainable skills development
Comparative analysis of six African countries

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Working Document

DOC 1.3.04

• Original Version in English •

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
AU	African Union
BOTA	Botswana Training Authority
CBMT	Competency Based Modular Training
CCFO	Critical Cross-field Outcomes
CEDEFOP	Council of Europe's European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CoL	Commonwealth of Learning
CONFINTEA	International Conference on Adult Education
COTVET	Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ETSIP	Education and Training Sector Improvement Plan
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
ICT	Information, Communication & Technology
IT	Information Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MQA	Mauritius Qualifications Authority
NGO	Non Government Organization
NQA	Namibian Qualifications Authority
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NTA	Namibian Training Authority
NTVETQC	National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Committee
NVQF	National Vocational Qualifications Framework

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFL	Open and Flexible Learning
QC	Quality Council
RNPE	Revised National policy on Education
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCQF	Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
TCCA	Technical Committee for Certification and Accreditation
TQF	Transnational Qualifications Framework
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VUSSC	Virtual University of the Small States of the Commonwealth

1. ABSTRACT

1.   Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is in line with UNESCO's vision already expressed in Learning to Be (Faure et al. 1972). These educational challenges foreseen by UNESCO many decades ago are not very different from the challenges to the learning system that we are confronted with; one might even state that the urgency of addressing them is rapidly becoming of greater importance. This development is based on the reality that formal education is not equipped well enough anymore to fulfill the growth in expectations and learning needs of individuals and communities in the rapidly changing global society. Furthermore, there is a growing demand by adults and young people for validation and formal awards for the knowledge, skills and competencies they have acquired in non-formal and informal learning environments, to better equip them to have decent work. Recognition, validation, and accreditation of prior learning through non-formal and informal learning pathways is viewed as an integral part of the broader theme of lifelong learning, and of the lifelong learning cycle. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning has relevance 'not only in regard to education and training policies but also to related challenges of poverty-reduction, job-creation, employment and social inclusion' (CEDEFOP: 2008).This paper will focus on four discreet but integrated aspects of the broader education and training system, within the broader context of sustainable development in Africa. It examines generic understandings of validation, recognition and accrediting non-formal and informal learning, the facilitating role that NQFs can and are playing in recognition, the analysis and conclusions from case studies from six African countries, and it concludes with suggestions about how validation and recognition policies and practices of non-formal and informal learning can be key building blocks towards lifelong learning and sustainable skills development in Africa.

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2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1. Introduction

2.   This report has been prepared for the ADEA Triennial to be held in Burkina Faso in 2012 and is based on a comparative analysis of information from six African countries about their approaches, processes and praxis of the recognition and validation of knowledge, skills and competences from all learning settings, with a special focus on non-formal and informal learning. The paper also examines whether NQFs have a facilitating role in activities related to recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, and in the broader context of sustainable development.

3.   The research design is primarily qualitative, and comprised a data collection and desktop review from a variety of sources. A key source of data, which forms the basis of this paper, is from an analysis of the information provided by the six African countries in response to questions. Qualitative considerations are based on a literature review of recognition and validation practices in the international discourse about these issues. The facilitation role of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) is also considered through the same methodology.

4.   The purpose of the study is to establish whether NQFs can facilitate *Recognition and validation* practices within the broader context of sustainable development in Africa. The study draws on the country reports of Botswana, Ghana, Mauritius, Namibia, the Seychelles and South Africa, which respond to eight qualitative questions about their quality assurance and NQF practices, and their recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning practices. The context is the labour market drivers and socio-economic sustainable development agendas.

2.2. The Conceptual Framework

5.   Generic and broad definitions of recognition and validation, non-formal and informal learning are considered. What becomes apparent is that there is no generally accepted definition for any of these concepts. There is debate about whether these concepts - formal, non-formal and informal - are encountered entirely without some measure of crossover influence from each other.

6.   The discourse is raised to the level of considering the usefulness, efficacy and support for what these concepts mean in terms of the six countries' growth, skills development plans and eventually sustainable development ideals.

7.   With regard to the facilitating role of NQFs, the paper examines the definitions of what a NQF is. In the African context, the reason for introducing NQFs is their potential for international and regional cooperation and labour mobility across national borders that rest on the similarities between jobs and skill sets required in different countries, and defined in qualifications registered on national frameworks.

2.3. Synthesis of country reports

8.   All the countries are *ad idem* that recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is important to advance the social and economic growth with concomitant political stability in their countries and on the continent. The six countries in this study have further imperatives for non-formal and informal learning, being access, equity and redress goals in

their countries, to increase the number of people across age groups, and racial and gender divides who are 'eligible' to get decent work.

9.   Each of the six countries either has or is embarking on the development of a NQF. South Africa, and Namibia have the longest established NQFs, while Mauritius and the Seychelles have more recent, yet established and well functioning NQFs. Botswana has embarked on the development of the Botswana NQF and the policy development, strategy and road map for submission for legislation and implementation is nearing completion. Ghana has a well established quality assurance system for technical and vocational education, and is considering the development of a NQF. The reasons for developing or strengthening current NQFs are, *inter alia*, due to the broader enabling mechanisms provided to the education and training fraternities in the countries, to implement key skills development and other educational goals for social, and economic development.

2.4. Key findings from country reports

The following key findings follow from the analysis of the country reports:

10.   Findings show that policy reforms are being driven by lifelong learning strategies that include NQFs and recognition developments, but coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies and practices covering the full life-course are still not the norm, with some still focusing on specific sectors (Ghana) or groups. Implementing lifelong learning through formal, non-formal and informal learning, and increasing mobility remain a challenge.

11.   The development of national qualifications frameworks and systems (NQFs) provide an opportunity for redesigning systems, and place qualifications achieved through assessment of non-formal education and training, including the recognition of learning outcomes, in a common qualification structure, on par with qualifications acquired through formal learning programmes and delivery modes.

12.   NQFs encourage the use of other common tools, like key competences, learning outcome approaches, quality assurance systems, credit transfer systems, et cetera, as well as stimulating intensive dialogue and consensus building between national stakeholders. Reforms in TVET associated with continuing training for work purposes are important features of countries' NQF developments.

13.   Several countries highlighted efforts to reform their education and training systems from supply- to demand-driven, involving the specifications of sets of skills and competences, and building of these into competency and qualifications frameworks. Impact assessment of reform initiatives should be carried out so that there is a strong evidence base, and exchanges are based on practices, the quality of which has been proved and evaluated.

14.   Nearly all countries place an emphasis on policies and systems to improve the quality of providers and efficiency of formal, non-formal and informal provision. In a number of countries, good practice in accrediting and assuring quality of providers has been identified. Further research is required on standards and quality criteria for providers. Quality assurance in higher education is a theme that has been highlighted in the context of provision.

15.   NQFs and *recognition* increase the possibilities for adults and young people to achieve qualifications at least on a level higher. They are instruments to support the continued development of basic skills and new skills so important for sustainable and inclusive growth. A number of countries, taking the current situation as a starting point and differentiating target groups, are enabling up-skilling through the progression to a minimum NQF level (equivalent to let's say lower secondary or secondary etc.). The study recommends that countries need to identify the low skilled and early school leavers most in need of qualifications.

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16.   The formal education system on its own does not produce all the knowledgeable and skilled people required by the African economy. Outside of those who have acquired qualifications through the formal route, there are significant numbers of people, both young and old, who have relevant skills, knowledge and competence acquired outside of the formal learning system. *NQFs* play a facilitating role to make recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning both visible and valued, through the common elements of NQFs comprising the outcomes-based approach, levels, level descriptors and a means of calculating credit values to learning such as notional hours or credit hours.

17.   Workplaces, communities, apprenticeships, internships, family environments can all provide the type of knowledge, skills and competences that the global economy requires, and that are valuable for citizenry, social and cultural participation and growth. Sustainable development in education practices includes the ability to acknowledge alternative methods of valuing and recognizing different forms of knowledge.

18.   While literacy and numeracy provide a foundation for new skills for jobs, developing new skills in modern African society merits significant attention in all the countries studied. Countries in Africa should set up projects and networks as well as guidelines for policy makers and practitioners that could contribute to the development of effective policy and practice in basic skills and new skills provision in the countries.

19.   When countries develop recognition systems, they should make explicit some principles, as well as methodologies for assessment and procedures for validation on which the system rests.

2.5. Sustainable development

20.   There are large numbers of the adult populations of the six African countries who have skills, knowledge and competence, built up through non-formal and informal means. But, because of issues such as gender bias, cultural dynamics, rural living environments, they have not been mainstreamed into the formal learning and labour market environments. Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning through credible assessment processes can assist such marginalized groups to gain access into formal education and training, and the labour market. Through such assessments, the pool of skills and talent of the labour force of a country can grow positively and enhance the sustainability of the labour market.

21.   Lotz-Sisitka writes about education for sustainable development and retention (ESD), where ESD is more than access to a learning environment. It includes examining issues such as access to learning which incorporates inclusivity, social justice and sustainability. (Lotz-Sisitka 2010: 219).

22.   Sustainable development in the education and training space has to move beyond the current discourse that focuses on the curriculum, the knowledge acquired by students, and the examinations students write. There is a need to develop a deeper and broader understanding of retention and access issues and how and why exclusions are constructed. de Haan refers to ESD-related competencies which focus on outputs rather than inputs which is where traditional and conventional syllabi and didactic approaches focus. The ESD approach asks what should be learnt. In this context according to de Haan, ESD specifically involves a number of sub-competencies subsumed under the term *Gestaltungskompetenz*. This means

>   the specific competence to act and solve problems. Those who possess this competence can help, through active participation, to modify and shape the future of society, and to guide its social, economic, technological and ecological changes along the lines of sustainable development (2010:320).

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3. INTRODUCTION

24.   Africa is a continent of paradoxes and opportunities. Addressing these contradictions, speakers at the May 2011 meeting of the World Economic Forum in Cape Town highlighted the importance of finding solutions to ensure sustainable skills development in Africa. They spoke about the fact that on the one hand African economies have made important strides in improving their economic environments – showing high levels of growth over the past ten years, but some key fissures remain that need to be corrected. One of the fissures they highlighted is the mismatch between the output of the education and training systems and the skills needed in Africa. Formal education is not equipped well enough anymore to fulfill the growth in expectations and learning and skills development needs of individuals and communities in the rapidly changing global society. There is a growing demand by adults and young people for recognition, validation and formal awards for the knowledge, skills and competencies they have acquired in non-formal and informal learning environments, to better equip them to have decent work.

25.   Recognition and validation of prior learning achieved through non-formal and informal learning pathways is viewed as an integral part of the broader theme of lifelong learning, and of sustainable skills development.Results from previous research activities and international exchanges (Singh and Duvekot, forthcoming 2011; CEDEFOP 2008) have shown that recognition and validation practices could be: (1) an important part of overall lifelong learning strategies; (2) integral to reforms of qualifications frameworks and certification systems; and (3) of increasing relevance to human resource management in enterprises and public organizations. 'The recognition of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning has relevance not only in regard to education and training policies but also to related challenges of poverty-reduction, job-creation, employment and social inclusion' (CEDEFOP:2008)

3.1. Purpose of the study

26.   The writers want to know whether recognizing and validating non-formal and informal learning would make a substantive difference to lifelong learning opportunities, sustainable development and decent work for all. It is also important to know whether a NQF potentially provided a critical lever through which such recognition and validation could happen. To come to an understanding and be in a position to make informed recommendations we used a comparative study of 6 African countries. By comparing current systems, practices, mechanisms, processes and linkages with quality reference points, including core-curricular frameworks in the six countries, the study aims to provide *Recommendations* to policy makers and practitioners to incorporate recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning into their overall national lifelong learning strategies and skills development frameworks.

27.   The conceptual framework used to examine these issues is based on several assumptions. F*irst* the notion of recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) and NQFs are viewed as an integral part of the broader theme of lifelong learning and sustainable skills development. The assumption is that a transition to a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society is possible only by promoting education from the perspective of lifelong learning engaging all spaces of learning. Societies need to develop approaches that encompass the notion of human capabilities and social dimensions of learning. Recognition respects diversity and it validates the existence of many different kinds of knowledges and fills gaps with which the formal education system is less equipped to deal. Wasting the skills and abilities of the people of Africa is not a sustainable practice and represents a paradox in countries where there are skills shortages. Ignoring or undervaluing learning achievements — informal, non formal or formal

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— represents a barrier to lifelong learning where the knowledge economy is rapidly changing (UIL Singh 2011).

28.   *Second,* the facilitating role of NQFs is examined in the light of the central question on how can competences and knowledge developed in a disparate range of learning contexts be valued equally?   Literature from developers of regional qualifications frameworks and reports from influential international organizations such as UNESCO, the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL), and CEDEFOP, point to the usefulness of NQFs as codification and referencing systems. These in turn provide a framework for comparability and/or equivalence of learning outcomes, levels and types of qualifications, and descriptions of the knowledge, skills and competence assigned to a qualification level, to facilitate learner mobility and access. The arguments presented are both plausible as well as instructional to position NQFs in a positive light within the context of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, and the broader context of sustainable development. Sound and documented examples emanating from the six countries in the study can be effectively utilized to reach conclusions to better understand how recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning through the mechanism of a NQF can be implemented.

29.   *Third*, the role of education in sustainable skills development in Africa is examined through considering broader contexts of what sustainable development means, especially in the African context, and what needs to be done through the education and training systems available to us, to assist in implementing this strategic imperative for Africa. There is reference to very current information about Africa, with its emerging middle class and potential to grow markets exponentially, but its lack of sufficient engagement with the opportunities presented. The paper then situates each of the six countries' responses to a set of questions within these broader conceptual framework themes, in a brief synthesis of common trends and threads through the responses, before it concludes with suggestions about how recognition and validation policies and practices of non-formal and informal learning can be key building blocks towards sustainable development in Africa.

3.2. Context

30.   In 2005 the United Nations declared the years 2005-2014 to be the *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development*, challenging African countries to think about their environmental, economic and social systems by encouraging growth that is good for the planet and for people. According to the Bonn Declaration (2009) which emerged from UNESCO's World Conference in Germany, *Education for Sustainable Development* "brings new relevance, quality, meaning and purpose to education and training systems…it involves formal, non-formal and informal education contexts, and all sectors of society in a lifelong learning process". Sustainable development is a cross-cutting theme that impacts all people, organizations, communities and countries. If sustainability requires people and organizations to change their behaviour in a meaningful way, what must we do to make education and training, human resource development, labour market research, qualifications and certification systems and frameworks more sustainable?

31   In recent years, the development of lifelong learning policies in UNESCO member states has shown that it is important to recognise all types of learning, and make visible and value the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning so that these may be identified, documented and/or formally recognised and validated. There is a growing demand by adults and young people for the recognition of the knowledge, skills and competences they acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings in the course of their life experiences, and on their lifelong learning (LLL) pathway, reflecting that alternative and complementary non-formal and informal learning pathways are prerequisites for successful learning and personal development (UIL 2011).

