

**The Implementation of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)  
and Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQFs) in ECOWAS Countries**

Final Report

Anne-Marie Charraud and Patrick Werquin, Paris, 22 March 2011

## **Summary of the Call**

Background

Duties and Responsibilities

The ECOWAS Members States

## **Introduction**

### **Chapter 1. Background**

1.1. The ECOWAS Policy Agenda for TVET: The Emergence of Qualifications Frameworks

1.2. The Actions by UNESCO-BREDA Regarding Qualifications Frameworks

1.3. Qualifications Frameworks: A Rationale

### **Chapter 2. Emerging Issues**

2.1. The TVET Challenges

2.2. Qualifications Frameworks as Tools for Reform in TVET

2.3. Multiple objectives – Multiples Qualifications Frameworks

2.4. Addressing the Issue of the Value of TVET: Two Case studies

2.4.1. The Kaduna Experience: A Regional Approach to Curricula

2.4.2. The Gambia Initiative: A Case Study

2.5. Changing Paradigm

### **Chapter 3. Definitions and Methods**

3.1. The Origins of National Qualifications Frameworks

3.2. Practices and Typologies of National Qualification Frameworks

3.3. A Mapping of the Existing National Qualifications Frameworks

### **Chapter 4. The Regional Approach – Examples of Regional Qualifications Frameworks**

4.1. The European Qualification Framework (EQF)

4.2. The Mauritius Transnational Qualification Framework

4.3. The African and Madagascan Council for Higher Education (*“Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l’Enseignement Supérieur”* – CAMES)

4.4. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Project

### **Chapter 5. Ways Forward**

5.1. The Competence Based Qualification Design

5.2. The Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes

5.3. Previous Draft of a Road Map

5.3.1. Main Steps to Establish a NQF

5.3.2. Important Considerations

5.3.3. About the Implementation of a Regional Qualifications Framework (RQF)

5.4. Proposed Working Methods

Appendix 1. Organisation of the Workshops, January 2010, Dakar

Appendix 2. The Glossary of the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF)

Appendix 3. The Glossary of European Qualification Framework (EQF)

## **Summary of the Call**

### **Background**

*Over the past decade, many countries in the ECOWAS sub-region have developed policies and strategies aimed at strengthening their TVET institutions and skills development programmes. The acquisition of employable skills, particularly by the youth, is seen as a pre-requisite for entry into gainful employment and achievement of sustainable livelihoods. At the national level, a skilled workforce is an important driver of economic growth. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has therefore assumed some prominence on the human resource and economic development agenda of many countries in the region and in Africa as a whole.*

*Given the importance of TVET in economic development and poverty reduction, UNESCO-BREDA, UNDP and ECOWAS have been spearheading a number of initiatives to revitalize TVET provision in the ECOWAS member states. The first of these recent initiatives was the TVET revitalization workshop that was held in August 2009 in Abuja-Nigeria as a follow up to the meeting of ECOWAS Education Ministers and TVET experts of ECOWAS member states held in March 2009 in Abuja. The workshop also underscored the need to move up from problem identification to the actual implementation of good practices founded on innovative partnerships for effective TVET delivery.*

*The second initiative was the implementation of one of the key recommendations of the Abuja Workshop on the creation of an Inter Agency Task Team (IATT) to coordinate the activities of the technical and financial partners in the area of TVET policy development, reforms, and implementation. To this end, UNDP-WACA funded a consultancy to provide technical and intellectual support for the launching of the IATT. The consultancy report formed the basis for the inaugural meeting of the IATT held in Dakar-Senegal in April 2010 which was attended by a number of agencies, including UNDP, UNIDO, UNESCO-BREDA, UNEVOC, and ILO.*

*In order to establish a firm basis for the IATT to carry out its multi-pronged programmes and effectively coordinate the activities of the IATT member agencies, the services of two consultants will be required to conduct two jointed studies to identify and document on-going TVET projects and programmes aimed at addressing the issues of skills development and youth employment in the sub-region and to develop a road map for Regional Qualification Framework. This present document is about the recruitment of the consultant in charge of the second area of concern (RQF development).*

### **Duties and responsibilities**

*Working under the overall guidance of IATT for TVET and the direct supervision of the Coordinator of the Regional Programme for Social Cohesion and Youth Employment in Sub Saharan Africa (YERP), the Capacity development Team Leader in the UNDP RCD and the TVET Programme Officer at UNESCO-BREDA, the consultant will be required to:*

- Map and document the certification and validation frameworks at the country level;*
- Identify challenges, resource constraints and bottle-necks in national TVET delivery systems concerning development of National Qualification Framework including informal sector and traditional apprenticeship*
- Develop a Framework for a Regional Qualification Framework for the ECOWAS region . The areas of focus for the certification framework will be determined in consultation with countries at the start of the consultancy.*
- Map the opportunities for implementing a Regional Qualification Framework at the ECOWAS level;*
- Define criteria for the designation of centres of excellence for the delivery of TVET programmes in the ECOWAS region*

- Map and identify potential Centres of excellence for the delivery of TVET programmes within the ECOWAS region; and

- Define a road map for adoption of a Regional Qualification Framework that secure recognition of qualification between the State Members in order to facilitate mobility of trained workers in the ECOWAS sub-region.

The expected outputs of the proposed consultancy are:

- Framework for a Regional Qualification Framework for the ECOWAS sub-region in 3 or 4 areas which will be agreed upon.

- Road Map for adoption of a Regional Qualification Framework at ECOWAS level in 3 or 4 areas;

- Definition of Criteria for the designation of Centre of Excellence for the delivery of TVET;

- Mapping and identification of Centre of Excellence in ECOWAS region; and

- A guide for each Member State to define or finalize a policy and implement a national strategy on Qualification and validation Framework with focus on employability.

### The ECOWAS Members States



## **Introduction**

The objective of this study is to shed light on the main principles for the establishment of national and regional qualifications frameworks and to reflect on support for it. This approach through qualifications frameworks is only one component of a broader research programme on the development of technical vocational education and training (TVET) in the countries covered by the study, the ECOWAS member states. This study is also aiming at promoting the use of qualifications, and therefore qualifications frameworks, for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Finally, the study is aiming at promoting the use of qualifications frameworks for planning TVET provision in relation to the economic demand.

These three objectives suppose a considerable investment from national institutions. They are promoted by institutions such as ILO, UNDP and UNESCO, which strongly encourage the implementation of qualifications frameworks and the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. Other international organisations such as ADEA, the African Union, ECOWAS and UNESCO-BREDA also put these objectives at the top of their agenda.

As part of the context, in September 2000, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as part of their Millennium Declaration. Later in the process, the Goal 1B – *Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people* – was added to the list of MDGs as a sub objective of MDG1. This is highly relevant for Sub Saharan African (SSA) countries, especially in the context of this study. The establishment of qualifications frameworks, whether national or regional, is a typical response to some of the MDGs.

The African Union, through the Action Plan for the Second Decade for Education in Africa (2006-2015) launched in January 2005 in Khartoum (Sudan), mentioned the establishment of NQFs and RQFs as suitable actions.

During their conference in March 2009 in Abuja (Nigeria), ECOWAS Education Ministers, among other things, committed to engage into actions permitting the achievement of these three objectives. After the conference, a seminar was set up in Abuja again, in August 2009, aiming at implementing the ECOWAS priorities defined in March 2009. In this context, UNDP and UNESCO-BREDA set up a task force entitled **Inter Agency Task Team (IATT)** with the purpose of coordinating the partnerships among the different stakeholders, whether technical or financial, involved in the implementation of TVET policies. The different partners involved in the IATT are: ILO, UNDP, UNIDO, UNESCO-BREDA and UNEVOC. Additional organisations were then invited to join: ADB, ADEA... A first IATT working party took place in Dakar in April 2010.

During this first IATT working party, the group called for a technical support in order to define a road map for the development of a regional qualifications framework in the ECOWAS Sub Region. This document aims at providing such technical help about qualifications frameworks. It comprises five chapters:

### **Chapter 1. Background**

Background leading to the establishment of national qualifications framework and regional qualifications framework in ECOWAS countries

### **Chapter 2. Emerging Issues**

Issues around vocational education and training in relation with other education systems and current initiatives as a response to economic demand.

### **Chapter 3. Definitions and Methods**

Definitions of national qualifications frameworks and regional qualifications frameworks existing

practices and examples in the African context and beyond.

Methods used and issues seen in the context of initiatives launched in Sub Saharan Africa.

#### **Chapter 4. The Regional Approach**

Examples of regional qualifications frameworks.

#### **Chapter 5. Ways Forward**

Proposition for a road map and technical support.

## Chapter 1. Background<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1. The ECOWAS Policy Agenda for TVET: The Emergence of Qualifications Frameworks

The implementation of national and regional qualifications frameworks is one of the priorities of the Education Ministers of the ECOWAS. After a first conference that took place in Dakar in 2002, two reference documents were published in 2003: the *Protocol on Education and Training* and its annex on the *Equivalence of Certificates*. From the Protocol, it became clear that the main interest of Ministers was to have a holistic approach concerning the whole range of provision from basic to higher education and to adult learning. In the Annex on *Equivalence of Certificates*, a focus was made on the assessment of knowledge, skills and competences and their recognition; for (re-)entering the formal education and training system and/or the labour market. This approach aimed also at facilitating geographical, occupational and social mobility.

The *Protocol* also translated the African Union priorities of the First Decade for Education (1997-2006) into five objectives:

1. Distance education of teachers based on new technologies;
2. Support programme on HIV/AIDS preventive education;
3. Support Programme on Girls' Education;
4. Support Programme for the Teaching of Science and Technology; and
5. Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

After defining the priorities during the first conference in Dakar, the Conference of Accra (Ghana), in January 2004 decided on the action plan for implementation.

In January 2005, in Khartoum (Sudan), the Africa Union published a new action plan for the Second Decade for Education in Africa (2006-15).

A third conference of the Ministers of Education took place in Abuja (Nigeria), on 17-20 March 2009. It was dedicated to the adaptation of this new action plan for implementation in the ECOWAS. On this occasion, Ministers insisted on the setting up of partnerships among international stakeholders. An additional extraordinary conference was held in Maputo (Mozambique) for organising this international cooperation. Bodies such as ADEA, CIEFFA<sup>2</sup>, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank were involved.

In Abuja (Nigeria), in 2009, two main themes were identified as main priorities for action:

- Creating Labour Market Information System (LMIS); and
- Establishing National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs).

The former, through the availability of better data, is presented as one of the key factors contributing to an efficient TVET provision. The latter is a framework that classifies all certifications according to a set of descriptors based on learning outcomes (competences...) instead of input (duration...). These objectives have been identified for the ECOWAS Sub-Region but also have a lot of value for every single country in the region, whatever the level of implementation of TVET.

This report concerns the second priority identified above, namely the establishment of qualifications frameworks.

---

<sup>1</sup> See details of the process in Appendix 1 (in French)

<sup>2</sup> International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa.