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32.   Following the Resolution (33C/Resolution 10) of the 33rd session of the General Conference (2005), the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) conducted studies on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and promoted the sharing of information and mutual learning through international meetings (Singh and Duvekot 2011 forthcoming). More recently, the implementation of the Belém Framework for Action adopted in the Sixth international Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) held in Brazil in December 2009, affirmed the importance of lifelong learning principles and democratic and humanistic values in addressing global challenges, and recommended developing or improving structures and mechanisms for the recognition of all forms of learning

33.   The recognition of non-formal and informal learning has relevance not only in regard to education and training policies but also to related challenges of poverty-reduction, job-creation, employment and social inclusion, identified in the CEDEFOP report of 2008. UNESCO puts special emphasis on the particular challenges for recognising knowledge, skills and competences acquired non-formally and informally. To be credible and sustainable, these mechanisms for identifying, documenting and recognising learning outcomes must be transparent, cost efficient and of high quality. Such arrangements can progressively, and when required, lead to formal qualifications helping individuals to succeed in further learning and employment (UIL 2011).

34.   There is renewed global focus on how and by whom quality is ensured and assured in schooling, further and higher education. Quality delivery, which incorporates transparency, accountability, information sharing and self evaluation is being recognized as a mechanism to support articulation, access and mobility for learners who have acquired awards or qualifications through recognition and validation, and formal means.

3.3. Research approach and methodology

35.   This research aims at using the concepts of *benchmarking* and *bench-learning*. The countries will be benchmarked or compared along the following   topics that have emerged from international exchanges and research as areas of strategic importance with regards to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

- Identification of the rationale/need for recognizing non-formal and informal learning
- Recognition as an explicit part of the lifelong learning strategy
- NQFs as enablers for recognition and validation to happen
- The real drive behind RPL is reforming the education and training system into a diversified system, capturing the full significance of alternative learning pathways
- Increasing the awareness and the acceptance of stakeholders in Recognition
- Approaches to NQF design, assessment and quality assurance
- Appreciation of recognition for marginalised population groups
- Reliance on labour market research and analysis to identify the skills requirement and outcomes of assessment for recognition and validation
- Core skills for lifelong leaning and sustainable skills development in Africa.

36.   The aim of *benchmarking* is to show on national levels the opportunities for people to acquire basic and continuing basic learning, employability profiles, personal development and empowerment. The way that the countries' NQFs focus on opening up and supporting access to quality learning opportunities pertaining to new learning forms, especially in non-formal and informal contexts is the central theme of the study. Methodologies for identification, assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning are looked upon as necessary tools to open up these new pathways. *'Bench-learning'* means comparing country typologies of recognition and, promoting mutual learning on the basis of the view that 'someone's glass is already half filled instead of being half empty'.

37.   The research activity on which this paper is based took place over a six-week period between April 2011 and mid-May 2011. The research includes data collection and desktop research, drawing on the following data sources:

- Background country reports prepared for the UIL and SAQA
- Documents from international agencies and governments
- Relevant journals, publications and conference papers.

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4. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Recognition and validation: a critical lever of lifelong learning and sustainable skills development

38.   Fenwick (2010) asks the key question*:* What knowledge counts most in a global knowledge society and suggests that 'we have to start by recognizing difference'. She highlights the fact that *what* knowledge is recognized and validated impacts significantly on people development and sustainability issues. An important aspect of education's contribution to sustainable development is the notion of recognizing prior leaning. There is a growing body of literature on validating and certifying learning experiences that lie outside of the formal system. Across the various contributions to this body of research many terms are used to capture the concept of recognition. Recognition and validation of, and awards for prior learning acquired through non-formal and informal learning pathways is viewed as an integral part of the broader theme of lifelong learning. Recognition in this context means that all forms of learning, including non-formal and informal learning are regarded as worthwhile and can be assessed and quality assured. Validation provides equal value to all forms of learning, and accreditation provides the awarding of credit for all forms of learning, towards the achievement of a part or whole qualification (Singh 2011 forthcoming).

39.   In the CEDEFOP model identification and validation are seen as key instruments in enabling the transfer and acceptance of learning outcomes across different settings. The identification of non-formal and informal learning records and makes visible the individual's learning outcomes (Bjørnåvold 2000, 2008; CEDEFOP 2008a). More recently, in the context of drafting UNESCO Guidelines, UNESCO uses all three terms—recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) —in order to highlight the transition from non-formal and informal education-formal and informal learning to access or advanced standing in formal education. RVA means the establishment of arrangements to make visible and value all learning outcomes whether they are acquired in formal, non-formal or informal settings. UNESCO puts special emphasis on the particular mechanisms for recognising knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and/or informal means and settings. Ideally, such mechanisms should have equivalence with formal qualifications, and should lead progressively to them. Individuals can thus be helped to succeed in further learning and employment (UIL 2011).

40.   The concepts of lifelong learning and education for sustainable development are key concepts within the present discussion on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and its linkages with a national qualifications framework. 'A transition to a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society is possible only by promoting education from the perspective of lifelong learning, engaging all spaces of learning' (Singh 2009, p 2597); …..'Equally important is the view that education for sustainable development is about respect for difference and diversity (Singh 2009, p 2597). 'By making visible kinds of knowledge that are being kept outside the curriculum or standards development processes, recognition of prior learning creates, constructs and reconstructs knowledge that has meaning and relevance for our lives, our societies and our economies; such a concept of education goes beyond education as being supply-driven, in which individuals are seen as mere receivers of that education. Instead, recognizing prior learning experience is expected to generate a demand for learning by creating motivated individuals who have an interest in continuing to learn' (Singh 2009).

41.   Highlighting the broader sense in which education for sustainable development needs to be understood, the ADEA concept note on the theme of the 2011 ADEA Triennale notes that '

> *The concept* has since expanded to encompass the social and economic infrastructure that determines a society's capacity to maintain itself in a rapidly changing global context (Cappon, P.). It is these cultural and ethical dimensions so central to the African context that motivates the concern for recognition in the context of this 6 country comparison. In Singh's forthcoming book *Why recognition matters* (2011), the question is addressed as follows:

> > Recognition validates the existence of many different kinds of knowledge and fills gaps with which the formal education system is less equipped to deal. The primary motivations behind exploring recognition is about fully understanding the potential of recognition and directing its positive energy through the empowerment of engaged individuals.

. > At its centre, a concern for the promotion of *recognition* is a concern for enabling individuals and providing social opportunities. Only in this way can human freedom, in its substantive sense, be achieved. This is a point eloquently elaborated upon by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen in his influential book *Development as Freedom* (2000)' (see Singh 2011 p. 3 forthcoming).

42. Similarly Colardyn and Bjørnåvold highlight the individual, social and economic purposes of recognition and validation:

> The purpose (which) is to make visible the entire scope of knowledge and experience held by an individual, irrespective of context where the learning originally took place. For an employer it is a question of human resource management, for individuals a question of having the full range of skills and competences valued, and for society a question of making full use of existing knowledge and experience, thus avoiding waste and duplication (2004:69).

43. As long as learning, skills and competences acquired outside formal education and training remain invisible and poorly valued the ambition of LLL cannot be achieved. The value of *Recognition* also lies in applying the practice to engage 'labour market change, reflecting evolutions in technologies, markets and organizations, (which) requires that skills and competences can be transferred and 'reprocessed' within the new working environment' (2004:69).

44. Nyerere[1] views the recognition of non-formal and informal learning within a system which *includes improving transparency* of formal, non-formal and informal learning and addresses issues of trust of quality assurance systems between institutions within a country and between countries. A study conducted in Ethiopia in 2008, found that the principle of lifelong learning recognizes untapped human resource potential more especially in situations where the need to provide for people who have been left behind or stranded within the formal education and training system can be addressed through significant recognition and validation processes being applied to non-formal and informal learning.

45. Tuck links lifelong learning with opportunities for employability and writes

> Virtually all countries now recognize the importance of lifelong learning, which is crucial in embracing an individual's employability in an increasingly uncertain work of work. The initial education of young people in schools, colleges and universities remains vitally important. However, it is now seen as essential that adults should have better access to education and training, to meet needs arising from technological and economic development and changing career paths. It is also important that the system facilitates the entry or re-entry of those young people who did not get access to, or dropped out of, initial education (2007:11).

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[1] http;//www.infed.org/thinkers/et-nye.htm. Accessed:4/1/2011

46.   There is a tendency in the literature on RVA to summarise the benefits of RVA in terms of *economic, social and educational benefits. Economic* benefits are felt through s**hortening the formal education process, and reducing direct costs of learning** by allowing people to accumulate credits, and/or gain access to further and higher learning, through *recognition*, and improving the allocation of human capital within organization by matching the appropriate demands and supplies of skills and competencies. *Education* benefits of *Recognition* are that flexible learning pathways are provided, and access to further and higher education of non-traditional learners is allowed. *Social* benefits of *Recognition* include empowering individuals to have more control over where and when they learn; and helping people out of poverty by imparting knowledge and skills to raise their employability

4.2. Non-formal and informal learning

47.   At the outset it is important to note that there are broad conceptual differences held by various researchers and organizations about what constitutes formal, non-formal and informal learning. Notwithstanding the fluidity of the concepts of formal, non-formal and informal, it necessary for the sake of practical repercussions for policies and practices, that these concepts are clarified and distinguished. According to Dohmen (1996:29), formal learning is structured, institutionalized learning with accredited certificates. Non-formal learning is all learning which does not lead to acknowledged degrees or certificates, regardless of whether it is self-organized or planned by others. Informal learning is unplanned and takes in all life-situations. The European Commission shares Dohmen's appraisal of the distinction between informal and non-formal.

48.   Examples from the six countries' study show that in all the countries there are significant numbers of the population that have not been through formal schooling to any significant levels. Many have less than secondary schooling, especially the older generation, and many have less than grade 12. Substantial numbers of the population in the six countries have not had access to higher education or post-school education and training. The exposure to learning, knowledge, skills and competence in work places, in non-formal apprenticeship contexts, or through cultural and social engagements should not devalue this type of learning acquisition, but rather make its value more visible through the kind of recognition and validation processes. Writers such as Colley& Hodkinson (2011), Colardyn & Bjornavold (2004), and Fenwick (2010) argue that it is not helpful to attempt to draw lines between the different forms of learning, as all learning through which knowledge, skills, competences have been acquired are valuable in socio-economic and political environments.

49.   In Colley, Hodkinson and Malcolm's[2] consultation report about non-formal learning, they conclude that

>   boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning can only be meaningfully drawn in relation to particular contexts; it is often more helpful to examine dimensions of formality and informality and ways in which they interrelate; and there are wider historical, political and economical contexts to learning (2011:1).

50   Illeris (2009:5) speaks about 'life long, life wide and life deep' learning in various contexts and time frames. Fenwick refers to what she terms the 'knowledge wars' about what non-formal and informal learning is, and highlights the conflicts unfolding around what counts as really useful and most important knowledge. She argues that educators have a 'crucial role to play in declaring the importance of knowledge that builds healthy, sustainable communities and human beings' (Walters 2010:2). She points to alternative forms of knowledge that can be developed, and argues that 'just about everyone everywhere agrees that within all these

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[2] http://www.infed.org/arcgives/e-texts/colleyinformal learning.htm. Accessed on 3/29/2011

'globalized spaces' knowledge is becoming central, and educational purposes have become entwined with economic demands.

51. The thrust of UNESCO's initiative to develop guidelines on RVA is to demonstrate that all forms of learning should receive equal acknowledgement because they are all fundamentally part of the overall concept learning.

52. Non-formal education refers to organized learning of various kinds that occurs outside the set curriculum of the formal schooling and higher education system. It can be directed at educating and training adults for work to meet the needs of the labour market or to participate in social activities and increase their personal development. Across the different models of non-formal education, two dominant types emerge. They include *supplementary programmes*, usually associated with North countries, and *complementary programmes*, associated mostly with the South. In recent years, non-formal education and training, has come to be referred to as adult and continuing education, particularly in the academic literature. The composite term expresses the twofold perception of the essentially socio-cultural provision made in adult education and the vocational component made in continuing education.

53. Originally the notion 'complementary' (Coombs 1968) was used to emphasize the alternative and autonomous contribution that non-formal education could make to meet the basic learning needs of children, young people and adults. However, such non-formal education programmes gradually became poor substitutes for their formal equivalents, offering the same programmes, but under adverse conditions, to children in disadvantaged communities (Hoppers 2006). Non-formal adult education in the South context needs further examination, particular in relation to its role in delivering literacy and basic education to early school leavers, disadvantaged youths and adults, and in filling in the substantial gap left by weak, inadequate and poor quality mainstream education and training provisions. Non-government organizations have shown that basic literacy skills need to be grounded in local businesses and workplace, where vocational curriculum and apprenticeship learning can be combined more effectively than in centres that focus only on vocational education. In Mexico, for example, non-formal education substantially enriches formal learning. In other countries, such as South Africa, Botswana and Namibia, non-formal learning is considered a better, more future-oriented option by many participants who feel stigmatized and pushed out of formal learning. There is a tendency in these contexts to deliver education programmes that closely resemble the structure of formal programmes, but nonetheless retain a non-formal character (Singh 2011).

54. Olakulehin's article (2002) published in the Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education examines the potential impact of open flexible distance learning systems in order to meet the education for all agenda for Africa. The EFA agenda is to ensure that there is maximum access to equitable and quality education for all. There is also a need for improved literacy levels and functional education in order to overcome the development deficits that are currently facing the region. The Open Flexible Learning (OFL) mode which is a form of a non-formal education system has evolved as an alternative mode of education to cater for the rigidity and inadequacies of the formal mode of education. Singh (2011) highlights three key implications of recognizing non-formal and informal learning for policy and practice at the country level. The *first* of these is a warning against a preoccupation with narrowly focused practical or useful knowledge in informal learning policy. There is a different kind of knowledge, however, which is also acquired informally and experientially. This includes traditional and indigenous knowledge, which is the cultural heritage of communities all over the world. This is kept alive through informal learning processes. This has implications for acknowledging that not all informal learning can be formalized, and yet it needs to be an important input in non-formal education programmes (Singh 2011).

55. The *second* issue concerns that future policy development should take into account the rewarding of non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged people or groups as this is

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an important pathway for them. In connection with the global discourse on the 'learning society' there is also widespread concern about the 'learning divide' between the 'knowledge rich' and the 'knowledge poor', which is expected to become even more significant. Therefore, another advantage of broadening education to include informal learning is to combat the low participation of individuals in formal education in the South. (Ibid).

56.   The *third* implication of the understandings of informal and non-formal learning relate to the ability of a society to make the best use of the capacities of its individuals. Through the process of recognition and accreditation of informally acquired skills and knowledge, the economy is able to benefit from human resources which are otherwise wasted. In many countries a great number of workers are excluded from participation in education and employment because they do not possess a formal qualification—although they might have the same skills and potential as those with recognized qualifications. The lack of validation and accreditation of informal learning is a neglect that creates a loss in terms of underestimation of human resources. It also stigmatizes and marginalizes knowledgeable people who cannot formally prove their competences. Recognition and accreditation of informal learning is thus a burning issue for a globalised world with international migration movements, which could be seen as mobility of human resources (Ibid).

4.3. Notions of 'competences', 'capabilities', 'life skills', 'core lifelong learning skills 'and 'learning outcomes'

57.   The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is primarily concerned with validating and developing individuals' competences.[3] While competences are as diverse as the daily lives and cultures in which an individual moves, nevertheless, the most important competences can be grouped together as *key competences*. These are defined as capabilities which are integral in shaping the complex challenges of one's own life and the development of society and are decisive in enabling the bearer to lead a good life (Weinert 1999). The OECD (2005a) distinguishes three key competences which are essential for successfully shaping one's own life and creating a functioning society. They include acting autonomously; using tools interactively; and functioning in socially heterogeneous groups.

58.   Competences are much broader than skills and area-knowledge. At a seminar held in Tunisia in 2010 sub-themes for the upcoming ADEA triennale were selected that focus on priority areas, in the African context. One of these sub-themes is *Common core skills for lifelong learning*. This sub-theme clearly indicates that primary and basic education, as defined at the Maputo Biennale, 'should enable learners to acquire a set of skills (knowledge and the capacity to learn and take initiatives) that are liable to initiate a process of lifelong learning. This dynamic view of education should make it possible for the 2011 Triennale to lay the foundations of a new approach which may be defined as the transition from the concept of instruction to that of learning,..and to a holistic vision that sees various forms of learning as a continuity of diversified but integrated systems (Hoppers, W. 2010. 1)

59.   A skill is certainly a competence, but competences include a range of other attributes too. For this reason, it is important to stress the normative aspect of competences. As Haan (2010) argues, competences comprise of several aspects, which he characterizes as pragmatic, socially experienced and future-oriented (2010). Another aspect, however, is normative. The normative aspect is important because it prevents competences from becoming understood as merely functional and behavioural. It also avoids purely economic calculations of competences. Instead, competences are underscored by an ethical dimension which

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[3] By convention, this book uses the term 'competence' and its plural 'competences' rather than the equivalent terms 'competency' and 'competencies'. Where direct quotations or citing programme names are used, the original terms are retained.

contributes to individually and socially valued outcomes. For Amartya Sen (2000), this normative dimension is well-being and freedom (2000). For the OECD, it is human rights, democratic structures and sustainable development. These provide the basis for defining the limits within which the lives of individuals should take place in society. On this basis, general normative learning goals can be formulated that are helpful to the individual for his personal development. These include participation in economic life, exploration and use of intellectual resources and information, building social networks and entering into relationships with others, maintaining physical and mental health, and find pleasure in living. Emphasizing the social aspect of competences through a normative focus, individuals are empowered to stand up for a good society. This includes standing up for equality and against discrimination, for social cohesion and active citizenship, for a readiness to intervene in support of human rights and processes of sustainable development, for fair resolutions to conflicts and for the exercise of a negotiated right to have a say (de Haan 2010). International conventions and agreements[4] already set the educational standards necessary for defining learning goals and it is important that they continue to be enshrined in recognition practices in the future.

60.   A practical example of this broad, normative understanding of competences is reinforced by UNESCO's concept of 'life skills', a concept that has gained importance since the Dakar goals of *Education for All* were set in 2000. It is a concept that links education and training activities with the notions of human development and quality of life enhancement. It also entails both generic skills (such as problem-solving, teamwork, critical thinking, learning to learn, management and organizational skills) as well as context-dependent skills (health, livelihood, work) (UNESCO GMR 2003). Self-direction and self-organization are crucial to the development of life skills and cannot be fully replaced by predefined and pre-structured teaching (Colardyn and Bjørnåvold 2005). Colardyn and Bjørnåvold note that change has become the core concept in today's working life, where lifetime employment has become an exception and during which time the majority of employees will change job and career several times. A key benefit is that 'labour market change, reflecting evolutions in technologies, markets and organizations, requires that skills and competences (which) can be transferred and 'reprocessed' within the new working environment' (2004:69).

61.   Another way of understanding competences is through the concept of 'capabilities'. This is an idea developed at length by Sen (1993) and discussed here in the introduction. Capabilities include both states of being (well-being) and other, more complex human attributes such as agency or the ability to decide and act within externally set constraints (Sen 1993).

62.   One reason to employ capabilities as opposed to competences is that the term 'competence' is often associated with vocational training. However, while the OECD has a tendency towards this, they are careful to include everyday experiences within their scope of their work. (DeSeCo, OECD 2003). Capabilities are generally taken to be fundamental attributes of a human being, whether they apply to work or not.

63.   In this paper, the broader notion of competences and skills is used. Once this broader understanding of skills or competences is established, it is helpful to enquire into how skills or competences can be measured? Competences can be formulated in educational standards as 'outcomes', and their acquisition can be evaluated. Learning outcomes are statements of what a learner is expected to know, to understand and be able to demonstrate after the completion of a process of learning. Learning outcomes are distinct from the aims of learning in that they are concerned with the achievements of the learner rather than the overall intentions of the teacher (Gonzales and Wagenaar, 2003). They can be assessed either by means of descriptors

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[4] Such as the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (1990), OECD's Framework for Key Competences (2005a), the European Reference Framework (2006), the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), ILO Decent Work Framework (1999), Millennium Development Goals (2000), and UNDP's notion of basic learning needs (2001). UNESCO Framework for the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2003) (Haan 2010).

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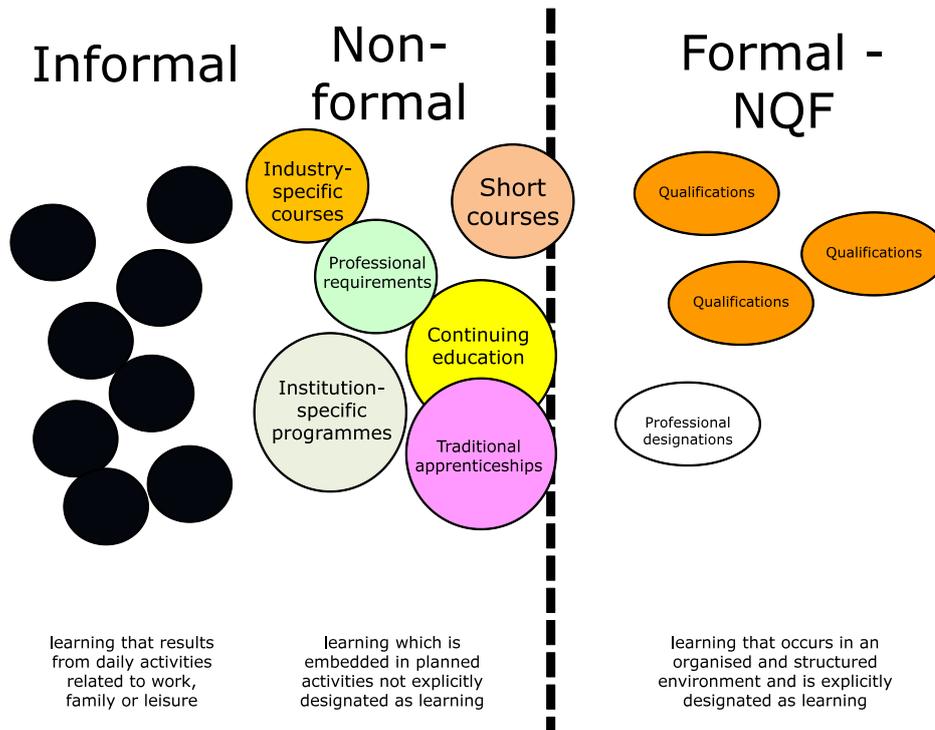
and indicators, or by linking descriptors with levels, thereby describing the connections and interrelations between key competences and individual career opportunities.

64.   This paper will use the broad understanding of 'skills' as used in *the ADEA concept paper on the theme of the 2011* Trienniale. The ADEA Triennale concept paper introduces the important concept of 'critical skills'. Although the concept of skill comes from the world of organizations, business and work, rather than from the school system, the notion of skill needs to be seen in a more dynamic and broad sense. It implies taking initiative and responsibility and a practical intelligence in situations requiring a context and an organization that favours the ability and the will to act.

4.4. The facilitating role of qualifications frameworks

65.   The central question here is how competences and knowledge developed in a disparate range of learning contexts can be valued equally? Part of the answer to this question, which was discussed earlier in the chapter, can be found through the pursuit of outcomes-based recognition. But another crucial aspect of the response must rely on the establishment of clear standards and reference points for the assessment, validation and certification of learning. What should these standards look like? Reference points prevent the overall quality of qualifications from being reduced by opening up towards non-formal and informal learning. It needs to be very clear that a qualification awarded on the basis of non-formal an informal learning has to meet the same demanding quality criteria as learning taking place in the formal system. At the same time formal system standards need to include elements from the non-formal education and informal learning.

66.   The nature of the qualifications system, therefore, is important. In general, qualifications can relate to either one of two categories; occupational standards or education-training standards (CEDEFOP 2008a). One way the two types of qualifications can be systematically organized is through a qualifications framework that supports the use of the learning outcomes, standard setting, curricula and assessment. National qualifications frameworks (NQFs) are overarching frameworks that define all qualifications recognized nationally in terms of workload, level, quality, learning outcomes and profiles in a way that makes the relationship between them transparent.

67.   The relative placement of qualifications should be comprehensible through the use of specific descriptors for each qualification covering both its breadth (competences associated with learning outcomes) and its depth (level). It is structured horizontally in order to cover all qualifications awarded in a system and vertically by levels of qualification. National qualifications differ with respect to the form of classification. In some qualifications frameworks, such as the Australian Qualifications Framework, qualifications themselves are arranged in a hierarchy of standards (Coles; Bjornavold and Coles 2008:206). In the Irish framework, on the other hand, the classification uses explicit levels that are each defined by criteria that are often termed as level descriptors or level indicators. Qualifications as in the Australian version, are sometimes further classified into qualification types (higher education qualifications, school qualifications and work-based qualifications). (Bjornavold and Coles 2008:206)

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Figure 1. Diagram representing the various types of learning within the objectives of a NQF

Informal   Non-formal   Formal - NQF

Industry-specific courses

Short courses

Professional requirements

Qualifications

Qualifications

Qualifications

Institution-specific programmes

Continuing education

Traditional apprenticeships

Professional designations

learning that results from daily activities related to work, family or leisure

learning which is embedded in planned activities not explicitly designated as learning

learning that occurs in an organised and structured environment and is explicitly designated as learning

Keevy:2010

68.   The diagram provides a context for the different types of learning programmes generally associated with formal, non-formal and informal learning respectively. The short courses, and part-qualifications and skills programmes situated in the non-formal space of the learning spectrum covered by a NQF, is now receiving focus as these sorts of programmes are seen to have merit to meet growing skills demands, provide mobility for learners, and greater access to further learning, promotion opportunities, and personal development in the workplace. NQF design and objectives facilitate recognition and validation of the entire learning spectrum, and herein lies one of the key reasons why NQFs play facilitating roles in recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

69.   NQFs are located in three contexts that are common to any system, namely the operational environment, the transactional environment and the contextual environment. The operational environment describes the organizational structure of the bodies responsible for qualifications frameworks. In their nature NQFs are changing to being communication, coordination and collaboration mechanisms with internal and external communities. The transactional environments are determined by legislation and these relationships, the communities with whom NQFs work, the learners, the general public, and the suppliers of services to the organizations responsible for NQFs. The contextual environment is where the issues of the impacts of NQFs within the bigger education and training systems, have the most opportunity to positively impact on sustainable development in terms of people and skills development. This environment deals with the economic, political, social, ecological and technological forces.

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5.   KEY FINDINGS AND AREAS OF ACTION

70.   The analysis of the country reports is attached as **<u>Annexure 1</u>** to this paper. The following key findings follow from the analysis of the country reports. These are also intended to highlight areas of concrete actions that African countries can learn from, and seek to implement in order to develop efficient systems that reach to both youth and adults alike and increase their participation in quality learning and integration in society.

   The five areas are.

- Reforms in all sectors of education and training in the countries on NQFs and recognition instruments
- Improve the quality of provision of formal, non-formal and informal learning
- Increase the possibilities for adults and youth alike to achieve a qualifications of a higher level
- Speeding up the process of assessing and recognizing non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged groups
- Ensure that recognition mechanisms aligned to qualifications frameworks are positioned in the overarching framework of sustainable development and inclusive growth

71.   *Findings show that policy reforms are being driven by lifelong learning strategies that include NQFs and recognition developments, but their implementation remains a critical challenge.* Coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies and practices covering the full life-course are still not the norm, with some still focusing on specific sectors (Ghana) or groups; implementing lifelong learning through formal, non-formal and informal learning, and increasing mobility remain a challenge. Education and training, including universities should become more open (Mauritius), and made relevant to the needs of the labour market and society at large.

72   *Several countries highlighted efforts to reform their education and training systems from supply- to demand-driven,* involving the specifications of sets of skills and competences, and building of these into competency and qualifications frameworks. Reforms associated with partnerships between world of continuing training and the world of work are important features of countries with NQF developments.

73   *The development of national qualifications frameworks and systems (NQFs) provide an opportunity for redesigning systems,* and place qualifications acquired through recognition on par with other qualifications. National qualification Frameworks are increasingly aiming to facilitate alternative progression routes in education and training systems, facilitating the value of a broader range of learning outcomes and addressing the transparency of systems and qualifications. NQFs encourage the use of other common tools, like key competences, learning outcome approaches, quality assurance, credit transfer systems, et cetera. as well as stimulating intensive dialogue and consensus building between national stakeholders. It is work in progress that needs to be continued.

74   Impact assessment of reform initiatives should be carried out so that there is a strong evidence base, and exchanges are based on practices, the quality of which has been proved and evaluated. Sustainability of innovative reform initiatives is also an issue. Many good practices and pilots rely on precarious project-based and donor funding and leaves them at constant risk.

75.   *Nearly all countries place an emphasis on policies and systems, especially improving quality of provision of both formal and non-formal education and training.* This could usefully be complemented with a bottom up element involving the opinion of critical players – practitioners, providers and the learners themselves. While improving the quality and efficiency of the education and training system, this needs to be concretized through quality of

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providers of education and training and the quality of distance learning and use of ICTs to widen access. Quality assurance approaches to quality in education and training are along a spectrum from prescription where public authorities exert control over the quality of provision to a cooperative model where the approach is a mix of control and autonomy on the part of providers to a self-regulated model where providers are fully responsible for the other equality of their provision including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning

76.   In a number of countries, good practice in accrediting and assuring quality of providers has been identified. Further research is required on standards and quality criteria for providers. Quality assurance in higher education is also a theme that has been highlighted in the context of provision. The question remains how best to exploit these tools to support quality in the remaining area of vocational and non-vocational adult learning, which is often characterized by many small organizations providing non-formal learning. Such organizations would benefit from an overarching quality framework for lifelong learning, which might incorporate simple guidelines to raise quality standards. Second-chance provision is more critical than ever as significant flows of early school leavers continue to join the ranks of the low-skilled.

77.   NQFs and *Recognition* practices increase the possibilities for adults and young people to achieve qualifications at least on a level higher. They are instruments to support the continued development of basic skills and new skills so important for sustainable and inclusive growth. A number of countries, taking the current situation as a starting point and differentiating target groups are enabling up skilling through the progression to a minimum NQF level (equivalent to lower secondary or secondary for example). NQFs need to be accompanied by *recognition* tools that build on the competences that people already have, as well as by improving outreach to all disadvantaged persons who are in most need of new qualifications. The study recommends that countries need to identify the low skilled and early school leavers most in need of qualifications. Speeding up the process of assessing and recognizing learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged groups is a key imperative for the six countries in the study. The formal education system on its own does not produce all the knowledgeable and skilled people required by the African economy.