## **1.2. The Actions by UNESCO-BREDA Regarding Qualifications Frameworks**

During the Abuja Conference in March 2009, UNESCO-BREDA confirmed its involvement to support the ECOWAS member states in their efforts to improve the quality of education; especially with:

- the adoption of the Basic education Programme in Africa for the 9 and 10 year old children;
- the promotion of primary, secondary and tertiary education to provide good quality human resources to Africa for its development; and
- the establishment of a national qualifications framework with certification and validation of experience and competences.

In the same vein, UNESCO-BREDA has based its strategy on the priorities identified for TVET by the African Union action plan for the Second Decade for Education in Africa (2006-15):

- Equitable access to TVET for all;
- Quality and relevance of national TVET systems and programmes;
- Non-formal learning: literacy and TVET; and vulnerable groups;
- Capacity building;
- Financing TVET; and
- Using network strategies.

When working with the ECOWAS Sub Region, UNESCO-BREDA is considering all other existing action plans in the other sub regions (ECCAS<sup>3</sup>, SADC<sup>4</sup>, EAC<sup>5</sup>) and in the other international organisations (ADEA, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO HQ). Nevertheless, UNESCO-BREDA insists on starting and building from existing local initiatives that often differ from country to country.

More specifically with the ECOWAS, a regional workshop was organised in Abuja, on 17-20 August 2009, in order to define concrete actions for the revitalisation of TVET. The main aim was to create a platform for sharing experience and best practice concerning TVET reforms focused on youth employability. The Inter Agency Task Team (IATT) was created to support the implementation of such a platform. It is a task force that gather the different UN agencies (ILO, UNDP and UNIDO) with the aim of creating synergies around themes previously addressed in the different agencies in a non-coordinated way. The invitation was then extended to other international organisations (ADB, ADEA, AFD).

Specifically on the issue of qualifications frameworks, for many years, UNESCO-BREDA had been involved in different initiatives such as the Gambia Skills Qualifications Framework (2006). It has also participated in all the workshops organised by the SADC and involving 14 countries. It has monitored all ECOWAS actions since 2007. It organised an inter-regional seminar in Zanzibar in September 2010.

## **1.3. Qualifications Frameworks: A Rationale**

The general understanding, within UNESCO, of a national qualifications framework is that it separates qualifications from educational and training institutions, so that it can also validate non-formal and informal learning outcomes. The levels in the qualifications frameworks reflect the learning achievements, not the time spent in education and training programmes. The shift from institution-

---

<sup>3</sup> Economic Community of Central African States.

<sup>4</sup> Southern African Development Community.

<sup>5</sup> East African Community.



based and programme-based assessment to learner-based and competence-based assessment, which results from this approach, is a major challenge. It is demanding in terms of capacity building requirements (Second Decade Action Plan, UNESCO; Framework for action in TVET, 2009).

There is an interest and a real determination to establish qualifications frameworks from all African sub-regions and from most international African institutions (UA, ECOWAS, UNESCO-BREDA). The rationale for doing so is manifold. It is also somewhat ambitious. It seems that one-size fits all frameworks do not exist and that a single qualifications framework will not be able to address all the objectives often put forward:

- To facilitate the mobility of trainees and trainers;
- To harmonise the content of qualifications;
- To harmonise the content of curricula; and
- To solve the issue of the match between supply of and demand for qualifications.

As a matter of facts, countries have understood that there is no such a thing as a single qualifications framework that meet all their expectations. According to their needs and experiences, some have established national qualifications framework; some have established vocational qualifications frameworks and there are also regional qualifications frameworks... It is the reason why promoters of qualifications frameworks should always be clear about the objectives of the qualifications framework(s) they mean to promote and establish: all are possible and relevant but the objectives have to be known for more adequate choices. Extreme vigilance is necessary about the objectives of the qualifications framework and its objects.

The UNESCO understanding of a qualifications framework, provided above, reflects this complexity in the objectives to achieve and this document will start from there. It will attempt at providing principles and tools to permit choices for establishing qualifications frameworks that are relevant.

## Chapter 2. Emerging Issues

### 2.1. The TVET Challenges

Traditional agriculture and the informal economic sector employ most of the labour in Sub-Saharan Africa, up to 90 % in Senegal or 95 % in Benin (AfDB and OECD 2008).). The informal economy therefore absorbs most of the individuals, mostly young people, entering the labour market. For them, owning a vocational qualification is not necessarily the primary requirement. Therefore, there is no pressure on the TVET system for it to develop. Any policy aiming at developing the TVET sector must take into account this reality.

As a matter of fact, TVET systems barely exist in ECOWAS, at least formal TVET systems. Nevertheless, it is not because the economy is mostly informal that (young) workers do not learn at all. This learning however is mostly on-the-job learning and therefore non-formal – somewhat organised in the best-case scenario for artisanic handicraft for instance – or informal (purely learning by doing). In the formal education and training initial system, TVET barely exists: In 2005, for two thirds of Sub Saharan countries, the total enrolment rate in formal technical and vocational programmes at secondary level was five percent or less (ADB and OECD, 2008). In short, if it is clear that individuals, young people in particular, have no incentives to engage in TVET. What is even truer is that they have no opportunities whatsoever to do so.

One assumption however is that awarding qualifications to young people could make the labour market evolve toward its formalisation and the formalisation of the economy. It is on this assumption that the ECOWAS regional policy, in coherence with the African Union rhetoric, is aiming at the “revitalisation” of TVET by putting it as a priority for action. To that extent, they are encouraged by international organisations – such as UN ones – to do so, hence the policy papers published that put TVET at the forefront of their reflection (UNESCO-BREDA, 2009).

Along these lines, some countries have started to make reforms. Benin, the Gambia, Ivory Coast and Senegal are examples of countries where ministries of Vocational Training have been created and/or where steps have been taken to introduce competence based education. Actual impacts remain to be seen but there is a progress toward the development of TVET.

One of the issues precisely is that initiatives taken in order to organise the vocational preparation of individuals through non-formal and informal training (e.g. by ministries of labour, agriculture and tourism or by artisans themselves) are not valued by the society and, in particular, by the labour market. These actions must be identified as formal training and therefore fully recognised. However, they were not organised under the auspices the ministry of Education and therefore were not recognised by the society.

By the same token, there is no system to award qualification, whether recognised or not, on the basis of validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes. A possible reason for the lack of existence of such a system is that there is probably no social recognition of such processes for validating knowledge, skills and competences acquired non-formally and informally, let alone the social recognition of the qualifications themselves.

However, by promoting vocational qualifications as a route to work through employability, such processes are a typical solution to promote a vocational preparation to facilitate entry into the labour market. Indirectly, this will raise the value of TVET.

To this end – promoting the use of learning outcomes, however acquired – the establishment of a qualifications framework is often presented as a possible solution. Qualifications frameworks are indeed based – in their most recent version – on learning outcomes, whether knowledge, skills and/or competences, rather than on input.

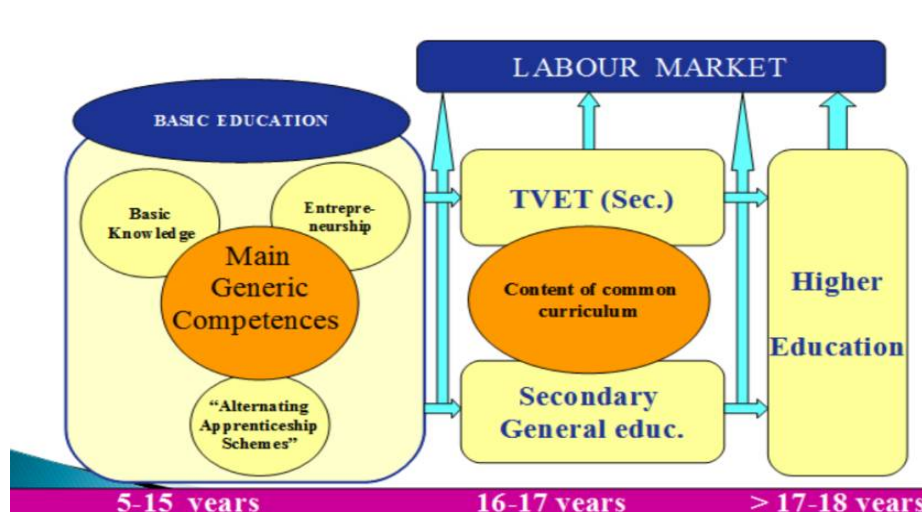
## 2.2. Qualifications Frameworks as Tools for Reform in TVET

The education and training systems in ECOWAS are fragmented. The independence left the countries with rather stable systems imported from the colonising countries. Since then, provision has been organised by waves over the years, and there has been little or no harmonisation among the different sub-systems, which remain watertight. One of the reasons for the fragmentation is that the provision has been supply-driven and decided bottom-down without coordination and without any holistic analysis of the needs. The education and training current systems are the result of different initiatives inspired and supported by imported systems, whether coming from new countries or new models from the colonising countries. The current systems are the result of a juxtaposition of systems built on competing approaches. As a consequence, there has been little or no possibility for linkages.

This fragmentation makes it difficult for people to exercise choice. There are little possibilities to transfer from a system to another, for young people and adults. It is also detrimental to the functioning of the education and training systems in the sense that high drop out rates are likely to take place. Finally, there is little possibility to compare a qualification to another and therefore, learners functioning in such a fragmented system cannot provide recognised evidence of their qualification when they move from a sector of education and training to another, as well as from an economic sector to another within the labour market. The possibilities of social or occupational promotion are scarce, and this is clearly an issue.

An ideal approach would provide bridges from one education and training sector to another, as proposed in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1. Pathways for TVET



Source: UNESCO-BREDA

A qualifications framework makes sense in this context because the education and training systems are fragmented. Such a framework provides visibility through identifying all sub systems and serves as the tool for building coherence among the systems.

### 2.3. Multiple Objectives – Multiples Qualifications Frameworks

There is not a single way to shape a qualifications framework. There are different sorts of qualifications frameworks too. They correspond to different roles. The first step in deciding on shaping a qualifications framework is therefore to precisely identify the issues the qualifications framework is meant to respond to.

The most usual types of qualifications frameworks are National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQFs) and Sectoral Qualifications Frameworks (SQFs). In this context, “national” refers to a country, “regional” to a group of countries such as the ECOWAS Sub Region and “sectoral” to a trade or a group of trades. The latter can be also called a Vocational Qualifications Framework (VQF) or a Skills Qualifications Framework.

There is a typology of qualifications frameworks that can be considered, in particular in a national context. These qualifications frameworks may concern all the qualifications in the system or a fraction of the qualifications, as in a sectoral qualifications framework.

<b>Table 2.1 – Typology of Frameworks</b>		
<b>Objectives for individuals</b>	<b>Supports</b>	<b>Role</b>
Visibility of the qualifications	Description of the qualifications	Classification of qualifications
Legibility of the qualifications systems	Comparability of qualifications	Classification of qualifications and pathways between the systems
Currency of qualifications	Recognition of qualifications by labour market and/or education institutions	Return to formal education and training system or labour market (re-)entry

Table 2.1 shows that there are three main objectives for a qualifications framework. The choice will impact and depend on the use, and the actors that vary according to objectives and use. The stakeholders involved in the design of different frameworks will be different.

In the case of a visibility objective (Row 1 – Table 2.1), the stakeholders in charge of the design of the qualifications framework do not need additional stakeholders. Their objective is to describe all qualifications according to the same descriptors, and with the same format. Stakeholders in charge of the design will do the classification.

In the case of a legibility objective (Row 2 – Table 2.1), the same tasks (description and classification) will be done to design the qualifications framework. However, it supposes a consensus beforehand among the different stakeholders in charge of the design and involved in the different qualifications systems, which will be covered by the framework. Most of time, there is a problem about classification in the sense that this classification must be done against specific aims that supposes a choice between legibility for the labour market or eligibility for the education system. They cannot be addressed all at the same time.

In the case of currency of qualifications (Row 3 – Table 2.1), other stakeholders must be involved together with the designers of the qualifications framework. The users of the qualifications framework must contribute to its design so that the qualifications are recognised by them. Typical users are representatives of social partners or the labour market, and representatives of individuals and families. This representation could be direct or not. The qualifications framework could be experimented with these representatives. They may not contribute to its design but should be involve in the experimentation of the qualifications framework.

## Occupational, social and geographical mobility

In the perspective of a qualifications framework aiming at fostering individual mobility, the last row of Table 2.1 is highly relevant. The recognition of a qualification for education stakeholders and labour market stakeholders must guarantee its currency. It is not the quality of the curriculum that guarantees its currency: it is only a building block of it. There are also the standards of competences and the way they are designed, the standards for assessment and the assessment modalities, and the quality assurance of the full process.

<b>Objectives in terms of mobility</b>	<b>Approaches</b>	<b>Use</b>
Individual mobility within systems; access to qualification	Currency of the knowledge, skills and competences assessed (learning outcomes)	Qualification as a signal for the labour market
Individual mobility between systems	Currency of the curriculum	Building education and training pathways (further studies, bridges among systems...)
International mobility	Currency of qualifications in a regional system	Recognition of qualifications achieved abroad

The regional frameworks are generally designed to facilitate mobility and recognition of individual qualification(s) across countries. To reach a regional level, it is necessary that the currency of the qualifications be defined at the national level. Setting up a regional framework supposes a network of peer stakeholders sharing the same objectives and same principles to communicate. The network could design a specific virtual device in order to produce this communication. In some cases, the networking actors could adopt the pattern provided by one of them. The others would then follow the same approach.

### **2.4. Addressing the Issue of the Value of TVET: Two Case studies**

The wish to work at the regional level around TVET became a reality through two approaches. The first one was a regional harmonisation of the currency of a qualification based on a common design of the curriculum related to this qualification. The second one was to describe and classify vocational/skills qualifications to permit legibility and comparability with other countries qualifications for the mobility of individuals. The former is known as the Kaduna experience. The second took place in the Gambia.

#### **2.4.1. The Kaduna Experience: A Regional Approach to Curricula**

The Kaduna experience is embedded in the “Abuja Process” defined in August 2009. It aims at revitalising TVET, by strengthening its provision, in the ECOWAS member states.

The idea is to establish a network of regional TVET centres of excellence for sharing curriculum and information, as well as teaching and learning material. In addition, it is planned to organise staff development (Centre directors, inspectors) and build TVET databases.

The experience could aim at developing a Regional Vocational Qualifications Framework through the exchange of experts and information among the member states. The project aims at identifying

Centres of excellence where these experts will be.

The implementation of this project started in January 2010 and led to a series of workshops. They permitted to create the Diploma in Computer Science under the responsibility of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) of Nigeria. Five countries were involved in this endeavour: Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. A common curriculum emerged, with information on the objectives of the training programme in terms of competences, the entry requirements (here related to post Secondary Candidates with relevant credits in the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) or National Equivalents) and the content of courses for a duration of two years. A common pedagogy was developed and learning, teaching and training materials were designed for use by Polytechnics and Colleges of Technology.

The last UNESCO-BREDA report related to the last workshop organised in September 2010 mentioned that *“indications on the prospects for the implementation of the proposed Curriculum was given by the participants as follows:*

- **Nigeria:** *once NBTE adopts the new the curriculum all Computer Science departments at Polytechnics and Monotechnics in Nigeria will commence their implementation.*
- **Ghana:** *Will have to submit the curricula to the Academic Board for approval and thereafter to the Accrediting body. It hopes to run the programme first on Sandwich basis because of the large number of students and limited facilities and computer systems available.*
- **Sierra Leone:** *Had some reservation about the possibilities for running the programme because of the required resources,*
- **Gambia:** *The University of The Gambia is committed to ensuring that the programme runs since the School of Gambia Technical Training Institute, GTTI is under the University”.*

A real effort was made in this project to set up a regional approach that will be extended to other countries and may be adapted to the French speaking ECOWAS countries interested in this “diploma in computer science”.

In this case, legibility of such a qualification is granted through two features: the position of the level of this curriculum in the education systems through the entry requirements and the duration of training. Its currency makes sense only for stakeholders in the world of education. The indication of the competences targeted by the programme permits a potential legibility for employers but they need more evidence for this qualification to be credible in the labour market. The participation of employers should be more explicit during the process of design of learning outcomes and of assessment criteria, which should both be more precise to ensure the same quality of reference at a regional level.

Nevertheless, the design of common references such as the curriculum is a real progress towards qualification frameworks and may aim at a real recognition of qualification at a regional level for education stakeholders. This will be strengthened by the development of a network of experts and of Centres of excellence in order to maintain the sustainability of the process. Recognition of the qualifications by the labour market supposes, in many cases, that there is more investment on other aspects as it has been observed in the Gambia case study.

#### **2.4.2. The Gambia Initiative: A Case Study**

The Gambia initiative is part of their global skill development strategy. It aims at providing skills for employability in the Gambian labour force. This objective is the starting point of an important TVET reform at the end of the 90's, with the creation of a new institution, called the National Training Authority, in 2002. The Gambia Skills Qualifications Framework (GSQF) was launched in 2006. It contains 30 skills standards and qualifications organised according to four priority fields and several

other Key Skills:

- Agriculture (Horticulture);
- Hospitality (Customer Care, Food Hygiene and Safety);
- Construction (Domestic House Wiring);
- Engineering (Motor Mechanic); and
- Key Skills (Literacy; Numeracy, ICT (User); English Communication; Work skills and Life Skills).

This national qualifications framework is a partial qualifications framework, dealing with technical, vocational and literacy skills. Nevertheless, it is considered by its designer as integrated “in the sense that it includes formal and informal learning of skills, post-school college or centre based and on-the-job learning, full-time and part-time learning. It includes provision for illiterate learners, apprentices (both formal and informal) with weak or even no formal education, mature adults as well as new entrants to the workforce.” (Policy document on GSQF discussed and agreed by NTA senior management, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2006).

This approach marks a real change against the traditional Gambian TVET school that was input based. In this case, a qualification is clearly focused on the assessment of learning outcomes, however acquired.

The objective of the GSQF is to provide opportunities to permit the recognition of the qualification by labour market stakeholders. So the “private sector” is involved during the whole design process related to the building of the standards and the assessment, as well as the certification process.

The NQF or VQF set up by Gambia is organised in 4 levels to which is added a foundation one (See Table 2.3).

Table 2.3. The GSQF Levels		
Qualifications		Level Descriptor – <i>Potential for</i>
Level 4		Competence to perform management and analytical skills and / or specialist skills associated with jobs that are non routine eg middle manager / professional worker.
Level 3 Practice	Level 3	Competence to perform tasks associated with skilled jobs of routine and complex nature sometimes with supervisory functions eg team leader.
Level 2 Practice	Level 2	Competence to perform routine and some non-routine tasks under minimum guidance and supervision eg skilled worker.
Level 1 Practice	Level 1	Competence to perform a limited range of work activities whilst working under supervision eg trained worker.
Foundation level		Initial skills - basic skills in English communication, life skills, numeracy and non occupational work skills with literacy in mother tongue as an option.

The only difference between the numerical levels and practical levels is that ***practical levels do not include:*** English communication and the Use of ICT and numeracy above level 1.

Source: GSQF, November 2006.

The purpose of this framework is clearly focused on legibility of qualifications for entering the labour

market. The levels hierarchy is related to the learning outcomes necessary to occupy a position in the hierarchy of a job organisation. So here the qualifications in this framework have been shaped to have currency in the labour market. To help to provide international recognition, the GSQF proposes a system of measure based on credits. The GSQF guide explains their contents as following: “Credits allocated to a unit standard reflect the notional learning time it is expected to take candidates to meet the outcome performance requirements in the unit standard. Notional learning time includes:

- Time spent in structured tuition;
- Self-directed learning and practice;
- Time taken to gather and provide evidence for assessment purposes; and
- Time taken for assessment in all the outcomes and contexts. In the GSQF, one credit represents a notional 10 hours of learning, practice, and assessment time with respect to the outcomes and contexts of the unit standard.”

At this stage, a move toward a regional framework could be done on the basis of a concrete and structured national, even only sectoral, framework. Descriptions provided for each qualification included in the GSQF permits legibility for another country and possible currency abroad due to the quality assurance associated to the assessment process. The Gambian approach permits here to consider the recognition of learning outcomes of the owner of a Gambian Qualification. This may facilitate individual mobility. Networking, benchmarking and references about vocational fields could be developed through NTA, which is a central body in charge of the GSQF, information and communication.

## 2.5. Changing Paradigm

The elaboration of Qualification framework implies a focus on the qualification value and use as a signal for the society. However, traditionally the action of assessment and delivering qualification is integrated in the process of teaching as a specific dimension of training and generally it is seen as the signal of the achievement of a curriculum. Most investments and efforts are made on the elaboration of this training through the elaboration of curricula. But the need to provide a linkage between training and labour market is very strong and their design are more and more developed in collaboration with representatives of what is called “the private sector” by opposition to the education sector which is under the responsibility of the State.

Qualifications frameworks imply to separate the training process from the certification process in order to give legibility and describe the content and the value of the learning outcomes of the owner of a qualification. Training must be always an important field to maintain with a better quality guarantee but its currency is related to education and training systems descriptors (in terms of types of education sectors, types of learning as e-learning, apprenticeship, duration of training). Speaking in terms of qualification is different because the focus is on the meaning and the value of learning outcomes after the learning process.

It is the reason why it can be said the elaboration of a qualifications frameworks means a paradigm change that is not usual for the education and labour market stakeholders. If common bases for dialogue could be easily found about training field, it is not the case for qualification field. Qualification concept is more complex because learning outcomes reflect the representation of what a society defined as what is expected from a qualified individual. *Some qualifications are related to the demonstration of performance on a specific and single work situation.* Other may cover a largest scope related to a whole occupation and transferable to another occupation.