78.   Findings show that engaging with non-formal and informal learning is considered to be one of the main tools to increase participation of adults and youth alike, in learning, for the attainment of qualifications, and in order to facilitate their integration in society. *Recognition* provides a synergy between various forms and learning and enables learners to progress on a flexible individualized pathway. *Recognition* is also important to support transfer from education to working life.

79.   *There are generic broad understandings of these terms and their applications in the learning societies and environments within the six countries that participated in this study,* despite the fact that there is no single agreed global definition of what the terms recognition, validation, non-formal or informal learning mean. The boundaries between formal, non-formal and informal learning can only be meaningfully drawn in relation to particular contexts. The most researched contexts are workplace, volunteer work, such non-governmental organizations, and distance learning modalities, as well as non-formal adult and continuing education

80.   *NQFs play a facilitating role to make recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning both visible and valued,* through the common elements of NQFs comprising the outcomes-based approach, levels, level descriptors and a means of calculating credit values to learning such as notional hours or credit hours. By potentially removing institutional considerations from the definition of levels, NQFs give a higher profile and equal value to the learning taking place outside formal education and training.

81.   Even though NQFs are in contested space, which has raised the question of the feasibility of countries developing a NQF and for what purposes, *this study has provided credible information and evidence that the countries developing NQFs as well as regional NQFs are*

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increasingly treating Recognition as an integrated part of national qualifications system, and potentially treating the non-formal and informal learning on an equal footing with formal learning. The strategic reasons for these initiatives, beyond those of the individual countries, is that NQFs provide useful, effective and cost-effective codification and referencing sources to *Recognition,* improve access and facilitate mobility across borders, and continents.

82. *Governments are increasingly seeing NQFs as facilitators for lifelong learning, and key instruments for the reform of education, training and qualifications systems.* Global trends to develop national qualifications frameworks and regional qualifications frameworks provide this evidence. In countries that do not have a NQF, there are still qualifications frameworks, for sub-sectors, which are credible, and build trust between institutions and countries. All frameworks rely on elements such as outcome based approaches, levels and level descriptors, and a means of referencing credits such as notional hours or credit

83. *Findings show that recognition is most developed in the TVET sector,* but is also developing in companies, in the micro-enterprise sector of the informal economy, and in the voluntary and youth sectors, as well as for access to universities and higher education, or credit towards shorter courses. More research is needed on *Recognition* as a tool for human resource management. Globalisation and with it rapid changes in careers will need employees to document their employment-related competences and have them validated regularly. In a few countries industrial or trade sectors are a driving force behind *Recognition.*

84. It would be more helpful to examine dimensions of formality and informality and ways in which they interrelate, to recognize that there are wider historical, political and economic contexts to learning. Within these understandings there is consensus from the study that valid recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning must become centrally situated in any education and training policies, and within NQFs. More research is needed, however, on whether recognition of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning are part of the learning opportunity given to disadvantaged groups, such as second-chance education workplace learning, and what the overall take up is among the low-skilled and early school leavers.

85. In developing Africa's strategy for sustainable development and inclusive growth, it is important to make visible and provide value to all forms of knowledge, skills and competence, irrespective of where it is acquired. The place and route to acquire knowledge is now recognized to be more than in formal learning contexts. Workplaces, communities, apprenticeships, internships, family environments can all provide the type of knowledge, skills and competences that the global economy requires, and that are valuable for citizenry, social and cultural participation and growth. Sustainable development means the ability to acknowledge alternative methods of valuing and recognizing different forms of knowledge.

86. Africa should focus on policies and strategies that are key for the sustained economic recovery and inclusive growth of the continent such as higher education for skilled manpower, and entrepreneurship development and financial instruments that would support private development and regional integration and trade. Sustainable development legislation across all government departments, economic sectors, nationally and regionally should become more harmonized, and resources need to be directed to ensure coordinated efforts in skills development, technology developments, research and monitoring.

87. While literacy and numeracy provide a foundation for new skills for jobs, *developing new skills in modern African society merit significant attention in all the countries studied.* These new skills are: digital skills, economic and financial education, civic, cultural and environmental awareness, healthy living et cetera. Countries in Africa should set up projects and networks as well as guidelines for policy makers and practitioners that could contribute to the development of effective policy and practice in basic skills and new skills provision in the countries.

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88.   *NQFs are a pillar of sustainable development.* The discourse on NQFs has highlighted the benefits of NQFs, which closely align with the overarching core principles. NQF operational, transactional and contextual systems described in **Annexure 2** to this study facilitate ways to maximize efficiency, reach, and accessibility and to limit duplication. Over and above these positive elements of NQFs in the sustainable development discourse, the issues related to the outcomes based approach, the levels and level descriptors, and the credible quality assurance standards position NQFs positively globally to simplify referencing of qualifications and non-formal and informal learning, to the benefit of all learners. The transparency associated with NQFs as they have evolved into communication and collaboration tools enhance the role of NQFs to remove barriers and obstacles to mobility and access, reinforcing their value in sustainable development activities.

89.   The six countries' responses to the questions provide *evidence that significant progress is being made in curriculum development in selected education and training fields.* Botswana, Ghana, Namibia and South Africa are emphasizing the increased training in, and development of the ICT sector. This discipline has significant implications for sustainable development, and environmental sustainability. African countries suffer from the malaise of a manufacturing industry which has low returns, despite the fact that it has the potential to grow. The huge potential of beneficiation of the raw materials of Africa has not been maximized. The limited growth is partly attributed to high production costs, and the influx of cheaper imports which make locally made and manufactured goods uncompetitive. But the limited growth is also due to poor skills development, and insufficient knowledge, and competence in critical areas related to manufacturing and beneficiation. The incorporation of ICT in plant and production operations to increase efficiency and cost-effectiveness would be a key enabler for beneficiation to start.ICT is an essential component of all engineering programmes. Improving training in ICT and applying relevant ICT solutions in the workplace would move African countries' economies into becoming modern automated, manufacturing and processing economies, where high level ICT skills and innovation is required. Other subjects that have been identified in the six country study for inclusion in the curriculum are language, mathematics, social studies, life skills, and entrepreneurial studies.

90.   Improved availability of internet communication, which will need to become more stable and reliable, will also be an enabling factor to private sector development and increased trade. From studies on some European, and Asian economies, the growth of their economies has as much to do with the growth of 'big business' as it has to do with the development of a competitive, viable and growing SMME sector. Encouraging graduates to set up their own businesses offering a variety of services to both the public and private sectors, thereby creating employment and supporting the development needs of the country is important. Important, too, is the establishment and implementation of business incubator facilities and training, designed to help micro-firms survive and grow during the start-up phase when they are the most vulnerable. 'The incubator provides hands-on business management assistance, access to financing and critical business or technical support services such as mentoring, access to equipment such as computers, projectors and training rooms and office space at reasonable costs. This is already happening in pockets of excellence in South Africa, but a paradigm shift needs to happen to take this to scale.

91.   In addition to the progress in education and training, *there are pro-poor agendas emerging in countries such as Namibia and Botswana.* Private sector investment in technology is increasing, e.g. in the area of mobile telephones - 389 million new phones registered on the African continent. Foreign Direct Investment is growing on the continent. There is increasing growth in public/private partnerships in countries in Africa, especially in the technology areas.

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6.   THE DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT IN AFRICA

6.1. Recognizing the sustainable development agenda in the six African countries and in Africa

92.   A question that has to be answered now is which developing world will become the engine of growth? The terms of engagement in terms of global economies have are still changing. Who will be the engine of growth? Will it be Africa, Asia, or China? We cannot ignore the new world that is evolving around us. The global environment and stage is fundamentally altered. What will higher education and further education institutions do to play a key role in the growth path for Africa, and in the altered global scenario? Demographics in Africa are changing. It has been estimated that by 2020, the population of the African continent will be larger than that of the most populous nations, at over 1.5 billion people. What then are African common core skills and principles for sustainable development? Olakulehin, writes that 'There is an established consensus among practitioners and policy makers that education is a fundamental pillar of the development process' (2010:171). Nyerere wrote about rural development as follows:

'
When we tried to promote rural development in the past, was thinking about development in terms of things and not people…As a result, there have been many cases where the capital investment has resulted in no increase in output where the investment has been wasted (2011:3).

93.   Knowledge is a critical element for sustainable development, and for social transformation. Current knowledge has not addressed the challenges sufficiently. We need increased partnerships to 'grow' new knowledge, harnessing, using and developing enabling and sustainable technologies, financial solutions and more jobs to address the challenges in the six countries, and further afield into the continent of Africa. Dr Ruth Kagia, Coordinator of the World Bank African region drew attention to the fact that Africa needs to recognize the importance of the sustainable development agenda. In a presentation on Africa Day at the University of South Africa (UNISA) she drew extensively on three reports: the June 2010 McKinsey Report, '*Lions on the Move: The progress and potential of African Economies'*; The 2011 World Bank Report, '*The Transformative Power of Partnersh*ips'; and the 2011 Education for All (EFA) global monitoring report, '*The Hidden Crisis: Armed Conflict and Education'.* Her message was clear to higher education institutions in particular; they have a moral and ethical opportunity to address issues which stop people from accessing higher education, being mobile in career paths. She also highlighted that Africa needs to look at ways to maximize technology to connect to the nation, region, continent and the globe. People should harness the opportunities they have to make a difference especially in the field of education. Technology can also be used to advance the agenda of *Recognition* and accessibility opportunities for disadvantaged and rural people, by opening up simpler ways to deliver e-learning or techno-learning and education solutions through video technology. Open and distance learning is emerging into use of technology more than before; to achieve the vision of the knowledge economy in its full sense, calls for public/private partnerships to enable all education and training communities to do more to play a pro-active role in improving the skills base of the populations in countries, through recognition of all forms of access, throughput, and responsible assessment processes, including recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Kagia encouraged governments, and education and training institutions to make selfless decisions to uplift the poorest of the poor, through creative, innovative and affordable solutions.

94.   Taking onto account that the forecasts are that there will be 1.1 billion Africans of working age 2040, Kagia suggested a 10-year vision for education and training interventions, with

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significant focus on *Recognition and validation* of all forms of learning, with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) playing a leading role in such praxis. Without a source of skilled people to support growing trade and economies, the development opportunities now available would be hampered. Africa should focus on policies and strategies that are crucial for the sustained economic recovery and inclusive growth of the continent. These include higher education opportunities to develop skilled manpower, and entrepreneurship development and financial instruments that would support private development and regional integration and trade. Kagia highlighted some critical challenges to address specifically in education, including, stagnation of students and staff numbers in many HEIs and FET institutions; poor quality of education delivery and output; few solutions to address the poor pipeline of undergraduates; HEIs continuing to focus on their current narrow foci; low levels of higher education; large populations of youth and over 35s in an unemployment crisis, with insufficient formal education or employment opportunities making them particularly vulnerable. An inventory of requirements for sustainable development in the context of education and training looks at broad issues such as cost-effective and efficient systems, types of programmes offered, labour market drivers, innovative and creative ways to use and utilize information, communication and technology (ICT) and the role that education plays in sustainable development.

6.2. What knowledge counts to position people to get decent work

95. Few of our organizations and education and training institutions and entities have sufficiently recognized exactly what knowledge counts to position people best to get decent work, and have access to further learning. A paradigm shift is needed about how to harness the vast experience and knowledge that people have acquired through all learning situations, and to validate it. This is crucial for sustainable skills development considerations, as the luxury of time to translate all forms of learning into programmes to be delivered in formal contexts, the issues of access, and mobility, and globally changing technologies require a different response, a changed paradigm. Uldrich (2008:10) encourages people to change or shift their paradigms, in much the same way that Fenwick encourages people (in particular educators) to focus on the flow of what goes on between things, and to focus on imagination.

96. Fenwick (2010:2) argues that educators have a 'crucial role to play in *declaring* the importance of knowledge that builds healthy, sustainable communities and human beings'). Within all these 'globalised spaces' knowledge is becoming central and educational purposes have become entwined with economic demands. Knowledge is not limited by location - as 'technology creates virtual markets and virtual organizations. Education needs to focus less on things and their separations, and more on the flows – what goes on between things. The second 'force' to shift new knowledge is to focus on imagination, and how to use imagination in education to reposition ourselves amid globalizing forces.

97. In similar vein to the Colardyn (2010:2) report, she speaks about how education in schools, vocational training or higher education, are complicit in the narrow view of "what knowledge counts", and highlights three areas where 'what knowledge counts' impacts significantly on people development and sustainability issues. The *first* process is that of mobility and she speaks about how people struggle in foreign countries to have their skills recognized. *Second*, is the process of 'boundary-blurring' where people become de-linked from their places of origin as do their values and practices. *Third*, is the process where local meets global, such as in global sports events or global responses to huge natural disasters and tragedies. Fenwick proposes that 'education is never innocent, for it is embedded at every level - policy, social structures, institutional norms, and regulations, curriculum and local interactions. In this way education has been a critical medium for globalization'.

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98.   Nyerere (2011:5) promoted the concept *of ujamaa Vijijini* which is to develop people, not things and that people can only develop themselves. His education philosophy carried this concept forward into two main themes; education for self-reliance; and adult education, lifelong learning and education for liberation. The formal system does not involve its students in productive work, and thereby deprives society of 'their much-needed contribution to the increase in national economic output and also breed among the students a contempt for manual work'. He promoted 'productive work' to become an integral part of the school curriculum and provide meaningful learning experience through the integration of theory and practice. His insights into the link between development and education are stated as follows: 'If adult education is to contribute to development, it must be part of life – integrated with life and inseparable from it. This means that education will promote changes in men and in society' (2011:7).

6.3. Sustainable skills development is relative to sustainable and inclusive growth

99.   There is potential for growth in Africa. In the June 2010 McKinsey report, '*Lions on the Move: The progress and potential of African Economies'* the writers present the following statistics and forecasts that Africa's collective GDP will rise from US 1.6 Trillion, roughly equal to Brazil's or Russia's to US 2.6 Trillion in 2020. African's combined consumer spending will rise from US 860 billion to US 1.4 Trillion in 2020. The number of African cities with more than one million people each will rise. 50 per cent of Africans will be living in cities by 2030. Other key statistics from the report are that Africa's share of the world's total amount of uncultivated, arable land is 60%; Currently 20 African companies have revenues of at least US 3 billion; 1.1billion Africans will be of working age in 2040; 128 million African households will have a discretionary income by 2020.

100.   These statistics provide an extremely positive view of the potential for economic growth and development for Africa. However, the 2011 Africa Progress report, written for the World Bank, titled '*The transformative Power of Partnerships*' highlights some significant obstacles to success, The report states that, 'Unfortunately, the transformative potential of partnerships (in Africa) remains constrained by several obstacles. These include weak institutions, burdensome bureaucracies, insufficient access to courts and other legal facilities, and budgetary and human resource limitations of the public sector. Endemic corruption is another major challenge (2011:61). In addition to those mentioned there are at least five cross-cutting gaps hampering the initiation and spread of successful partnerships: mistrust of the private sector motive; the information and imagination gap; the difficulty for many actors to escape institutional mindsets and cultures ;: and the resources *and Capacity Gap, as well as the low ceilings to perceived benefits*. (2011: 61, 62).