Harmonisation of those two approaches of qualification could not be possible and even considered. Diversity is a source of richness and innovation. The qualifications framework challenge is to provide



sufficient legibility to understand and respect each approach according to the context of the systems and the countries.

Before describing further NQF or RQF, the definition of a “qualification” must be reminded. The GSQF guide gives a specific definition in accordance with the objects classified and described in the framework designed by and for Gambia: *“A qualification is a proven ability to perform an occupation at a particular level. It consists of a suite of occupational and key skill standards – often known as unit standards. The standards are formally assessed by an accredited assessor, usually by on-the-job observation and questioning. Qualifications represent the results of learning, regardless of whether learning has been in formal or informal contexts. Qualifications are awarded following formal assessment that the required competences have been attained, not that they have been taught.”*

In comparison, the European definition is much broader: *“qualification means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.”* (Coles and Werquin, 2007<sup>6</sup>, and Recommendations for EQF 2008).

The OECD, and EQF, definition focuses on the proof of learning outcomes and the process of assessment but not on a specific content or use. It is the reason why the definition of a NQF is mentioned with a referencing to all kind of learning systems: *“national qualifications framework’ means an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims to integrate and coordinate national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society”.* (Coles and Werquin, 2007, op. cit., and Recommendations for EQF 2008).

In the context of Higher Education (HE) based on a three-cycle degree system, a qualification is presented as the completion of a HE cycle and is related to a number of transferable credits. The process permits *“fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning”*.

It does not exist a single way to plan and design NQF or RQF. What is important is to clarify before beginning the use of those frameworks and the environment where qualifications could to be legible and recognised.

---

<sup>6</sup> Coles M. and P. Werquin, 2007. Qualifications Frameworks: Bridges to Lifelong Learning, OECD Publishing, Paris.

## Chapter 3. Definitions and Methods

### 3.1. The Origins of National Qualifications Frameworks

Qualifications frameworks (QF) are clearly related to the development of lifelong learning and consequently to the dissemination of a large range of different learning systems. The need for maintaining and increasing individuals' competences in order to follow the economic move make arising new approaches of learning routes and recognition processes emerging. Even if national qualifications frameworks (NQF) devices appear at the beginning of the 2000's, the concept of NQF is not new. Deij (2009)<sup>7</sup> proposes a scenario with three different generations:

- A first generation “*developed from national perceptions, mainly determined by internal drivers, and often using experimental approaches*”, such as in Scotland, South Africa or France.
- A second generation “*has tried to learn from 1<sup>st</sup> generation experiences, in terms of design and processes. Seeking more communication with other national systems on a bilateral basis, but influence of external drivers is limited*” » such as in Mauritius, Malaysia or Jamaica. And
- There is a third generation where “*Internal drivers remain important, but external drivers have a significant impact on the technical design of frameworks and the Qualifications Authority arrangements*”, such as in Botswana or Ethiopia.

Each NQF is designed according to each national context. Historical, cultural and sometimes religious dimensions intersect with one another, therefore shaping qualifications contents, systems and currencies along the years. There is a need for a framework to provide legibility and visibility within and between the different sub-systems in place.

The introduction of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems among traditional academic education systems is often at the origin of a NQF initiative. The objective is to achieve official visibility and generate currency. At the same time, it creates reluctance from the academic world and questions the actors of the academic system about their renewal. The parity of esteem for those two kinds of qualifications and systems (academic and TVET) is far to be a reality despite the issue being addressed for many years. It is the reason why some national qualification frameworks cover all existing qualifications sub-systems available in the country, whereas some cover only part of the available qualifications (for example TVET qualifications). In some instances, only a part of a sub-system is involved; for example it may happen that only some authorities or awarding bodies are involved.

This brief reminder shows that Africa is not so late in this landscape and surely the approach adopted in ECOWAS crosses internal and external drivers. Internal drivers are related to the implementation of TVET policies to provide linkage between the labour market and training systems. External drivers are related to individual mobilities implying for qualifications owners to be recognised outside their own country. However, at the same time, education stakeholders and labour market stakeholders need to design adapted policies and innovations that may be inspired from foreign experiences and practices. The numerous influences on this field coming from many different approaches exported in the ECOWAS could be enlightened and clarified through the experiences of designing national and regional qualifications frameworks.

A recent study (The implementation and impact of NQF – Report of a study in 16 countries – ILO – June 2010) indicates that “*some 100 countries are now involved in some way in designing or implementing qualifications frameworks. Whether the emphasis is on increasing the relevance and flexibility of education and training programmes, easing recognition of prior learning, enhancing lifelong learning, improving the transparency of qualification systems, creating possibilities for credit accumulation and transfer, or developing quality assurance systems, governments are increasingly*

---

<sup>7</sup> ETF International Conference, Istanbul, November.

*turning to qualifications frameworks as a policy tool for reform”.*

Before exploring the current situation in Africa, and more explicitly in ECOWAS, the different practices observed by practitioners and researchers about the implementation of NQF and RQF will be explored (Section 3.2).

### **3.2. Practices and Typologies of National Qualification Frameworks**

A common fact is observed in most of the countries: TVET, workplace based or skills based qualifications have a lower status than school and university qualifications. This cultural aspect creates a paradox that is among the causes of a high dropout rate among young people and the source of uneasy school-to-work transition for young people owning academic qualifications because they do not have a vocational preparation.

Policy makers have understood that the development of TVET and a real push to describe and explain what the owner of a qualification is able to do, could help to address such a paradox. Setting up a NQF appears here as an opportunity to reach those two objectives.

Building a NQF, whatever it covers, supposes to classify qualifications. However, the linkage between a qualification, which is a result of learning, and the route permitting to get this result is actually so strong that classification obtained may be a classification of education and training systems rather than a classification of learning outcomes. A specific classification already exists for that matter: the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) provides a picture of training systems. An appropriate classification of qualifications should deal with other descriptors that would disregard the learning routes and devices and would focus on the use of the learning outcomes.

Looking at existing practices, two methods can be seen for structuring a framework:

- A grid of levels is established according to a consensual approach. A structure is elaborated ex ante and qualifications are referenced against the classification proposed; and
- Alternatively, the grid of levels may emerge from the analysis carried out after a mapping of existing qualifications. The content and the meaning of the grid appears after a collective process which often may be the starting point for a new qualifications system or for the revision of the existing one.

The choice of one or the other approach is related to the existing situation. In countries where classifications are already elaborated the challenge is to build a grid of levels covering the largest range of descriptors used to do the classification. In countries where no classification has been established, the challenge is focused on the emergence of criteria that permit to make visible and available the largest range of qualifications delivered and so to design the qualifications (sub-)system included in the framework and out of it.

Such a collective endeavour is rather complex and the establishment of a NQF needs some main points to be officially addressed. Five main aspects will be specifically stressed here.

#### **1. The Definition of the Target of the NQF**

As already mentioned above, a NQF can cover different types of qualifications. In some cases, the NQF permits to have an comprehensive mapping of all qualifications sub-systems. In another case it covers only a part of a system. Many NQF are finally set up to give visibility to vocational, sectoral and (sometimes skills) qualifications. They could constitute a first step that could evolve a more holistic framework. However, in countries where TVET has little value, it is important to increase such a visibility and, consequently, to signal the value of NQF to stakeholders involved in its elaboration. At this step, the descriptors are built with an internal scope for a national use such as the

legibility of a reform.

It is worth noting that a NQF could aim at a broader visibility to permit mobility of the qualifications owners. The grid to build could question the first national picture made and even the national descriptors elaborated. This situation means promoters ought to be very clear about the objectives of the NQF. This will be addressed in Chapter 4.

## **2. The Specification of the NQF Provided by the Designers**

Whatever is the target of the NQF, its establishment supposes to address the issues related to the institution and the stakeholders that will be in charge of elaborating the qualifications framework, of its development and of its publication through different supports (generally a web site). The elaboration process is generally long and it supposes the existence of a coordinator with sufficient legitimacy and technical competence to be accepted by all the stakeholders involved. In some countries, a new institution was created for this purpose. It is receiving appropriate resources to take up this role. In other countries, the coordinator belongs to an existing institution and the establishment of the NQF corresponds to an additional mission. The choice of one or the other solution depends on the political context. Stakeholders are composed of representatives of the different ministries delivering qualifications, and of representatives of labour market. Experts often help them. The main problems arise when resources are not sufficient from a financial, human and material point of view; and when the duration of the elaboration process is underestimated. NQFs can lead to good results but they need to be thought as a sustainable device.

## **3. The Sustainability of the Involvement of Stakeholders**

One of the main problem in elaborating qualifications frameworks is related to the technical basis needed to manage analysis and debates about the concept of “qualification”. Most stakeholders are specialist of education and training or of the labour market. However, few of them are competent in “qualification”. Many terms are completely new to them – such as learning outcomes –, or produce misunderstanding, such as competence. Therefore, many different definitions of the same term or concept are used and it is difficult to make a decision about which one to adopt and communicate with.

It is the reason why two approaches are used: organise the capacity building for all the stakeholders and prepare glossaries in order to better communicate on the basis of a common vocabulary. External definitions coming from abroad or from international for a may help to formalise national ones but national contexts are so different that it is always necessary to provide referencing also for terms used in a NQF. Such a preparatory work is a necessary condition for a better involvement of the stakeholders that can commit to a collective approach they can then consider as their own.

## **4. A Legislation Specific to NQF**

According to the two points 2 and 3 above, formal legislation and regulations are important tools to create, manage and govern NQFs. Qualifications and their classification are related to societal values and can be considered as rules for a society and even legal rights in some countries. The introduction of TVET and classifications are seen as a break from older practices. That is specifically evident when is introduced the principle of recognition of non formal or informal learning outcomes. A NQF sheds light on the reforms that are needed and on what has value and currency in a country. Changing the role and position of some systems will have consequences for decades and even more.

## **5. Learning Outcomes as a Key Tool to Establish NQFs**

It may well be that the most important concept making NQFs so successful is related to the qualifications as the objects of classification and their classification through levels of the learning outcomes they attest. “Learning outcomes” (LO) are often associated with “competences”. LO content

derives from standards of occupations. Competences refer to the different cognitive, practical and attitude components in combination with actual occupations. Therefore, learning outcomes correspond to the combination of those components expected at the end of a learning process assuming the competences. LO based descriptions of a qualification are not easy to do because, generally, the learning process (*curriculum*) is immediately elaborated after the provision of occupational standards. The qualification process is the last step of a learning process and consists more of an assessment of the appropriation of the notions taught than of the checking of the use of those notions in action. The latter corresponds more to what is expected for the assessment of competences. Therefore, writing qualifications in terms of LO is often a very important step to reach in order to permit the establishment of a NQF.

### **3.3. A Mapping of the Existing National Qualifications Frameworks**

ILO (2010) presents a map with more than 100 countries involved in the development of a NQF. However, they are at very different levels of realisation. Only 23 countries really had established a NQF. Most of the countries are making progress on the way to establishing one, are about to decide to establish one or at the very early stage of the feasibility and opportunity study. In sub-Saharan Africa, the situation is as follows:

- Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius and South Africa established a NQF; Lesotho and Seychelles were at the stage of implementation;
- Angola, Ethiopia Kenya, , Nigeria, Rwanda and Zambia were elaborating their NQF
- Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe were considering the feasibility of establishing a NQF.

This study is not comprehensive. Some countries such as Gambia and Senegal are missing in this mapping. However, it is an interesting study that shows that East Africa seems to be more involved in establishing NQF. Interestingly enough, it also provides evidence that francophone countries are clearly out of this mapping.

Another way of looking at the approach used by countries in establishing their NQF shows there are common characteristics across countries. They are generally vocational qualification frameworks. They are coordinated by a National Agency often called “National Training Authority”. This authority has a triple mission: collecting information on qualifications, guaranteeing quality assurance related to the content of curriculum, managing the assessment centres. In some cases, it is in charge of the provision of *curriculum*.

#### **An example of an English speaking country: The South African NQF**

The South African NQF is developed under the responsibility of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). “*SAQA (source SAQA website: www.saqa.org.za) is a juristic person – that is an entity given a legal personality by the law. The South African Qualifications Authority Board is a body of 12 members appointed by the Minister of Education after consultation with the Minister of Labour. The members are nominated by identified national stakeholders in education and training.*

*SAQA's role is to:*

- *Advance the objectives of the NQF;;*
- *Oversee the further development of the NQF; and*
- *Co-ordinate the sub-frameworks.”*

This public institution has an independent status with an overarching role about policies and quality assurance related to all kinds of qualifications. This is explained below:

*“In terms of the NQF Act no. 67 of 2008, the Quality Councils, will, amongst others:*

- Develop and manage their sub-frameworks, and make recommendations thereon to relevant Ministers;*
- Ensure the development of qualifications or part qualifications as are necessary for their sectors, which may include appropriate measures for the assessment of learning achievement;*
- Recommend qualifications or part qualifications to the SAQA for registration.*

*SAQA has the following role with respect to qualifications:*

*1. SAQA must develop and implement policy and criteria, after consultation with the QCs for the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part-qualifications, which must include the following requirements:*

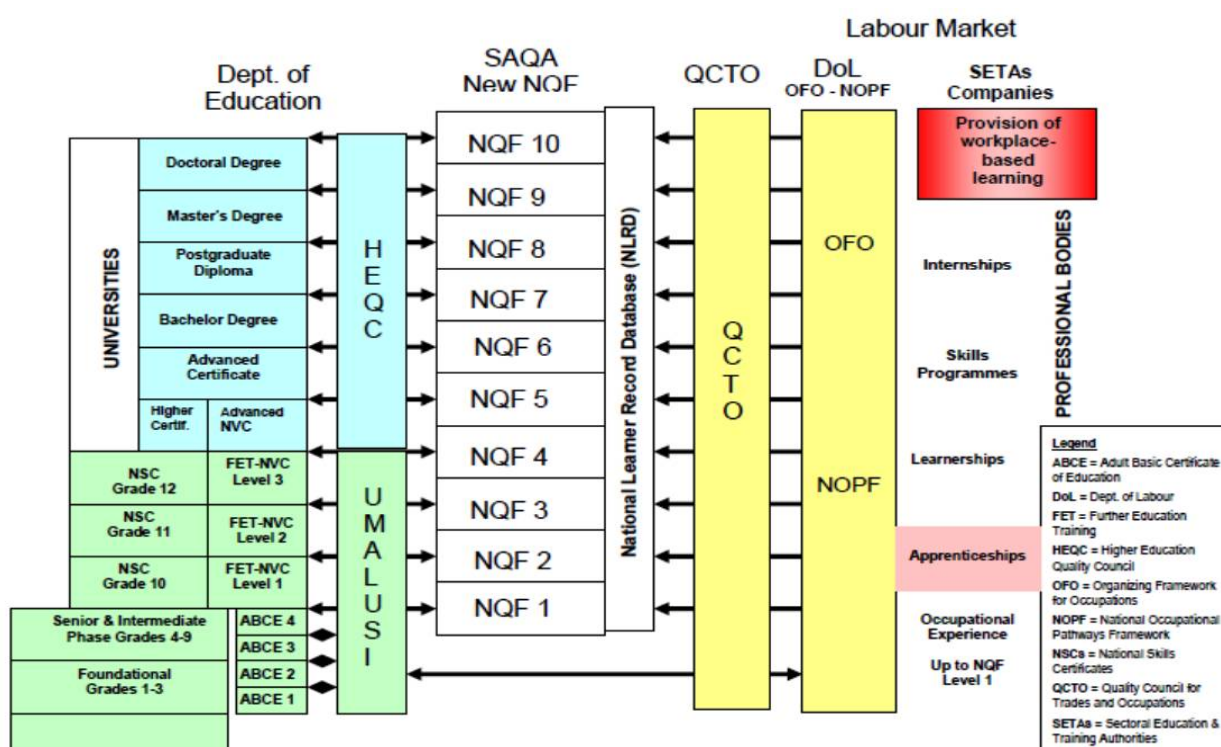
- The relevant sub-framework must be identified on any document relating to the registration and publication of a qualification or part-qualification;*
- Each sub-framework must have a distinct nomenclature for its qualification types which is appropriate to the relevant sub-framework and consistent with international practice.*

*2. SAQA must register a qualification or part-qualification recommended by a QC if it meets the relevant criteria.*

*3. SAQA must develop policy and criteria, after consultation with the QCs, for assessment, recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer.*

After an original NQF elaborated in 2003, a new Framework is emerging in 2009 covering three sub-systems (Higher education, Ministry of Education, competency-based qualifications developed by 12 National Standards Bodies). Between qualifications providers and SAQA, responsibilities are shared here with “Quality councils” related to each sub-framework (or sub-training system) can. Finally, the NQF is structured in three main parts classified according to the type of sub-system: higher education is dealing with levels 5 to 8, education and training is dealing with levels 2 to 4 and general training is dealing with level 1 (Table 3.1.).

**Table 3.1. Proposed New Arrangements for the South African NQF, 2009**



Source: adapted from Heitmann and Mummenthey (ILO, 2009)

The strong attachment to the education and training formal system prevents South Africa to really develop recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Prior learning that can be recognised is related to inputs even if those inputs are elaborated in a process where some discussions with the trades representatives and argued with job analysis. However, it is very difficult to make a correspondence between an individual experience and components of curriculum.

It is worth noting that there is a possible relation between the South African NAF and the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The impact of the Bologna process on the South African approach is certainly one of the reasons for this.

### **An example of a French speaking country: Senegal**

The Senegal initiative related to establishing a NQF is embedded in the national policy aiming at an important reform of TVET. The task of the TVET reform was given to a new Ministry of Vocational Training with the aim of developing a competence based curriculum. As in most countries, co-exist in Senegal different sub-systems with the same triplet: general (or basic) education, TVET and HE). Many different bodies develop TVET but learning outcomes are not recognised because the awarding bodies do not belong or work with a ministry or because there is no relevant qualification. The first idea at the origin of a NQF was the regulation of the training provision. The creation of a “*Commission d’homologation*” (Training Accreditation Body) was even considered in 2008. Finally, the Minister of Vocational Training was requested to develop a NQF with the purpose of covering the full range of qualifications, including higher education.

By law, the field of qualification is under the responsibility of the National Government. As it is the

case in the French tradition, only a component of the State could undertake the role of dealing with the currency of qualifications. Since it pertains to a Government prerogatives, it must fall in under a Minister jurisdiction. In 2009, it was therefore decided to give this authority to a component of the Ministry of Vocational Training: the Directorate for Planning and Reform. However, even if this authority could in theory extend to all the qualifications, it is very difficult to really obtain the commitment of the Ministry for Education or of the Ministry of Higher Education. Unlike the Anglo-Saxon model, the creation of an independent body cannot be used as a solution to coordinate ministerial relationships. On the other hand, it is difficult too to imagine that one ministry could manage principles or criteria for the qualifications delivered by another ministry, except if this ministry directly falls under the authority of the Prime Ministry.

Nevertheless, an important investment was made in Senegal to reform training and relevant qualifications towards learning outcomes descriptions thanks to the methodology used to elaborate the occupational standards and the competences-based assessment and training references. It can be mentioned that even general education programmes are elaborated on the basis of this competences-based method in order to develop adult training and the recognition of their non-formal and informal learning outcomes. This approach has driven exchanges especially between TVET content and general primary education. One of the objectives is to develop competences for all citizens especially young people that have not achieved a qualification. In July 2009, with the help of UNESCO-BREDA, a first step was made toward an NQF initiative. A first contact was made with each education stakeholders (Ministry of General Education, TVET and HE) in order to elaborate a method and draw a schedule to organise a common reflection with this goal. A first workshop was organised in January 2010 with a first circle of stakeholders. Different ministries in charge of education and training, representatives of other ministries contributing to the qualification process, private education sectors were represented. The final conference of this workshop saw the participation of the private economic sectors and of international institutions. A first draft toward a common project and a road map were proposed. The method adopted is based on mapping and on making apparent quality criteria from a precise description and analysis of each qualification sub-system. Even if a real momentum was noticeable after this workshop, and if the Directorate for Planning and Reform was confirmed as the coordinator of the work, no effective leadership emerges one year later. The initial enthusiasm seems to be lost.

The mapping of the training provision facilitates the emergence of the main characteristics of each sub-system, and therefore the emergence of quality criteria. An important step was made with the recognition of non-formal and informal learner to apply for some official qualifications or to access examinations. So the main trend that seems to appear consists of a regulation of the provision of qualifications. Nevertheless, there is an improved possibility to achieve them whatever the curriculum and the routes used to acquire the expected components of the qualification. This can be possible through the dissociation of the assessment process from the learning one. However, this means a common acceptance of such a principle in all the minds and new organisations in a context where, in general, assessment centres cannot be independent from the learning providers. If the principles related to describe and design qualifications in terms of learning outcomes is effective, due to the competence-based method actually in use, the classification in terms of levels is far to be established. The different sub-system are watertight and the authorities in charge of qualifications are too independent from one another to allow a common approach and pathways in terms of establishment of a common currency for the different existing qualifications.



<b>Table 3.2. The Certification Landscape in Senegal</b>					
Sub-systems	Under an Official Authority	Standards and Documents	On-going Qualifications	Planned Qualifications	Bridges
Elementary	✓	✓	✓		✓
Secondary	✓	✓	✓		✓
Higher Education	✓	✓	✓		✓
ETFP	✓	✓	✓		✓
TVET Examinations	✓	✓	✓		✓
ENF	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

As it was already seen in the Gambian example, the Senegalese approach facilitates the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes due to the possible links existing between working life and personal life. The main difficulty to overcome is to find a legitimate body that can be accepted by all stakeholders. Another difficulty to solve that is not specific to French speaking countries is related to the social partners representation in consultation and decision process about qualifications. Their participation is necessary to determine value and provide the basis for a common currency. However, in countries dominated by the informal economy, there is no labour market stakeholders and even less representatives to voice their needs. Organisations to represent the labour market must be politically promoted to permit the establishment of a NQF.