6.4. Concluding statements about LLL and sustainability

101.   Any system embracing *Recognition* needs to include improving transparency about and trust in quality assurance systems between institutions intra-country and inter-country. Qualifications achieved in an institution or country must be 'understandable and trustworthy in another institution or country'. Sustainability speaks to the intention to suppress education and training barriers and obstacles to mobility; to access work and/or education institutions, and ensuring that *Recognition* is transparent and credible; in other words valuing learning irrespective of where it has taken place.

102.   When countries develop recognition systems, they should make explicit some principles, as well as methodologies for assessment and procedures for validation on which the system rests. It is important for people who wish to access *Recognition* practice, to know: what the conditions to access and benefit from *Recognition* are, and these should also be described; which outcomes are to be assessed and with which methods; process made more transparent to

ensure proper validation, and how is this information to be more readily available to potential candidates. A learning culture with core skills and principles needs to develop to accept and trust recognition as a norm, and on par with formal learning. Awareness-raising is necessary and local informal, guidance and employment services must be more pro-active in promoting recognition, and train their staff to validate or refer their clients to the relevant bodies. Confidence should be built through transparency. The roles and responsibilities of the assessors and moderators need to be impartial. Credibility through relevant programmes, valid assessments and inclusion of relevant stakeholders at appropriate levels is important.

103. However, initiatives regarding *Recognition* practices and linkages to qualification frameworks need to be driven by strategic issues of core skills for lifelong learning, sustainable progress and prosperity, and not by operational issues of assessment, evaluation and certification, which although critical for the implementation processes of the programme, are instruments and not purposes (García-Bullé 2011 forthcoming).The single most important factor for success is the combined effort, political will, and visible support for recognition and validation of all forms of learning, including non-formal and informal learning, by government, business, labour and educators, The making visible and valuing all forms of learning impacts on the acceptance of core skills that people need to continue on a lifelong learning pathway. It is important to retain the enthusiastic involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the lifelong learning journey, if there is to be significant paradigm shifts towards acknowledging that all knowledge counts and has value. Sustaining this initiative will rely on sound and credible quality assurance practices, and new ways of collaborating between economic, education and government sectors. New ways of using technology in innovative ways to overcome distance and cost barriers to learning need to be embraced. It has become imperative to utilize the entire system of governance, policy and implementation as an additional instrument to fight poverty through the development and certification of competences, which could open new opportunities for poor people through the recognition of their competences for better integration into the US labour markets (Ibid).

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8. ANNEXES

8.1. ANNEXURE 1:   ANALYSIS OF COUNTRY REPORTS AND RESPONSES

1. Identification of the rationale/need for recognizing non-formal and informal learning

1.1   Almost all countries highlight the broader sense in which recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is an important tool for sustainable skills development and lifelong learning. They highlight individual, social and economic purposes of recognition and validation. These are inter-related, rather than being distinct. For example, helping people out of poverty by imparting knowledge and skills entails both social benefits as well as employability goals. It also has the benefit of bringing about transformations in the education system.

1.2   The real drive behind RPL in Mauritius is to gradually transform the education and training system in Mauritius in a more systematic way, allowing a more qualified labour force to be developed in Mauritius. Improved recognition of workers' skills is a way to overcome skills shortages and match skills demand with supply. In addition, much effort is being made to fully integrate RPL in widening access to education and training systems with a view to further promote lifelong learning. The idea is to encourage those people who have been left out of the system to have an opportunity to have their skills and knowledge developed outside the formal education system recognized and valued into formal qualifications.

1.3   In the Seychelles, it is the government's strategy to create a knowledge-based society and promote lifelong learning. This includes efforts to open access to people who could not continue their formal education and training for diverse reasons such as accessibility, financial status and socio-economic problems, but they continued their learning through work experience, and to allow access to any potential candidate wishing to seek certification in Seychelles regardless of his or her disability, race, religion or nationality. This means that they could be eligible to obtain formal qualifications so that they are given the opportunity to reach their full potential. For all learners, RPL is meant to facilitate access, transfer and award of credits leading to certification of qualifications within the National Qualification Framework. By essence, RPL exists to promote equity of access and fair chances to all learners.

1.4   Providing equality of educational opportunities has also been the need identified by Namibia and South Africa. In confronting the inequality of the apartheid era, Namibia undertook wide scale educational reform that ensured inclusive, fair and learner-centred education took place. The policy, '*Towards Education for All: A development Brief for Education, Culture and Training*' directs that lifelong learning has special significance for the education sector in an independent Namibia. The culture of lifelong learning (LLL) will help the people to react rapidly to the challenged the country faces.

1.5   The South African Government of the day identified the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as having the potential to redress the discrimination suffered by racial

groups who had no or limited access to education and training opportunities under the apartheid regime. The Government recognized that widespread availability of RPL of non-formal and informal learning, can extend the reach of the formal education and training sector by providing a means by which individuals can access further learning and receive recognition for knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts. Furthermore given SA s population demographics, age distribution, literacy and unemployment rates at the time, and to date, and its skills shortages in critical economic sectors, RPL was seen to have the potential to serve the needs of both individuals and the SA Labour market and economy.

1.6   In South Africa, since the advent of the NQF, RPL has had a very specific agenda. RPL is meant to support transformation of education and training system of the country, commitment of all role players to remove barriers and the extension of benefits to all learners and stakeholders.. The inclusive and holistic position subscribes to the principles and values of human development and LLL, it is learner-centred.

1.7   Speakers at the BOTA conference highlighted the fact that in countries such as Zambia and Ghana where there are significant informal sectors, new skills demands for increasing levels of skills development from foreign direct investment (FDI) companies and partners are becoming an urgent requirement. Coupled to this the large numbers of unemployed youth lead to significant social challenges and conflict, and there is poor access to tertiary education in sub-Saharan Africa. Suggestions to address these challenges focus on consideration of flexible criteria for recognition of non-formal and informal learning and a move towards a far more demand-led system where labour market determinates provide guidance in skills development and training delivered.

1.8   All the countries are *ad idem* that recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning is becoming a necessity, to advance the social and economic growth with concomitant political stability in their countries and on the continent. African countries have further imperatives for non-formal and informal learning, being access, equity and redress goals in their countries, to grow the number of people across age groups, and racial and gender divides who are 'eligible' to get decent work. Two countries, specifically Namibia and South Africa have very strong redress agendas based on their previous apartheid histories. These two countries, as well as the other four in this study, are faced with increasing numbers of people who have non-formal and informal learning covering a wide range of knowledge, skills and competence, which need to be formally recognized to provide them with new and/or further work opportunities. The need for skilled people to ensure sustainability of product, market and economic growth is becoming very apparent. How better and more efficient and cost-effective to grow the base of a skilled workforce, than to tap into the talent pool of those with valid and relevant non-formal and informal.

2. Recognition as an explicit part of the lifelong learning strategy

2.1   In each of the six countries, the critical need for recognition and validation of all forms of learning towards some level of award or at least, access to further learning is reflected at the policy level and some countries have also made them explicit within their lifelong learning strategy papers. Mauritius, Seychelles and South Africa have policies to enable recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning to happen, and there is evidence of pilot projects in selected economic sector and education sub-sector categories in Mauritius, and smaller scale RPL projects in the Seychelles and South Africa. In South Africa, the RPL interventions have been in both FET and HE sub-sectors, and in the occupational and economic sectors as well. The Namibian Education Ministry has tasked

the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA), together with the Namibia Training Authority (NTA) to oversee the 'development of a National policy on RPL' (Report). An RPL steering committee with representatives from different sectors was constituted to work on the draft policy. Ghana's NTVETQC has developed validation, recognition and accrediting policies for learners in the formal as well as the non-formal and informal learning sectors. Validation of informal and non-formal learning is considered a key component in Ghana in its overall TVET lifelong learning strategy. It has made provision for non-formal and informal learning within the National TVET Qualifications framework to address progression pathways for the TVET learners.

2.2   Non-formal and informal learning are integral components of lifelong learning. In Botswana several education policies and national development plans have accentuated the need for lifelong learning: The Report of the National Commission on Education (1993), the Revised National Policy on Education (1994), the National Development Plan 9 of 2003 – 2007, The Presidential Task Force (1997), Botswana's Vision 2016. However Botswana currently does not have a lifelong learning strategy, but duly recognizes the importance of lifelong learning as evidenced by the documents listed.

2.3   The main reason for the implementation of RPL in Mauritius is to recognize non-formal and informal learning of being part of lifelong learning strategy, education and training policies and a diversified and integrated system of education. This system is gradually being accepted by the stakeholders. In addition, over the past years, the Ministry of Education has established RPL as one of its key objectives. Subsequently there has been regular follow-up by Cabinet of Ministers where monthly reports were submitted by the Minister of Education. Additionally, the introduction of RPL in tertiary institution is yet a good example of adopting RPL, in particular the Open University which has recently been established where mature learners can join higher education.

2.4   The education policy of Seychelles talks about making the Seychellois citizens becoming knowledgeable where lifelong learning is concerned.   However the Department of education has yet to include RPL or even acknowledge informal or non-formal learning in its policy statement. In addition, *there is still work to be done* to incorporate RPL into the national system of student selection for post-secondary institutions. Still, its integration into the validation process of qualifications is a case of making it part of the lifelong learning trajectory in Seychelles.

2.5   RPL is new and it is still to make a real impact on society. This said, it is clear that once RPL has been fully understood and taken on board, it will become popular among the general public. It is vital for the education and training authority to ensure that the aspect of a diversified and integrated system of education and training is really given its importance by taking the step to incorporate the concept of RPL in its education and training policy.

2.6   South Africa has recognized that RPL cannot stand alone and outside of LLL. The contexts within which RPL is practiced are linked to the personal development, progression into learning programmes, promotion and career change or job change requirements of the country's learners. One of the primary objectives of the NQF is to' contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large" (NQF Act, 2008).

2.7   SAQA has identified that it is important to establish ways in which articulation between vocationally-oriented, professional and academic qualifications can take place to facilitate the development of multiple learning pathways, throughout a learner's life-wide, lifelong

and life deep learning pathway. SAQA recognizes candidates who have exited formal education either prematurely or at the end of a formal programme, and who have built up substantial amounts of learning over a number of years through non-formal and informal learning and part-qualifications. This is part of what is termed the 'lifelong learning route' and it is envisaged that increasingly RPL will become a mechanism for recognizing the skills, knowledge and values thus acquired' (SAQA. 1998).

3. NQFs as an enabler for recognition and validation to happen

3.1   The current system of validating, recognising and accrediting (or awarding for credit) is closely linked to developments in the countries' National Qualifications Framework. There is direct evidence that there is growing appreciation of the role that the NQF plays as an enabler for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning to happen, and that elements of good quality assurance, trust, a measure of outcomes-based approaches and cognition of the importance of meeting both academic and labour market requirements, drives non-formal and informal learning in the six countries which are part of this study.

3.2   There are recognized benefits to developing a national qualifications framework. An analysis of the reasons for developing qualifications frameworks given by the six countries are similar to those given by other countries for developing NQFs:
*   The need for *transparent referencing* of national qualifications levels to international NQFs, and other regional NQFs;
*   learning outcomes-based levels are seen as a neutral referencing point for diverse qualifications and providers;
*   they are important instruments for increasing transparency of national qualifications systems
*   to make national qualifications systems more user-friendly;
*   they strengthen coherence of qualifications systems;
*   they support lifelong learning through visible pathways, thereby facilitating access, participation and progression;
*   they strengthen links and improve communication between education and training and the labour market;
*   they create a platform for cooperation and dialogue; and
*   they provide a reference point for quality assurance.

3.3   Of the six countries selected for this comparative analysis, each of the countries either has or is embarking on the development of a NQF. Namibia and South Africa have NQFs which were established more than fifteen years ago, and they are viewed as being comprehensive and established qualifications frameworks. South Africa's NQF, which is termed one of the first generation NQFs has had a change of legislation from the SAQA Act of 1995, to the NQF Act of 2008. This is seen to be a maturing of the SANQF, towards improved systems for quality assurance, and qualifications development to meet changing labour market and knowledge 'growth' imperatives. Namibia's NQF is fifteen years old and, similar to the SANQF follows outcomes –based approach, and comprises level descriptors, notional hours of learning, and unit standard based and whole qualifications design, covering the spectrum of academic, and vocationally-oriented qualifications. The Namibian NQF is currently in process of legislative amendments. Mauritius and Seychelles have more recently established NQFs, but these are well-established and functioning. Characteristics of their NQFs include level descriptors, and notional hours of learning. The Seychelles NQF is more closely aligned to the Competency-based Modular Training (CBMT) approach, whereas the Mauritian QF follows an outcomes-based approach.

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3.4   Mauritius has a well-developed qualifications framework, and through the MQA, the development of policies for RPL, and the implementation of the practice of RPL has happened in a focused way. As per the Mauritius Qualifications Authority Act (2001), one of the functions of the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) is "to recognize and validate competencies for the purpose of certification obtained outside the formal education and training system." This function is achieved through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) which has been recently launched in Mauritius in 2009. In 2009, RPL was launched in four sectors namely Tourism, Construction, Printing and Plumbing. MQA intends to extend RPL in other disciplines notably Adult   Literacy,   Spray   Painting, Panel Beating, Automotive Mechanics and Electricians. In the near future, MQA will be focusing to apply RPL in all trades. The RPL model as set up in Mauritius comprises of three stages namely the Pre-screening process, the Facilitation process and the Assessment process.

3.5   In the Seychelles context, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) means to recognize and validate competencies obtained inside and outside the formal education and training systems, for purposes of certification. It is a process whereby prior learning acquired formally, non-formally and informally is assessed against standards, which are developed nationally and those 'borrowed' from international NQFs, and are given recognition. *The SQA has a role of coordinating and monitoring the RPL process.* It has also the role of advertising the process of RPL to potential candidates. The SQA has a well-developed system to recognize learning towards the achievement of modules or part-qualifications as well as whole qualifications, for learning regardless of where the learning was achieved.

3.6   The SQA recognizes *equivalence* rather than an exact match between experience and academic learning, which in their context has become necessary. But the assessment of learning from experience, consideration of relevant competencies and equivalence of competencies contained in unit standards of qualification would require a set of agreed criteria, policies and procedures. The overall goal then is to develop well established criteria and mechanisms to recognize prior learning in order to determine whether a candidate meets all or part of the qualification for the attainment of credits.   It is therefore critical that a systematic, nationally approved, approach is developed.   This will protect the integrity of qualifications and the award of credits. Such a system when given the support by all relevant stakeholders will promote learning, create a visible, usable and credible system.

3.7   In the Seychelles the aim of establishing recognition of prior learning in Seychelles is double. *Firstly*, to allow individuals who have gained significant experience in a particular field to be given the opportunity to become qualified. *Secondly*, to grant individuals the just and fair level of qualification which may have been pitched at a lower level on the National Qualifications Framework in the past. In this context RPL is closely allied with the present exercise of rationalizing the qualifications landscape. This is laid down in the RPL policy through its definition.

3.8   The Namibian NQA is legally responsible for developing and maintaining the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) through setting standards and qualifications; quality assurance; accreditation; and equation of qualifications and assessment, including RPL. RPL is intended to provide access and redress the injustices of the past by recognizing and accrediting relevant prior learning and experience. RPL will play an integral role within the Namibian Education and Training sector (Report).

3.9   The South African National Qualifications Authority (SANQF) was initially conceptualized within a strong political context arising from the country's political legacy. Even before the 1994 elections, policy makers, Trade Unions, NGOs and other political and social structures were researching and working towards developing policy for a national qualifications framework, which would address key issues of redress, access, mobility, and recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning for credit. The first task team0s were established in 1992, through the then Department of Manpower. One of the key recommendations was to establish the NQF. Further work happened after 1994.

3.10   The SANQF, regarded as one of the most progressive NQFs of the time, was legislated in 1995, and developed and implemented over the past sixteen years. The SANQF was founded firmly on five objectives. Central to the objectives is the requirement that the NQF would make access to and mobility of learners to education and training at all levels achievable, and transferability and accumulation of credits achieved towards final achievement of qualifications a goal. RPL of non-formal and informal learning remains an objective, as does the full personal development of each individual in South Africa. This means that RPL should be as much part of the delivery of learning programmes and qualifications or part –qualifications achievement as what formal learning is. The SAQA Act was one of the first new 'transformation' Acts legislated which marked the transition to a transforming education and training system. South Africa has a well-developed NQF.

3.11   In Botswana the NQF is still under development. Consequently, processes for validation, recognition and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning are conducted by Botswana Training authority (BOTA). BOTA has developed an RPL process, which is part of their qualifications framework.[5] Non-formal and informal learners are assessed and given credits based on the evidence of their competence.

3.12   Ghana does not have a NQF, and similar to Botswana has an effective TVET quality assurance and qualifications development body called COTVET. Ghana has developed a draft policy for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, and this policy is currently under legal review, before submission to the Minister. The National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Committee (NTVETQC) have also completed work on the development of criteria and regulations for the new framework which takes into account non-formal and informal learning. The lowest two qualifications, namely Proficiency I and II recognize the traditional informal apprenticeship which is major sector in the education and training system.

3.13   Each of the six countries has country has one or more quality assurance body/ies which uphold quality assurance criteria of credibility, validity, relevance, and authenticity in delivery, assessment and certification. In the absence of a fully-functioning NQF, in Ghana and Botswana, the quality assurance bodies such as BOTA and COTVET fulfill vital functions to build communities of trust across the education and training sub-systems nationally and regionally.

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[5] BOTA's qualifications framework (Botswana National Vocational and Qualifications or BNVQ for short is a sectoral qualifications framework.

4. The real drive behind RPL is reforming the education and training system into a diversified system, capturing the full significance of alternative learning pathways

4.1 An effort is being made by **Botswana** the country with regard to this. However a move toward full recognition of non-traditional modes of learning is still handicapped by a belief system that best learning only happens in education and training institutions where formal teaching and learning takes place. Notwithstanding this, the acute shortage of tertiary institutions is forcing a change in the mind set of the learners and other stakeholders. For instance a large college for open and distance learning has been established in Botswana and many learners, particularly those who are employed, use the college for personal academic and professional development. The Department of Out of School Education (DOSET) of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development has a Skills Development Training Programme for out of school children. The programme aims at providing vocational and entrepreneurship skills for out-of-school children who are 16 and above in age. DOSET also sends their learners to Madirelo Training and Testing Centre (MTTC), an institution accredited by BOTA, for assessment. A learner can be awarded a certificate for practical competence after assessment for practical skills. Those who are literate can be assessed for theory and practical skills and be awarded C (T+P) Certificate (Certificate for theory and practice. A learner with a C (T+P) qualification can be attached to industry for 2 years after which they can be assessed and be awarded a Trade Test B Certificate.

4.2 The greatest challenge for education and training institutions is that there are no common national criteria and guidelines for validation, recognition and accreditation of learners' achievements except the sector ones provided by BOTA. Overall, one can conclude that there aren't many institutions in the country that see the significance of availing alternative learning pathways.

4.3 In **Mauritius,** there is now the possibility of academic entry after the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has implemented its policy with a view of implementing RPL for the purpose of academic entry. It is worth mentioning that University of Mauritius (UoM) has also embarked on the RPL process for entry to University courses. Notwithstanding above, *training institutions in Mauritius are not directly linked with RPL.* Potential candidates apply at the MQA, facilitators are assigned by MQA and assessment carried out by the awarding body. Nevertheless some institutions, such as Caritas (an NGO and also a MQA registered training institution) are keen with the project where Adult Literacy is further promoted through RPL, thereby reducing the number of illiterate people in Mauritius. Subsequently, RPL is being gradually accepted by the education and training institutions. *However, it is worthy to note that training institutions are not directly involved in RPL.*

4.4 In the **Seychelles** the whole concept of RPL as well as the idea of accepting and recognising alternative learning pathways have yet to be captured by al the education and training institutions. Most of the education and training institutions are managed by the Department of Education of the Ministry of Education, Employment and Human Resources. These institutions and training centres tend to concentrate on their main role, which is to provide training to young people who have completed secondary schooling. Indeed, the education and training institutions in Seychelles have yet to realize and capture the importance of this approach and to work to integrate it into their work. However, for all qualifications which are being validated by the SQA and placed on the framework (NQF) there is now a requirement that RPL entry to the qualification should be possible. This is now being implemented. It will take some more time, though, for this idea to be fully implemented. To-date there has been three training institutions which have been involved with the RPL process and exercise. There

were previously some RPL assessments carried out, such as the Trade Tests which can be considered as part of RPL, and have been conducted for more than three decades mainly in the vocational and occupational trades. Another example is the upgrading of qualifications in the health sector, in Environmental Health and Health Information, through RPL activities.

4.5   **Namibia** too, in its fifteen-year strategic plan referred to as the Education and training Sector improvement Programme, has been launched to strengthen the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the education and training system in the country. They have realized that 'learning should not be confined to childhood and a brick and mortar environment. Knowledge acquisition cannot be confined to time or place. Learning is therefore a continuous ongoing process' (Country Report).

4.6   In **South Africa** RPL can be applied in differing contexts and there is acknowledgement of the dynamic nature of the construction of knowledge that will come into play as the system matures. Principles of good assessment include fairness, validity, relevance, reliability and practicability. There is a need to look at the intrinsic rather than only the extrinsic value of someone's learning within a particular context and ways in which some forms of knowledge are privileged. RPL in South Africa has a very specific agenda, as it is meant to support transformation of the education and training system, and open up access to education and training, and redress past injustices. SAQA adopted a holistic approach through which it wanted to prevent assessment from becoming a purely technical application, and dislocated from a particular individual and broader context.

4.7   In **Ghana**, the Ministry of Education has an Agency which deals with non-formal education and training mainly for adult learners. Their certification is not linked to the formal education system. The new national qualifications system will take care of the recognition, validation and assessment of such education and training. For general education qualifications framework is summative. The recognition is linked to the framework through formal assessment or examination.

5. Increasing the awareness of and acceptance of recognition among stakeholders

5.1   It is not enough that governments and social partners establish legislation and policies; it is just as important that stakeholders make voluntary commitments at all levels. Only active mutual relationships between individuals and organisations of a wide group of stakeholders can give rise to synergies between the recognition of skills, knowledge and competences acquired outside the formal the educational system. The information from many countries on their policies and practices indicates that partnerships with different stakeholders differ largely. Some countries which exhibit a predominantly shared system of responsibility; however, there are others with a predominance of industry-based processes and the third is where public authorities and government take the leading role as in Botswana and Namibia.

5.2   **Namibia** expresses the challenge that publically funded institutions are duplicating efforts in the education provision, and that this state of affairs is unsustainable. They express the view that synergy between the different education sectors is important in order to develop an integrated and comprehensive learning system for promoting lifelong learning. The **Botswana** Government is collaborating with other stakeholders on establishing the BQNF, which endorses the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and is premised on shared understandings, and involvement of all stakeholders with all aspects of implementing quality assurance for non-formal and informal learning. The Government also plans to promulgate legislation to require all employers to accept and acknowledge experiences of their employees certified through recognition mechanism. Sharing resources is a concrete step to ensure that their vision 2016 is realized, and a sub-committee established for the purpose to monitor

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implementation of the Botswana Revised National Policy on education, also monitors stakeholder involvement and buy-in to the Vision 2016.

5.3   In **South Africa,** there is enabling legislation, and pockets of excellent RPL implementation. Good examples of RPL projects exist in the occupational, Higher Education and Further Education and Training sectors. However, the three sub-sectors still function in silos, and there are legislative barriers to overcome to recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning through RPL assessments. A recent international RPL conference held in South Africa agreed that sub-sector cooperation was important to move the RPL agenda forward. The SETAs are relevant stakeholders which have funded and implemented RPL projects for a number of years, with a measure of success. South Africa has strong institutions, good legislation and the political will to implement RPL across the education and training system, with positive stakeholder support.

5.4   Communication is an important strategy by most countries in creating acceptance among stakeholders The **Seychelles** has recently launched successful communications strategy including TV programmes and DVDs, brochures, media briefings and briefings to Parliament about RPL which has created a 'definite excitement in the country' (Report 2011). The challenge they face is 'how to equip the education and training institutions for them to initiate the RPL exercise and start offering opportunities to potential candidates on a continuous basis' (Country response 2011). **Mauritius** has also followed a focused communication strategy to inform the people in the country about RPL and its benefits, and opportunities. Through the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) they have directed and managed pilot RPL projects, and now they feel the time is right to implement nationally. Their stakeholders have participated meaningfully in the pilots, and in their country response they note that 'each stakeholder is playing its role actively for the promotion of lifelong learning' (Report 2011).

5.5   All the countries are working towards or already have policies for lifelong learning, which is different to RPL, but which would recognize RPL as one of the means of obtaining credit for learning achieved along the lifelong learning pathway. The countries all recognize the need for quality assurance policies and processes to be in place to ensure the validity and authenticity of any recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The countries all have quality assurance bodies, such as the COTVET in Ghana, Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) in Botswana, the quality councils in South

5.6   **Ghana** expressed concern that stakeholders do not recognise their shared responsibility to ensure that *Recognition* happens. Their stakeholders see this as the 'sole responsibility of the policy making agency like COTVET, to provide all the necessary support' (Ghana response to questions, 2011: 2). However there is the intention that industry will participate fully in an education and training-business partnership in many ways.: through Industry Training Advisory Board (ITAB) and its sub-committees; Validation Panels; External Verifiers and in cooperating voluntarily with the learner placement needs for work place experience. In Ghana, industry is participating in assisting the developing of the CBT programmes in TVET programmes has been taken on board, the need has been expressed to have a nationally agreed policy of transferability within general education by introducing credit system and making credits portable;

5.7   **Mauritius** also adopted the strategy to expose major stakeholder to international RPL best practice. MQA has made tremendous effort to increase the awareness of local stakeholders by conducting regular workshops, training, sensitisation campaigns and press adverts. Associations of employers have tremendously helped in the promotion of RPL where they have identified RPL Candidates for the RPL pilot projects. Given that there is no national funding for RPL, the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) and the Mauritius Commercial Bank (MCB) has financed RPL Candidates through institutions, like the Caritas Ltd, which is a good sign for the promotion and development of RPL. It therefore shows that each stakeholder is playing its role actively for the promotion of lifelong learning.

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5.8   The introduction of the NQF, by the **Seychelles** Qualifications Authority (SQA), to stakeholders was very successful as it was seen as the biggest project ever carried out by SQA in the interest of society. However, when the concept of RPL was introduced, it did not take off with the same vigour. This said, the SQA has managed to sensitize several groups in this country – health workers, people in the built environment industry, and human resource development officers in private and public enterprises. The SQA has produced an information DVD which has been aired on the national TV on two occasions with the aim to bring awareness on the subject among stakeholders. But, it can be stated that to date, that there are different interests at stake and that perhaps not all of these are being taken into account.

5.9   An inter-organizational working group comprising of the SQA, the National Human Resources Development Council (NHRDC) and Department of Employment in recognition of this need, was also formed in the last quarter of 2010. The formation of this committee was found necessary since it was realized that in launching RPL and sustaining the RPL drive in the country, it is going to take more than just the efforts of the SQA alone, hence the need to link up with key national actors to make RPL a reality. In this context the Employment Department sensitizes its own workers to RPL, so that they are able to spread the message and encourage workers to undertake RPL, and NHRDC provides direction on manpower sectors ear-marked as potential RPL areas.   In the context of the Hairdressing RPL SQA has been instrumental in pushing, firstly, for the formation of the Hairdressers Association as they realized that without such body, it would be difficult to bring the hairdressers to the RPL trough and to develop standards for the profession locally. With this achieved, they have worked with them and the SLA to launch the RPL. SLA has given their full backing to the project and we have worked with ALDEC, the institution in which the RPL was offered and which will be offering the bridging course for the hairdressers. Here, it has been very much a case of a multi-pronged approach to bring RPL where it could make a difference to the lives of workers.

5.10   Through its efforts, the SQA has been sending the following message to all organizations and agencies in Seychelles RPL is real in Seychelles – it is already beginning and can be used as needed to tackle certain human resource needs, RPL is a credible way of validating and certifying competencies. Worldwide it is already accepted as such. RPL can be used by potential job seekers to obtain qualifications and/or have their competencies validated as part of a qualification; RPL can be a useful tool for employment agencies and HR Managers to encourage potential job seekers to obtain recognition of competencies. Human resource organizations will need to accept and promote RPL qualifications (both in Government and outside). Human resource organizations will need to provide guidance to the SQA as to the RPL priorities that the government may have so that the SQA can address national priorities rather special interests. RPL can be used as a tool for career progression. RPL can be used as a tool to adapt to policy change in relation to revised definition of duties (e.g. secretary to office assistant).

5.11   In Seychelles, the TOR of the Inter-organizational Working Group for RPL (consists of the SQA, SQA engaged consultants and National Human Resource Development Council and Department of Employment representatives) has been set up: to   create mechanisms/structures/procedures as needed to take RPL forward ; to elicit/engage all manner of support from NHRDC and Employment in taking RPL forward; to project the RPL process to the public as a useful tool for gaining qualifications; to lobby the public/job seekers as to the value addition of RPL qualifications in terms of job progression; to convey to the public at large that RPL qualifications are credible and no difference with qualifications obtained through conventional schooling; to consider the integration of trade test as a component of RPL; to lobby SLA to recognize part of a qualification i.e. A number of unit standards obtained through RPL as Trade Test Certificate; to entrench the concept of lifelong learning among the public in general; to come to an agreement as to issue of costing of RPL – for applicants/per organization.

5.12   SQA is the prime mover behind the RPL and NHRDC Employment Department/Employment organizations are the crucial partners of the SQA. The   NHRDC   and   Employment Department/Employment organizations support the SQA in the promotion of RPL and in possibly garnering financial support for the RPL initiatives. Needless to say, the **SQA engaged Consultants to** Assist the SQA and the Inter-governmental committee with their specialist expertise to ensure that the RPL is carried out according to international bench marks and standards; Help in the promotion of RPL to various service areas/industry; Where relevant participates in the assessment of candidates in specialist fields. They will undertake the main tasks.