Cultural influences coming from the past have clearly an impact on the development of NQFs in sub-Saharan countries. The delegation of authority to an independent body to establish a NQF seems to be impossible to implement in the French speaking countries where qualifications and its currency fall under the State prerogatives.

Another aspect should be explored further. It consists of a comparison of the qualifications' content. In the French speaking countries, a qualification is related to a whole occupation perimeter and curricula are structured with this goal. The assessment process is focused on the combination of the different components of competences that are combined themselves to occupations. In the English-speaking countries, it seems that a qualification is, first and foremost, the proof of the achievement of a completed learning cycle. The assessment allows to check each component of the acquired knowledge and skills.

If it is admitted in the French speaking and the English speaking countries that trade partners must be involved in the elaboration of the qualifications, it can also be observed that the multiple types of qualifications allowed in the French speaking countries, multiply the meeting and consultation areas, reducing the opportunity to strengthen capacity building and risking to develop drop out from such consultation processes.

## **Chapter 4. The Regional Approach – Examples of Regional Qualifications Frameworks**

As it was already mentioned in Chapter 2, Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQF) are elaborated according to a common goal that several countries have adopted. Two main kinds of RQFs can be observed:

- One related to mobility; and
- One related to quality assurance

In both cases, the approach implies the elaboration of common criteria and common communication tools. In the case of mobility, mutual trust is based on common appropriation and use of concepts related to qualification by national authorities in charge of the referencing of the national NQF to the RQF. In the case of quality assurance, a regional board is in charge of checking the good appliance of the rules and criteria designed *ex ante* by the competent authorities in charge of the delivery of qualifications. An intermediary authority level may exist between the regional board and those authorities with a national board, controlled itself by the regional one.

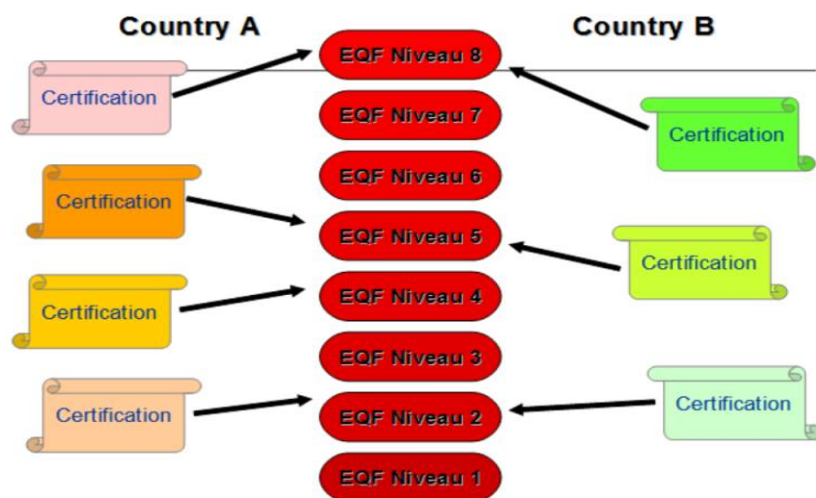
Examples of RQFs established as a mobility tool for the recognition of individual qualifications are presented in the rest of Chapter 4.

### **4.1. The European Qualification Framework (EQF)**

Emanating from the Copenhagen process of the European Union, the EQF was clearly elaborated to permit the transparency of qualifications and especially of vocational qualifications. The expected mobility, as it was forecasted in 2004, was related to the European labour market. In order to recognise a that a worker owning a given “qualification” is able to do the corresponding activity, the idea was to give transparency to the “qualification” delivered by the education or training authorities. At the beginning, transparency was achieved through a description of the qualifications by way of a common format (called Europass and elaborated in 2002). In a second step, the transparency object was best defined through what was called “learning outcomes”. This innovation dissociates the content of the qualification from the learning that leads to it (type and duration). The comparison of learning outcomes could not be done through a common grid of levels describing education and training systems. Therefore it needed a new grid of levels and new descriptors. Finally, after a long debate and national consultations within all European countries including accession ones, the decision was made to use three descriptors (knowledge, skills and competences) and eight levels.

The main principles of the EQF come from national qualification frameworks. They must express a hierarchy of learning outcomes levels to permit legibility towards the EQF. In 2008, when the EQF Recommendation was published, with the approval of the European Parliament and Council, some European countries had already a NQF but not necessarily based on learning outcomes. Their classification was based on descriptors coming for their education and training systems. The risk was high to bring confusion and to valorise academic knowledge instead of the three descriptors together: knowledge, skills and competences. In this case, referencing to the EQF needed to reviewit the national approach in order to really compare learning outcomes. The other countries did not have a NQF at that time. In their hurry to make their citizens recognised in the European labour market, they adopted the 8-level grid but often forgot that the comparisons are dealing with learning outcomes whatever they way they had been acquired (see Table 4.1). In some instances, TVET was forgotten, especially when it did not fall under the authority of the Ministry of Education.

**Table 4.1. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF)<sup>8</sup>, a Translation Device**



Source: EQF

The EQF approach has been a significant opportunity for countries to reflect on their own education and training system. More importantly, the EQF has provided an opportunity to make actors, users and stakeholders aware of the importance of a system for recognising qualifications in a country. This last point may be the most difficult to grasp because the concept of qualification is so related to education and training that the currency of a qualification is related to a social recognition and not only to education providers. The recognition of “qualifications” involves a lot of parameters according to the societal, cultural and historic environment that prevail in the country. It is the reason why so few countries have already referenced their NQF to the EQF. The notable exceptions are those that already had a NQF and have revised their descriptors in order to give legibility in terms of learning outcomes.

#### **4.2. The Mauritius Transnational Qualification Framework**

The Transnational Qualification Framework comes from an initiative of the Ministers for Education of the Commonwealth in 2000. At their triennial Conference, they considered that many States of the Commonwealth were too small “*to conquer the online eWorld on their own, but they might do it by working together*”. A Virtual University was created in 2003 for the Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). It aims at strengthening the capacity of national education institutions with the help of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) organizations. Workshops, called “boot-camps”, are organised for educators coming from different areas to elaborate learning materials. The first workshop was held in Mauritius. Fourteen countries participated. From then on, workshops were organised, with a main theme each time:

- 2006, Mauritius: Tourism and Entrepreneurship;
- 2007, Singapore: Professional Development for Education;
- 2007, Trinidad: Life Skills;
- 2007, Samoa: Disaster Management;
- 2008, Seychelles: Fisheries;
- 2008, Bahamas: Construction;
- 2009, Samoa: Maritime; and

<sup>8</sup> Again, in this paper and in English, the terms “certification” and “qualification” are taken as synonymous.

- 2010, Maldives: Agriculture

Thirty-two Small States are currently involved in the VUSSC: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Kiribati, Lesotho, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Seychelles (The Republic of), Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland, The Bahamas, The Gambia, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

In 2007, the project to develop international recognition of the qualifications awarded by the VUSSC was launched. The South Africa Qualification Authority (SAQA) provided the basis for what has then been called the Transnational Qualification Framework. *“The TQF is a ten-level framework. It is not meant to replace existing qualifications frameworks in the Small States. It is a translation instrument between the systems in different countries and regions that will provide a mechanism for the transfer of credits, qualifications and learners between countries. It will also provide a means by which qualifications frameworks can be compared and allowed for referencing of all qualifications to the TQF levels.”* (Sir John Daniel from COL, VUSSC conference, Cape Town, 3 May 2010).

The TQF covers Vocational as well as Higher Education qualifications. It is based on quality assurance principles.

<b>Table 4.2. The Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF)</b>			
<b>LEVEL</b>	<b>QUALIFICATIONS TITLES</b>	<b>MINIMUM CREDITS</b>	<b>Hrs of TQF</b>
10	Doctoral Degree	360	3600
9	Masters Degree	240	2400
8	Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma; Bachelors Degree with honours	120	1200
7	Bachelors Degree; Graduate Certificate and Diploma	360	3600
6	Advanced/ Higher Diploma Associate Degree/ Foundation Degree	240	2400
5	Diploma	240	2400
4	Advanced Certificate	120	1200
3	Certificate III	40	400
2	Certificate II	40	400
1	Certificate I	40	400

Source: Dr. Kaylash Allgoo, O.S.K. Director, Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA), Chairman, TQF Management Committee (TQFMC) for Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) – The TQF 2010.

The structure provided is based on a classification types of awards here is relevant to the South African Qualification Framework. The use and currency of a qualification is related to education and training institutional organisations and to the system for the delivery of qualifications. The mutual trust is assured by the existing rules and checking mechanism permitting the registration of the qualifications awarded in a regional, national framework. A local institution could even register the qualification if it is accredited by a local or a regional Quality Assurance Agency.

The TQF is “backed by *Quality Assurance Guidelines, Qualifications Guidelines, Level Descriptors, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and the maintenance of the VUSSC portal...* It refers to the statements describing the characteristics of the generic outcomes of each of the ten (10) levels in the TQF. Characteristics consist of the knowledge, skills/competencies and attributes that participants should possess or be able to demonstrate on completion of a programme/course/module”.

In the case of mobility, in the 32 countries involved in the TQF, the recognition of a qualification owned by an individual can be seen through its registration in the TQF. This registration is related to its design following quality assurance guidelines. Although this quality is based on education and training support, it is possible to achieve a qualification thanks to a RPL procedure that seems currently difficult to develop. On the other hand, an experiment was carried out so that the French island of *La Réunion* could join the TQF. The competent Authority was contacted and bridges projected. However, systems are so different from each other that only agreement to provide equivalences between some qualifications could be proposed.

#### 4.3. The African and Madagascan Council for Higher Education (“*Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l’Enseignement Supérieur*” - CAMES)

The Regional Qualification Framework developed by the Madagascan and African Council for Higher Education (CAMES) is a sectoral and partial framework focused on the qualifications related to HE degrees. CAMES was set up in 1968 to develop cooperation between the French speaking African countries and harmonize the higher education systems across the Continent. This institution accredits the titles and degrees of universities and higher education colleges. It also evaluates researchers work as part of their doctoral studies. Another of their roles is to establish an equivalence between the vocational qualifications and university degrees.

The Council is composed of the Ministers in charge of higher education and scientific research of the Member States. Sixteen countries are members of the CAMES: Benin, Burkina-Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Togo

The CAMES had adopted the French approach to the Bologna process since 2007. The CAMES provided specific guidelines in order to enter in the new organisation it implies with content directly transferred from the French rules and principles.

<b>EQF Levels</b>	<b>Bologna Levels</b>	<b>Scottish Framework</b>	<b>French Framework</b>
8	Third Cycle	Doctorate degree	<i>Doctorat</i>
7	Second Cycle	Master degree	<i>Master</i>
6	First Cycle	Bachelor degree	<i>Licence</i>
5	***** Short cycle HE		
4			
3			
2			
1			

Source: Authors

When a public or private higher education institution or a university creates a new degree, it has to request accreditation from the CAMES. This request implies the preparation of a dossier and the existence of experts accredited by a General Consultative Committee. Experts examine information provided by the training in order to control the teaching conditions, the contents of the programmes and the compliance with the quality assurance criteria described in the Agreement elaborated by the Higher Education Council. This theme involves the Council that has had organised workshops and reflection to strengthen quality criteria and the trust from foreign countries. The Bologna process provides the basis for most of the content and process in terms of quality. Some African Quality Agencies are registered with the International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies for Higher Education (INQAAHE). Most investment is meant to be as close as possible to the French Higher Education rules and principles with attention to the quality of the teaching and, since recently, with an increased attention to the impact of the degrees achieved to facilitate the transition of their owners to the labour market.

The CAMES accreditation aims at a registration in the CAMES catalogue of each country. The owner of the degrees awarded in one of the 17 CAMES countries is allowed to be introduced in further studies in any Members States in theory. However, as all the countries are not at the same level of organisation and involvement in this matter, the recognition of qualifications is not systematically granted.

#### **4.4. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Project**

The RQF of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was initiated in 2001 during a Ministers of Education meeting to enhance mobility, harmonisation and recognition of qualifications across the Region. In 2005 it was defined as *“a regional framework that consists of a set of agreed principles, practices, procedures and standardised terminology intended to ensure effective comparability of qualifications and credits across borders in the SADC region, to facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications among Member States, to harmonise qualifications wherever possible, and create acceptable regional standards where appropriate ...the purpose of the SADCQF is to be a regional mechanism that is used in the SADC Region to meet the demands of the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, most particularly the demands for harmonisation, standardisation and equivalences.”* (See *Towards a Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework Concept Paper and Implementation Plan*, Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation, Maseru, March 2005).

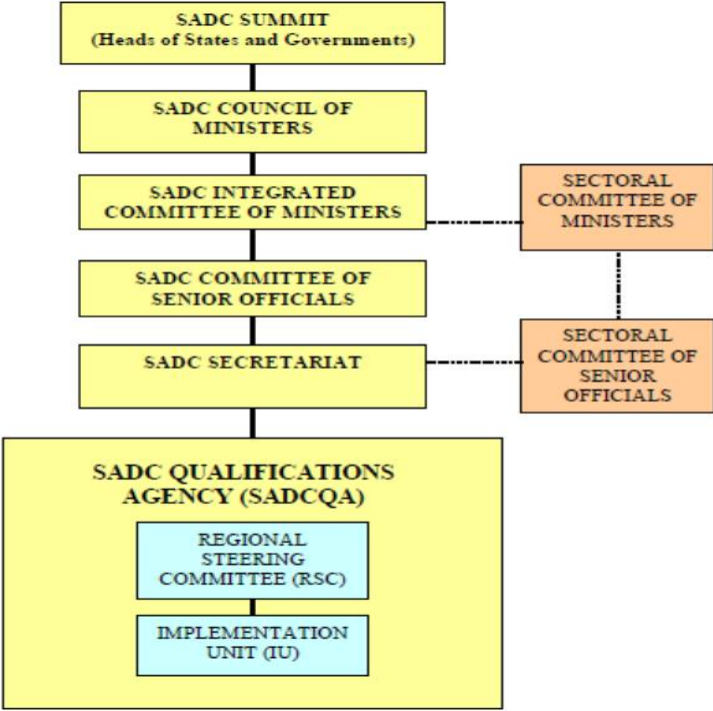
This mechanism is connected to databases relaying information provided by the Members States. It will be a device permitting linkages and interfaces with the other NQF databases. It supposes common quality assurance criteria and procedures for registration. During its completion phase, the project delivered many studies about quality assurance systems. An important work will be done in order to harmonize the format of the information related to each qualification and communication will be done through a design allowing Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) to facilitate Recognition of Non-formal Learning. A particular focus was made during the pilot phase on the validation and recognition of foreign qualifications, whether they were achieved in a SADC country or outside.

Such mechanism implies a specific process validating the qualifications delivered by Members States and therefore the existence or the creation of a specific organisation. It supposes the creation of new institutions and Committees (see Table 4.4)

The implementation of the whole system will be based on agreements, conventions and protocols signed by the different Members States of the SADC: Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa,

Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

**Table 4.4. The organization of the SADCQF**



In order to facilitate such an approach, the SADCQF will have to help Members States to develop and implement their NQF, to harmonize the NQFs among the different countries involved, to provide guidelines to review and strengthen national assessment and accreditation systems and facilitate agreement on the pre-requisite for accessing higher education.

The SADCQF is actually in a testing phase. The work that remains to be done involves the customisation of the Internet portal to allow easy access and use for all types of users (learners, employers, education, governmental institutions etc.). It may be a reality in 2011.

## Chapter 5. Perspectives and Road Map

A return on the ECOWAS context indicates a difference with SADC when it comes to NQFs or their use of the EQF. Among the 15 ECOWAS countries, only some English speaking countries seem to have established a NQF (Gambia and Namibia). In the French speaking countries, there exists an intention to develop a NQF in most of them, and a specific framework established to give a quality label to HE degrees designed according to the Bologna process.

NQFs in French speaking countries seem to be difficult to be established and implemented even if a NQF was already established in France even before the publication of the EQF Recommendation in 2008. It can be observed, in ECOWAS countries, a lot of different initiatives to develop TVET. However, it also appears that only Ministry of Education actions are considered as valid. A qualification is not only the signal of the achievement of a curriculum, it also has currency in the society, including labour market. A qualification must therefore be elaborated by the highest possible level of Government. In the countries with French influence, an independent body cannot be in charge of such a function, it has to be the Government. This is not the case in English speaking countries. Perhaps, it is one of the reasons why any process aiming at establishing NQFs have generally failed because a NQF needs a collective approach and no ministry could accept instructions coming from another ministry.

In addition, the transfer from an Anglo-Saxon model to a French context does not go without problems. The organisation developed to elaborate qualifications have characteristics in common: the involvement of representatives of the labour market, committees with different stakeholders from education and training and industries or trades, work analysis in order to better know the needs of employers etc. These characteristics currently are more a target than a reality. However, most national policies are focused on these goals in all countries whatever the (cultural) context. Nevertheless, it can be observed a difference in the design of qualifications even when they are called in the same way: diploma, degree or certificate. The French approach considers a whole occupation as the basis for a qualification and so it is composed of units covering a combination of transferable competences jointly assessed. In the English approach, a qualification could be related to a competence or a group of competences in a specific context that is not necessarily transferable. Such a difference on the scope of a qualification makes the comparison difficult when qualifications are not described through their content, especially learning outcomes. On the other hand, the concept of “credit” is often difficult to be applied in countries with a French influence because the assessment may use an average approach. It considers the weighting of certification unit on the basis of main core competences against less dominant ones to exercise a job. On the contrary, in the English approach, the weighting of the credits are more related to the duration of the learning process and to the workload for the student.

Those two approaches can be brought together in the same framework if the object of the classification is the “learning outcomes” and if the object is related to the same objective (e.g. mobility within education systems or mobility in the labour market). It is the reason why the first step of a the elaboration of a qualification provides the objective of the framework. As a consequence, there is an organisation of the teaching by field of study for academic qualifications and according to work analysis for TVET qualifications.

The choice of an objective for a national qualifications framework is very important. It is even more important for a RQF. The criteria used to decide to include a qualification in the framework or not provide interesting information about this objective and the most adequate method to organise comparisons.

In the ECOWAS context, two main aspects give a real opportunity and hope to build a NQF and a RQF: one is related to the elaboration of qualifications with a competence based method, the other one is related to the challenge of the recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning.



## 5.1. The Competence Based Qualification Design

The competence based design method is largely spread in the ECOWAS countries and beyond. Generally presented as a specific method derived from the Quebec experience developed at the end of the 90's, it is based on the principle of the job analysis in order to define TVET. However, it is not very new. It is currently used to elaborate a TVET curriculum that would match the needs of the firms. This approach is often questioned by many education stakeholders, especially in the field of primary or general secondary sectors where it is used under the name Competency Based Education (CBE). Nevertheless, it appears very appropriate in the case of vocational education and training.

The competence based method is used most of the time to elaborate curriculum. Its use could also be interesting in elaborating qualifications. It could be supposed that this aspect is not mentioned because a qualification is viewed as a signal of the achievement of the curriculum rather than it would be the signal of competences appropriation.

The development of this method is present in ECOWAS since the beginning of the 2000's. This choice was made by Education Ministers with the support of UNESCO through its International Bureau of Education (see *IBE Working Papers on Curriculum Issues N° 7 - L'approche par compétences en Afrique francophone : quelques tendances. Geneva, Switzerland, May 2008*). The main interest of this method comes from the use of the analysis of job situations as the base of the standards to establish a curriculum. The analysis is made following a specific enquiry whose purpose is to collect information related to the context of job activities (tools, materials, procedures, regulation, knowledge, know-how, attitudes etc...). With this method, competences are expressed in terms of expected results and performance criteria.

Generally, it is well mentioned that the job situation analysis could be the basis of the assessment in a qualification/certification process. In addition, it could also be the basis for the elaboration of such qualifications/certifications. Such information could be the "learning outcomes" describing the qualification that will be in the NQF or the RQF. Such expression could be legible by learners as well as employers, teachers and trainers.

This information could also be the basis for the comparison with other qualifications described in the same manner. If learning outcomes are defined before the training takes place, more flexibility could be achieved in pedagogical approach in order to reach more people according to the situation they are faced with. In this case, quality will also be achieved in the qualification standards and assessment procedures, and not only in the training or teaching processes.

Since many ECOWAS countries have adopted such an approach, it could be said that the different actors involved in the elaboration of training and qualification have the capacity to give information about qualifications delivered in terms of "learning outcomes" and so permit description, organisation, classification and comparisons in order to build or integrate a framework whose objective consists of providing support for labour market mobility.

Such an approach is also essential in order to develop recognition of non-formal and informal learning related to job situation whatever the context of the activity (in a formal or informal economy).