5.13   The Namibian Ministry of education has provided a mission statement which speaks to the fact that recognition is a shared responsibility. It states that, 'We, in partnership with our stakeholders, are committed to providing all Namibian residents with equitable access to quality education programmes to develop their abilities of individuals to acquire the knowledge, understanding, skills, values and attitudes required throughout their lifetimes."

5.14   Whereas the Mauritian model for implementing RPL was first managed through dedicated pilot projects managed by the MQA, SAQA's approach was to provide policy and criteria and guidelines, which were then utilized by a range of stakeholders – providers, SETAs and ETQAs- to implement RPL projects ranging in reach and scale. Both approaches have merit, although the Mauritian pilot project example may assist to iron out initial challenges to RPL implementation and quality assurance issues in a more streamlined way, than what has happened in the SA context. However, the SA model demonstrates the very strong shared 'ownership' of RPL by*, inter alia,* business, organized labour, education and training institutions, and quality assurance bodies.

6. Approaches to NQF design, assessment and quality assurance

6.1   Use of Learning Outcomes Based references

6.1.1   Not all the countries sampled in this study follow an outcomes-based approach to qualifications design and assessment. **South Africa, Namibia,** and **Mauritius** follow this approach; the Seychelles follows a competency-based approach; **Ghana** and **Botswana** have adopted a Competency Based Modular Training (CBMT) approach especially as they have well-established TVET qualifications frameworks, and systems of assessment, quality assurance and certification. It is envisaged that the new BNQF will follow an outcome-based approach once their NQF is fully operational across all education sub-sectors.

6.1.2.   What emerges from the countries reports is the heavy competency focus in TVET frameworks despite the acknowledgement of a learning-outcomes approach in the framing of national qualifications frameworks. In Botswana, for example, there is either misunderstanding of what outcome-based learning is or should achieve. Generally Botswana's **education system** is not outcome based. If anything it is competency based. This comes out clearly where out of school learners are assessed for competency in particular areas. There is also lack of understanding as to how learning outcomes-based system will be applied in the knowledge domain based sector such as tertiary education.

6.1.3   Many countries seem to be saying that they are adopting an outcomes-based learning approach, which they call Competency Based Training. Ghana's mainstream education reform is neither using the Competency Based Training (CBT) nor Outcomes-Based. Its technical and vocational education training (TVET) reform is using the name CBT but with the

outcomes-based concept. In Ghana the CBR has successfully been piloted in three TVET institutions. They are in the stage of rolling out the concept on a national scale.

6.1.4   It is necessary to acknowledge that CBT is different to learning outcomes-based approaches. Broad definitions of both show the difference. *Competency-based training* focuses broadly on what the participant is expected to be able to do in the workplace as opposed to just having theoretical knowledge. It also focuses not only on actual jobs that are required in the workplace, but also the ability to transfer and apply skills, knowledge, and attitudes to new situations and environments. An *Outcome-based approach* is learner-centred, results-orientated system founded on the belief that all individuals can learn ((Towers, 1996, p 19). It incorporates a method of teaching, learning and assessing which focuses on what learners can actually do, know, evaluate, analyse, et cetera, after they have been in a learning programme. (Lorenzen, M. http://www.libraryinstruction.com/obe.html. 2011).

6.1.5   The use of learning outcomes takes on significance as countries move towards the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. As Ghana moves towards recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning, they may need to consider including an outcomes-based approach together with the CBT model. In countries like Mauritius, with a unified qualification established prior to the launching of RPL, Unit Standards which are outcome-based have enabled the RPL.. It is worth mentioning that outcome-based learning is now being used by several providers and the concept of outcome-based assessment is currently being loaded into. However, RPL assessment is different from the formal system. In this particular case, evaluation grids are prepared by the grouping of Unit Standards, called competences. The evaluation grid is used by RPL candidates to build their portfolio, by RPL Facilitators for guiding the candidates and by RPL Assessors for Assessment.

6.1.6   It is not enough to have frameworks that are learning outcomes based; their application through providers is important. In Seychelles, which has adopted training using the competency based approach (CBA) for many years now, several training institutions have already developed and are implementing new CBA courses whilst others are still developing and reviewing others using the CBA. With the arrival of the NQF, institutions have had to ensure that their courses and training programmes meet the requirement of SQA for validation. Learning outcomes and competences for those programmes have to match the level descriptors and qualifications on the NQF. Several institutions have already passed this stage and they should have no problem to undertake RPL exercises in the future. Other institutions are still in the process of developing new training courses using the CBA to produce learning outcomes which would match the level of descriptors and qualifications on the NQF. It will take a while before all training programmes will have all their competencies and learning outcomes written in a systematic, outcomes-base, approach. Lack of trained manpower in competency based training approach tends to delay the task of completing some programmes.

6.1.7   The South African NQF is underpinned by an outcomes-based approach and philosophy. All qualifications, whether they are unit standard based or whole qualifications with exit-level outcomes, are developed using the outcomes –based approach.

6.2   Quality assurance for certification processes

6.2.1   The six countries all have relatively transparent quality assurance for certification processes. RPL in Seychelles is based on learning outcomes (standards) which dictate what is to be assessed. Already, this should provide one element of quality assurance. The other element is that institutions will have to go through an accreditation process which will look at how assessment (including for RPL) is carried out. RPL which is more than 25% of a qualification is directly coordinated by the SQA. RPL assessment is the same as in formal courses and hence this is a safe guard of quality. However there is a lot of work to be done ahead. For instance, there needs to be training of assessors and this is a weak point that needs to be taken up. RPL assessment needs to be more adequately moderated. A greater variety of assessment

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models need to be used. We need to train RPL facilitators and coordinators. RPL certification in the country is to be done by the Ministry of Education, Employment and Human Resources.

6.2.2   In the absence of a NQF, **Ghana**, and **Botswana** have well established quality assurance bodies such as COTVET in Ghana and BOTA in Botswana. Non-formal and informal learning is subjected to quality assurance measures stipulated by Botswana Training Authority (BOTA). There are many sector **quality assurance systems** in Botswana. However there are no national guidelines and criteria for quality assurance. In Ghana COTVET is governed by a 15-member Board made up of stakeholders and three standing Committees, one of which is specifically for quality assurance and accreditation.   The Namibian Training Authority (NTA) is a recognized quality assurance body in the vocational and occupational fields.

6.2.3   The quality assurance processes are in their initial phases in Seychelles. This country is at the point of rationalizing the qualification landscape. The next stage is to actually move to the accreditation of training providers. The two processes when completed should provide transparent quality assurance for certification processes.

6.2.4   South Africa has well-developed and transparent quality assurance for certification processes. These are written into the NQF Act, which legislates the roles of SAQA, the three quality councils regarding quality assurance practices. Transparent QA processes are also well documented in SAQA policy and criteria documents. SAQA has conducted two audits of quality assurance processes and implementation across the activities of all the quality assurance bodies serving FET and HE, from which reports have been written and are freely available to the public.

6.2.5   Fenwick (2010), Colardyn and Bjørnåvold (2004), the OECD (2010), *inter alia*, are not alone in their call for deeper research and application of quality practices in the field of recognition and validation of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning. In a recent conference hosted by the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) various presenters referred to the need to strengthen research and implementation around this same issue. They highlighted the need to focus on the recognition of learning in the workplace as a type of learning, and recognition thereof and promotion of formal and non-formal training (SAQA 2011).

6.3   Summative and Formative assessments

6.3.1   None of the countries in this study have strongly directive policies regarding summative and formative assessments. Assessment practices for non-formal and informal learning cover written formative and summative assessment; portfolios of evidence building; oral assessments; or mixed modes extending to e-assessment mechanisms. Recognition of the importance of aligning qualifications, assessment and quality assurance practices to labour market requirements in order to 'make visible' the outcomes of assessment, is becoming more apparent across the various quality assurance, skills development and education and training bodies.

6.3.2   There is an awareness among recognition policy makers and implementers in all countries that both formative and summative assessments of non-formal and informal learning are important for the achievement of qualifications. In South Africa, for example, all qualifications recorded on the National Learners Records database have provided sections dealing with assessment, both formative and summative. SAQA has also developed policy and criteria documents about all forms of assessment. These have been used by accredited providers. Through the TVETQF in Ghana, room has been made for recognition of prior learning based on specific learning outcomes. Since the delivery modes under this framework include the workplace and the informal sector, assessment may take different forms including portfolio gathering, performance evidence at one's work place as well as formal written evidence, interview or demonstration/performance. Informal learning will be accommodated under the framework and will be assessed using national standards developed for the specific trade and level of training.

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6.3.3   In Mauritius, various workshops had been conducted prior to launching of RPL, and in particular for the RPL Assessment. RPL captures all types of learning: formal, informal and non-formal. This is also reflected in the portfolio and same is assessed during the RPL Assessment.   To date, local awarding bodies have already taken necessary measures to conduct the RPL Assessment while considering the types of progression pathways. Alternative learning pathways exist in Mauritius through the Apprenticeship system. Additionally, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) also serves as a tool to provide clear pathways to the learners prior to embarking on any course.

6.3.4   In Botswana progression pathways do exist. However they are not clear. One of the objectives of Botswana's qualifications framework is to ensure that each sector of education and training develops clear learning pathways. In the Seychelles, progression pathways are those that are indicated on the NQF. A candidate will have to achieve a certificate before moving on to an advanced certificate. This said, however, during the RPL processes there is the possibility for a candidate to qualify for a credit above the level of qualification applied for, even though his application is for an award below. A candidate may achieve part of a qualification or even a whole qualification through RPL, though at degree level the rule is that one can only be eligible for 50% of a qualification. The difficulty presently is to have an understanding with training providers to offer bridging courses for RPL candidates to so as to enable them to have fully portable qualifications to move up the NQF levels with. The SQA will require international assistance to learn from experienced countries and to establish them accordingly. There will be different methods for conducting assessment for different situations. The assessment will be based on fairness, validity and evidence. The methods used should be comparable to methods used in formal education and training system for purpose of parity of esteem and consistency of the qualification obtained.

6.4   Mechanisms, basic tools and instruments for the identification, documentation and validation of learning outcomes

6.4.1   In Botswana these are not currently in place.   In **Botswana different institutions have developed different methods.** A Portfolio of Evidence is commonly used in accredited centres that offer technical and vocational programmes to out-of-school learners. Madirelo Training and Testing Centre (MTTC) and the Department of Out of School Education and Training (DOSET) are two such centres. However these two and several others follow the assessment criteria stipulated by the Botswana Training Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) which is the accrediting body. Another common mechanism for validation and recognition of acquired under non-conventional modes is written assessment. This is commonly used at the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCDOL) and at MTTC where some of the learners take knowledge-based courses which require the application of traditional assessment mechanisms.

6.4.2   Currently, Ghana has no basic tools and equipments for the identification, documentation and validation of learning outcomes from the non-formal and informal learners. As of now in **Ghana** there is no policy on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal however, some mechanism such as oral, written, observation and demonstration assessments are generally used to recognize and validate learners in the informal and non-formal sector

6.4.3   Mauritius has a well developed process. The Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) which replaces the Industrial Vocational Training Board (IVTB has already set up its system for RPL Assessment.   The portfolio of evidence is document containing essential information about the RPL candidate. RPL assessors read the portfolio, which is the essence of RPL, and benchmark it against the Unit Standards of the qualification and formulate the questions they intend to ask to the RPL Candidate. The RPL model as set up in Mauritius comprises of three stages namely the Pre-Screening process, the Facilitation process and the Assessment process.

6.4.4   In the Seychelles a lot of work has been done and more is being done to have tools to use in facilitating, coordinating and assessing in place. It is really an on-going process where lessons are being learnt and corrections are being made during the actual RPL process. The **SQA** has taken the stance that the importance *of recognizing equivalence rather than an exact match* between experience and academic learning is becoming necessary.   The development of a set of agreed criteria, policies and procedures is on-going for this purpose so as to protect the integrity of qualifications and the award of credits. It is based on a rigorous system of credit transfer and a performance-type of competencies assessment. This is where the candidate is required to perform certain task or tasks at hand.

6.4.5   Most countries are striving towards ensuring that qualifications obtained through the formal education system or through RPL process will have the same value and weight for employment consideration and education and training access. South Africa has a sophisticated national learners records database (NLRD) which has the capacity to record all qualifications, providers, assessors, moderators and learning achievements. The NLRD has the capacity to record whether the qualification was obtained through RPL or through formal learning processes, although the certificates provided to graduating learners does not display this distinction..

7. Appreciation of recognition for marginalized population groups

7.1   Each of the countries on the study confirmed unequivocal understanding of and support for the potential of non-formal and informal learning as an empowerment tool for marginalized populations and individuals. In **Namibia**, adult education, which includes formal and non-formal and informal learning is a national priority and would address developmental challenges such as unemployment, poverty and social inequalities, and their focus on the poorest of the poor to undergo Recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Each country has expressed recognition that alternatives need to be implemented to open access and encourage participation in recognition of non-formal and informal learning to empower marginalized people, and to bring them into the 'mainstream' of economic activity through such recognition.

7.2   All six countries recognize that recognition of non-formal and informal learning has to be made an explicit part of the lifelong learning strategy, education and training policies and a diversified and integrated system of education. This is not only for educational achievements and awards, but opens access to the large talent pool of knowledge, skills, competences and values that exist in the marginalized, or the population of learners who either did not complete learning or were disadvantaged to the extent that they could not complete formal education and training to the levels required by a changing labour market. In this regard, **South Africa**'s NQF Act places *Recognition* within the NQF Act as a direct responsibility of SAQA; similarly, Seychelles and Mauritius qualifications authorities have responsibility to ensure that Recognition of non-formal and informal learning happens**. Mauritius** has piloted recognition of non-formal and informal learning projects with good success, and building on these successes, they will implement recognition of non-formal and informal learning across other economic and education sectors. **Seychelles** has in inter-governmental support committee that monitors and coordinates RPL initiatives.

7.3   **Botswana** is fully aware of the potential for recognition of skills and knowledge possessed by people without formal education or who are unemployed. This explains why the Government of Botswana is pushing for the establishment of a national qualifications framework. It is expected that the framework will be accompanied by a robust Recognition of Prior Learning tool which will help in assessing individuals who have learned through non-conventional modes. Botswana believes that the national qualifications framework will motivate the people of Botswana to learn using various flexible modes of learning, bearing in mind that their skills

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and knowledge will be recognized. Botswana's Vision 2030 provides evidence that they see the potential of non-formal and informal learning to develop their people, and their economy. Botswana has spent a lot of money on literacy and numeracy programmes, and can proudly 'boast' of having one of the highest literacy rates in Africa, estimated to be about 81% literacy for the Botswana population.

7.4   In **Ghana**, the lowest two qualifications in the National TVET qualifications framework, namely Proficiency I and II recognize the traditional informal apprenticeship which is major sector in the education and training system. In Ghana, the Ministry of Education has an Agency which deals with non-formal education and training mainly for adult learners. Their certification is not linked to the formal education system. The new national qualifications system will take care of the recognition, validation and assessment of such education and training

7.5   It is a fact that RPL being a new concept is taking its own time to be inculcated in the Mauritian culture. However, with the growing number of applications received over time, *the initial lack of awareness is gradually overcome.* With a view to integrate people back to education and training, MQA has also introduced RPL in Adult Literacy. Subsequently, such people will be better equipped to join Vocational courses. This has become a motivating factor for those people by boosting their self-esteem and self-confidence. Furthermore, Government has set up a Ministry of Social integration under the Vice Prime Minister. The Vice Prime Minister in a recent press conference commented on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for marginalized population.

7.6   In the **Seychelles,** this is may be true for the system in general. However, SQA is slowly changing attitudes following recent TV programmes with the release of its DVD on RPL. There appears to be a kind of excitement emerging among the general public, organizations and institutions in Seychelles. However, the issue now is how to respond to the excitement and motivation of those people. One important question preoccupying many is how to equip education and training institutions for them to initiate this RPL exercise and start offering opportunities to potential candidates on a continuous basis. SQA sees the purpose of RPL to be beneficial to learners, in that through the RPL assessments **they can develop personally, as well as professionally.**

145.   **South Africa's** strong focus on RPL as part of the redress and transformation agendas of the education and training system of the country bear testimony to the sensitivity of the needs of marginalized groups. Further, the SAQA approach to RPL has sought to address the context and conditions that inform the practice. This means taking steps to remove the emotional, educational, and cultural factors that may constitute barriers to effective learning and assessment practice. The holistic approach also recognizes the rich diversity of knowledge, and learning styles which candidates bring into the assessment situation.

8. Core skills for lifelong learning and sustainable skills development in Africa

8.1   The six countries selected for this study were each asked to provide comment on what they considered could be common core skills for lifelong learning and sustainable socio-economic development in Africa. Taking into consideration the rapid technological changes coupled with the fact that illiteracy rate in Africa is very high **Botswana** has identified functional numeracy, literacy skills which are appropriate for an individual's work; basic functional ICT knowledge and skills; problem solving skill; entrepreneurial skills; development of indigenous skills.

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8.2   **Ghana** has identified Basic Literacy Basic Numeracy, Information and communication Technology, Entrepreneurship, Interpersonal Skills/HIV and AIDS and Basic Trade Science as core skills which can facilitate lifelong learning and sustainable socio-economic growth in Africa.

8.3   **Mauritius** responds to this question by highlighting the fact that the implementation of RPL is seen as crucial to boost up the socio-economic development in Africa. It is now widely accepted that RPL promotes lifelong learning and contributes towards a qualified labour force. MQA has developed a qualification entitled National Certificate in Adult Literacy Level 1 and has also extended RPL to Adult Literacy. This initiative has been taken with a view to give formal qualification to such people and subsequently to bring them back to education and training system. In so doing, not only the life/work experience of such people is recognized but it also boosts up their self-esteem, confidence and motivation to enter the formal education and training system.

8.4   In the **Seychelles**, communication is considered as an important aspect for development of a person as a worker and contributor to the economy. Communication is an essential skill which the Seychellois citizen should acquire in life. To-date communication stresses on the use of English as the common language. This is especially important if a person is to go beyond the national borders (important in Seychelles as we are an outward looking people). But communication in assessment can also be considered for use in the local language, especially in oral assessment. Three other common core skills are considered essential for lifelong learning. They are Numeracy and Information Technology (IT) and life skills. Working with numbers is an everyday activity for all and with the arrival of computer technology in almost every aspect of life, it is important that information technology is understood by everyone. Life skills are about social behaviours, ethics and so on. In any event these form the core of our essential unit standards, of which all students should master at certificate or advanced certificate level of the NQF.

8.5   Through the Critical cross-field outcomes (CCFOs) and the fundamental component which is compulsory in the level two to four qualifications, **South Africa** is sending clear signals of what it considers to be common core skills for lifelong learning. Summarized, the CCFOs require all qualifications to display outcomes reflecting learners' ability to be able to identify and solve problems, using critical and creative thinking; work in teams; organize and manage themselves and their activities; collect, analyze organize and critically evaluate information; communicate effectively; demonstrate the world as a set of related systems; and be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts. The Fundamental component of qualifications comprises communication/language, numeracy and mathematical unit standards, as well a financial literacy unit standards. These core skills go beyond the realm of subjects or fields of learning. They speak to the crux of citizenry, enabling tools for personal and economic development and for social development and stability.

8.6   **Botswana** has developed a Vision for 2016, in which sharing educational resources is seen as a concrete step that Botswana can take to ensure the realization of the national Vision for 2016. Extended use of schools by adults attending evening classes, shared use of libraries, private sector training institutions, community based organizations, civil society institutions (e.g. churches), underlies the concept to enable the citizens of Botswana to access to face to face learning across their life span. This speaks not only to stakeholder buy-in and direct involvement, but also to sustainability issues which will obviate the need for unnecessary duplication of resources, and constitute a direct saving of training Pula, building resources, and other resources which strain the environment. Central to the strategy for the education and training system to enhance its capacity are plans to coordinate policy initiatives across different sectors. The Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) established a sub-committee on out-of School Education, which has been playing a leading role in monitoring the implementation of the RNPE.

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8.7   **Botswana** has a Communications Technology policy which was developed to provide Botswana with a road map that will drive social, economic, cultural and political transformation through the effective use of information and communications technology in the years ahead. The first objective of the ICT policy is to create a culture of LLL that maximizes the potential of all citizens and accelerates innovation to develop a knowledge based system. 'A sustainable ICT-driven transformation and national growth will only be achieved through development of local skills and expertise, with particular emphasis on the development of ICT skills in children and young adults. In order for Botswana to achieve the goal of a "knowledge based society" as outlined in Vision 2016.

8.8   **Namibia** has developed a 'Vision 2030 which will create policy synergy and will link long-term perspectives to short-term planning' (UNESCO 2010:7). The current Namibian system is not able to implement the Vision 2030, hence the adoption of the Education and Training Sector Improvement Programme (ETSIP). Its key purpose is to substantially enhance the sector's contribution to the attainment of strategic national development goals and to facilitate the transition to a knowledge-based economy. Namibia has also adopted a 'pro-poor approach to the distribution of opportunities for high quality and market responsive education and training opportunities' (UNESCO: 11).

8.9   The priority and most critical areas to be addressed are divided into objectives such as to ensure that adult and lifelong learning and information service sector programmes are relevant and responsive to the needs of a learning society. Sustainable development relies on delivery of relevant learning programmes to all sectors of the population, through formal and non-formal and informal learning; another of the objectives is to 'expand equitable access to quality information and lifelong learning programmes, and the need for a widely based learning programme that supports the disadvantaged people in their efforts to work their way out of poverty. A further element of the sustainable development agenda is the extension programmes such as adult skills development for self-employment, which is an entrepreneurial programme for business, to all regions with the assistance of other partners.

8.10   **Namibia's** sustainability agenda includes the development of a knowledge-based economy where skills of various degrees and magnitude would be required for improved standards of living. The TVET system is expected to play a key role in the new economy in both the areas of traditional trades and new learning areas focusing on tourism, computing and design.

9. Identifying the skills requirement through labour market research

9.1   Labour market research and analysis in **Botswana** has not been a robust undertaking. This may explain why the country is experiencing a great mismatch between supply and demand of labour. It goes without saying that the labour market research and analysis has been unreliable. Consequently as of 2007 Botswana commenced the process of establishing a Labour Market Observatory whose function, inter alia, would be to: develop labour market information system (LMI) and analysis of existing national data sets; collect, collate and analyze labour data; conduct sector skill studies identify and determine skill requirements; develop a job opportunity index in order to understand the nature and extent of demand for skills and labour.

9.2   The labour market in **Ghana** is so fragmented and uncoordinated and as such it makes it extremely difficult to gather data. Moreover agencies that are supposed to gather on such group of learners seem not to exist. Meanwhile, COTVET is making a focused effort to develop demand and supply analysis to support the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learners. The rationale for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning through the proposed TVQF is to: enhance the economic and industrial value of the qualifications by influencing the content, context and delivery of the programmes as well as ensuring a rapid response to technological change; Enhance the participation of the employees

into a flexible mode of delivery learning to develop the technical/vocational skills and Key/core skills; Make easier the portability of credits and foster the transferability across educational institutions; Offer learners who choose to go through the TVET pathway an opportunity to get to the highest level just as in general education.

9.3   In **Mauritius** all the Qualifications developed under the NQF are developed by ITACs. ITACs comprise people from both the public and private sector. Formerly, MES was chairing the panel but following to the change in the Awarding body, MITD now chairs the Committee. The participation of the private sector is very crucial as they absorb most of the NQF qualification holders. The Unit Standards have been derived in such a way that they reflect the country's requirements and also cater for the performance criteria which is helpful for assessment. As per information being gathered from RPL candidates who have already acquired their qualification, some of them have been promoted in their jobs. This is a very positive sign of the acceptability of the RPL Candidates, and would possibly point to the fact that the qualifications, the delivery and the assessment outcomes meet the labour market requirements in Mauritius. Additionally, it is worth noting that the certificate issued to RPL Candidates is similar to that obtained through formal education.

9.4   In a context where IMF encouraged retrenchment is taking place NHRDC has been made aware of the possibility of considering RPL to support government programmes where retraining or upgrading of workers is required to keep people in employment. To-date NHRDC has not really been forthcoming in the provision of data possibly because they do not themselves have such comprehensive data

9.5   Presently, it is more of a case of sectors coming forward to make their case. SQA and institutions then embark on a journey to develop learning outcomes and standards to move in with RPL strategies. However, thus far interest has been expressed for RPL of office workers to become office assistant and office managers as they are now referred to in the context of **Seychelles**. Likewise, there is a desire by education officials to RPL auxiliary teachers so that they become fully qualified teachers in schools. The hospitality sector tends to be a potential area to be explored as well.

9.6   Given **South Africa's** population demographics, age distribution, literacy and unemployment rates at the time, and to date, and its skills shortages in critical economic sectors, RPL was seen to have the potential to serve the needs of both individuals and the SA Labour market and economy. A piece of legislation that was very important to the next level of RPL implementation was the Skills Development Act (SDA) of 1998, through which 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities are established. Their core functions are to conduct labour market research, from which annual sector skills plans were developed. These plans included an analysis of the scarce and critical skills which needed to be addressed in each sector. They are also required to disburse mandatory and discretionary grants to companies in their economic sector jurisdiction, to perform skills development initiatives.

9.7   There currently exists a lack of understanding or possibly acknowledgement of the validity and relevance of the SETAs Sector Skills Plans, their labour market research results, and their scarce and critical skills research outcomes. Because of this lack of understanding, the HE and FET sectors continue to operate in silos, of what they believe the economy needs in terms *of outputs* of graduates with types of qualifications, and the numbers of such graduates required. In its turn the business fraternity criticizes the school curriculum, the FET sector's unresponsiveness and the poor quality of HE graduates, without providing concrete statements of requirements, content, and the type of knowledge, skills and competence they would like graduates from the three sub-sectors to display. It will take conscious decision-making to become more attuned to both the individual sub-sector requirements and the bigger picture requirements, from all stakeholders and role players, to change the existing paradigm.

	Botswana	**Ghana**	**Mauritius**	**Namibia**	**Seychelles**	**South Africa**
	practices followed.	strongly directive policies regarding summative and formative assessments. There is a variety of assessment practices followed.			followed.	
Appreciation of recognition for marginalized population groups	Unequivocal understanding of and support for the potential of non-formal and informal learning as an empowerment tool for marginalized populations and individuals. *Recognition* needs to be made an explicit part of LLL	Unequivocal understanding of and support for the potential of non-formal and informal learning as an empowerment tool for marginalized populations and individuals. *Recognition* needs to be made an explicit part of LLL	Unequivocal understanding of and support for the potential of non-formal and informal learning as an empowerment tool for marginalized populations and individuals. *Recognition* needs to be made an explicit part of LLL	Unequivocal understanding of and support for the potential of non-formal and informal learning as an empowerment tool for marginalized populations and individuals. *Recognition* needs to be made an explicit part of LLL	Unequivocal understanding of and support for the potential of non-formal and informal learning as an empowerment tool for marginalized populations and individuals. *Recognition* needs to be made an explicit part of LLL	Unequivocal understanding of and support for the potential of non-formal and informal learning as an empowerment tool for marginalized populations and individuals. *Recognition* needs to be made an explicit part of LLL
Core skills for lifelong learning and sustainable skills development in the six countries, and the African continent	Functional Literacy, Numeracy, Functional ICT knowledge, Problem solving, entrepreneurial skills, development of indigenous skills.	Basic Literacy and numeracy; ICT; Entrepreneurship; Interpersonal skills; Basic trades and sciences; as core skills.	Literacy and numeracy; as access skills into further and higher learning opportunities. RPL seen as a key enabler for economic growth due to increase in available skilled people.	Their 2030 vision encompasses the need to grow the Namibian economy into a globally-competitive knowledge-based economy. They have adopted a pro-poor approach to the distribution of opportunities of high quality and market responsive education and	Communication is seen as an essential skill. Numeracy; ICT; IT; Life skills.	Numeracy and Literacy; ICT; Sciences; Communication; the Critical Cross Field Outcomes (CCFOs)encompassing citizenry; life skills, cognitive and analytical skills.

	Botswana	**Ghana**	**Mauritius**	**Namibia**	**Seychelles**	**South Africa**
				training opportunities.		
Identifying the skills requirement through labour market research	This is not yet a robust undertaking, resulting in a current mismatch between supply and demand of labour. As of 2007 Botswana established a Labour Market Observatory to develop labour market information systems to research, analyse, collate data and develop a job opportunity index.	The labour market is fragmented and uncoordinated making it difficult to collect reliable data. COTVET is researching and analyzing what the labour market demands are and how to supply skilled labour. They focus on support to learners' to have recognition and validation of their non-formal and informal learning. Ghana is using the data to enhance content in qualifications, and to ensure a rapid response to technological changes, flexible delivery modes, and increase Recognition opportunities to learners.	Industry bodies participate in the development of qualifications and standards. These have been derived from labour market analysis, and are designed to reflect the country's skills development needs to feed its labour market requirements. RPL is a key to ensuring that demand for and supply of skills remains fluid and dynamic.	Namibia has a national HRD council, which advises regarding labour market drivers. To date, the collection, collation and analysis of data has not been very successful, and there are renewed attempts to obtain reliable data. There is insufficient evidence about whether RPL is used as a mechanism to bolster and grow the skills base required by the labour market.	In the Seychelles the economic sectors work with the SQA to develop qualifications and assessment strategies to address labour market needs. Recognition happens in partnership with the sectors that identify their skills needs and then develop assessments to address skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning.	There is a sophisticated research system into the labour market through the Sector Education and training Authorities (SETAs), through the Sector Skills Plan research. Unfortunately the research results do not permeate the current institutional landscape, and few institutions work with or use the SSP research to ensure a demand and supply approach to learning programme design and delivery. This systemic disjuncture is costing South Africa dearly, in that scarce and critical skills are not addressed to scale. RPL is happening in pockets of praxis, but not to scale.