## 5.2. The Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes

The theme of recognition of non-formal and informal learning is an important challenge for Africa. It is also at the heart of many debates all over the world (Werquin, 2010a and 2010b<sup>9</sup>). Many pilots have

---

<sup>9</sup> Werquin Patrick, 2010a. *Recognising Non-formal and Informal Learning: Outcomes, Policies and Practices*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 91 p., [www.oecd.org/document/29/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_39263294\\_44870941\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/29/0,3343,en_2649_39263294_44870941_1_1_1_1,00.html)

Werquin Patrick, 2010b. *Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning: Country Practices*, OECD, Paris, February, 65 p.,

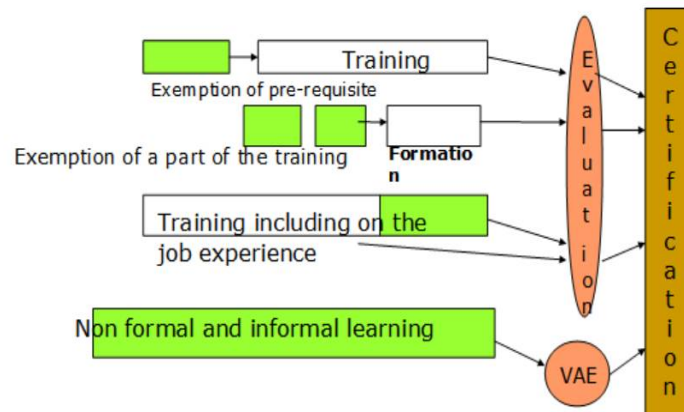
taken place and some have failed due to the lack of a convincing follow up.

Many terms can be observed in this field (see Werquin, 2007, for a survey<sup>10</sup>). It seems “Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)” is the term used in Africa when it comes to NQF and RQF. Other terms are:

- Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) in the United States;
- Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in Canada;
- APL, again, and Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning (APEL) as well in the United Kingdom; and
- *Validation des acquis de L'expérience* (VAE) in France.

It is essential to clarify why non-formal and informal learning have to be recognised. RPL could be organised to improve individual employability and the aim of the recognition is therefore related to the competences expected by employers. RPL could also aim at helping individuals achieving a curriculum and the aim is then related to the principle of modularisation of the training and to an examination whose goal is to identify which modules are appropriate and which are needed. The aim of RPL could also be for individuals to be delivered a licence to practice. In this case non-formal and informal learning must be mentioned in the rules of the license. The approaches described above are interesting but the most important one is related to the use of RPL for individuals to achieve qualification/certification. Non-formal or informal learning could be developed and recognised through four processes (see Table 5.1).

**Table 5.1. The RPL Processes for Achieving a Qualification/Certification**



The main different practices that could be observed are:

- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning could be used in order to achieve a curriculum aiming at a qualification/certification without the academic prerequisite usually expected;
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning could be used to give exemption of a part of the education and training programme;

[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/12/44600408.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/12/44600408.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Werquin P., 2007. *Terms, Concepts and Models for Analysing the Value of Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning*, Document prepared for the OECD activity on “Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning”. [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/58/41834711.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/58/41834711.pdf)

- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning could be used to award credits, especially in a mixed curriculum such as apprenticeship; and
- Recognition of non-formal and informal learning could be used to deliver a part or the whole qualification/certification. It is the French approach called *validation des acquis de l'expérience*. In this case, the procedure of assessment could be organised solely on the basis of work experience.

The development of such recognition processes may imply legislative rules and texts spelling out principles and processes to consider non-formal and informal learning as equivalent to formal learning. This needs a cultural shift that is not easy to obtain in countries where qualifications could usually be the signal of the achievement of formal learning. Technical procedures must be set up to give trust to the assessment of non-formal and informal learning. Nevertheless, if the goal of the assessment process is to assess the same learning outcomes identified through competences in the case of formal learning, it could be easy to obtain this trust even by allowing access to applicants that have not followed the formal curriculum.

The first necessary step is related to the recognition of the legitimacy of the Authorities in charge even if they do not belong to the Ministry of Education. The development of a NQF or a RQF stimulates especially this second issue by positioning all different kinds of qualifications in the same grid with the same descriptors and so with the same parity of esteem; at least in theory.

### **5.3.1. Main Steps to Establish a National Qualifications Framework**

The main steps that deserve immediate attention in the establishment of a NQF are reported in Table 5.2.

<b>Table 5.2. Main Steps to Establish a National Qualifications Framework</b>	
Political decision	Setting up of a steering group and of an institution in charge of the monitoring of the project at the highest level of the government.
Background work in order to provide a first draft of the NQF	Mapping of existing qualifications (see examples of tools in annex), discussions with the different Authorities in charge of delivering qualifications and industry and trade representatives in order to provide a proposal of the NQF purpose and use through a draft paper and advocacy.
Political decision and possible a legislative approach	Presentation of the draft and official decision to establish the NQF with a clear objective and delegation to the steering group to work with an inter-ministries technical and financial power. This aspect could be made official by a legislative text.
Elaboration of the draft NQF	Proposal for a classification grid and descriptors. Organisation of the implementation and maintenance of the NQF. Creation or expansion of commissions, agreements and/or committees. Creation of communication tools. Fund raising.
Political validation of the system	This step gives the starting point for the implementation. The validation could be related also to the specification of the database.
Accompaniment of the stakeholders	Describing a qualification instead of a curriculum or a training programme is not easy for all the Authorities. As a consequence, it is necessary to plan accompaniment that could be a collective one.
Testing and arrangements following the test	This step is the guarantee of the good functioning of the framework and related tools.
Communication in the country	A good communication strategy is important to make the NQF known and used by all types of users that are targeted.

### 5.3.2. Important Considerations

#### 1. Mapping All Existing Types of Qualifications

Making a mapping of all existing types of qualifications is an important step that supposes the realisation of a common format in order to collect the information related to each type of qualifications. This format can start with a grid already existing but in the perspective of the possibility of having a RQF in the future. It could be convenient to work with common regional tool and adapt the existing ones. This data collection permits to identify quality assurance related to the value of the qualification (stakeholders involved and procedure developed in the standards, curriculum, examination or assessment design and control), and therefore its currency in the society. This information is essential to determine which qualifications will be in the NQF, or not. For this mapping, as it is impossible to have a whole and comprehensive collection of existing qualifications, it is suggested to make it by taking three or four fields or specialities covering different levels, authorities in charge of their delivery (mixing public and private) and process used to design the qualification. This step will conclude with a proposition of a glossary related to the main NQF concepts and the objectives that could be pursued through the establishment of a NQF.

## **2. Preliminary Work in the Elaboration of a NQF**

Before the elaboration of the NQF per se, some preliminary work is suitable. It will determine the main structure of the NQF. Three aspects could be developed at the same time:

- A political one with the choice of the different kinds of qualifications retained as available in the NQF and why. The issue is the design of conditions and rules to be in, or out of, the framework but also the choice of the institution or authority (possibly a committee) will be in charge of this choice.

- A technical one with the experimentation of a database format describing the qualifications. This aspect is very important to get a realistic tool available as well for the use of qualification authorities as the use by the public to understand what underpins the qualifications in a guidance project or a job recruitment project. One important point that will be particularly strengthened is related to the descriptors that will be used.

- A third aspect deserves a lot of attention: the design of the grid of levels grid. Two dimensions should be kept in mind:

- . A political one in order to clarify the use of the NQF and therefore to decide on the meaning of the levels. In all instances where “academic” qualifications compete against “vocational” qualifications, the issue must be addressed and the two types of qualifications must be reconciled. The levels could be different: one focused on knowledge and duration of education and training, the other more related to skills and competences permitting a correspondence with job organizations. This choice will lead to different levels structures and therefore to an integrating NQF covering all qualifications but with different grids of levels. The focus is currently on the concept of learning outcomes but the elaboration of learning outcomes varies according to the interpretation of the Authorities in charge of their description and each country has to clarify its own.

- . A technical dimension by testing the format set up to collect information about qualification in order to achieve a database support. The database project must be tested in the fields chosen in the first step but also tested in some other fields to check the generalisation step to all the qualifications that will be in the NQF. This supposes to prepare a specification support necessary to develop the database and to prepare a communication strategy about it. This also implies to be clear about the stakeholders in charge of filling the description format, those in charge of the checking of its content and those in charge of the publication and maintenance of the system. This database must be a sustainable system and it must allow the institution in charge of it to make all possible changes of content and even some part of the structure after its establishment.

In terms of method, the different steps suppose a steering group such as the NQF committee already established. An additional circle of stakeholders will be necessary. It should be composed of the stakeholders in the fields chosen for the tests and experimentation.

### **5.3.3. About the Implementation of a Regional Qualifications Framework**

The main steps for the implementation of a RQF are provided in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3. Implementation of a Regional Qualifications Framework: Main Steps**

Definition of the goal, area and stakeholders	A RQF needs a vision of the function of the framework and the qualifications dealt with.
Establishment of a network of countries that will be involved	This phase is important because it supposes a clear commitment of each stakeholders and a minimum of stability for the actors involved.
Choice of monitoring	It may be that a country will volunteer but it is generally the case that an external support is needed.
Definition of common tools and vocabulary	This could be rather important in a context where different cultural environments exist.
Preparation of a draft RQF	This phase permits to check the feasibility of the RQF, review the areas and main principles.
Political validation of the system	This step gives the starting point of the implementation. The validation could be related also to the database specification.
Testing and arrangements following the test	This step is the guarantee of the good functioning of the device.
Communication in the country	A communication strategy is important to make the NQF known and used by all types of users that are targeted.
Accompaniment of other countries that are considering being involved in the RQF	This supposes the production of documents explaining the rules and principles and accompaniment in order to adapt the national approach to the regional one.

#### **5.4. Proposed Working Methods**

The establishment of a NQF and a RQF could be done at the same time in an alternative way. This could be possible for the ECOWAS if:

- The aim of the RQF is clearly spelled out;
- A network is already set up with volunteer countries sharing the same goals; and
- There already exist resources to develop monitoring of the whole project.

Using the example of the SADCQF, where the project is monitored by an external Authority established after the SADC decision and investment. Some countries had already established their NQF, more or less following the same pattern. The project aims at relying on databases already existing and accompanying countries that do not have their own NQF to build one compatible with the RQF.

The ECOWAS area is still very far from this stage. In addition, it seems very difficult to imagine a similar system to the SADC one in the short run.

It is the situation that can be observed thanks to the work of the European Training Foundation (ETF), especially in countries around the Mediterranean sea. Those countries are largely influenced by the systems used in Arabic countries, Australia, Canada, England and/or France. So the idea was to begin by establishing a NQF using clusters and peer learning workshops. Such an approach aims at building

capacity for the staff in charge of the NQFs. The work is focused on economic sectoral qualifications. Each country builds its NQF according to the same methods of analysis, exchanges of tools, and gathering stakeholders from different sectors such as education, trade and industry.

Describing qualifications and defining their value, and therefore its currency, in a country and in a region demands a lot of time. Quality assurance dealing with qualifications is not the same as quality assurance in the context of training. A possible way forward could be to organise exchanges between peers having the same mission in different countries. It could be the best way to reach the recognition of individual qualification in the case of mobility thanks to collaboration and a mutual understanding.

## Appendix 1. Organisation of the Workshops, January 2010, Dakar

The workshop in Dakar, in January 2010, took place in three main stages:

**First Stage:** Inventory of the current practices in terms of qualification processes. This implies the preparation of an inventory before the workshops on the basis of questionnaire 1.

Three working parties can be considered, respectively on:

- Qualification processes in the primary and secondary education sectors;
- Qualification processes in the technical education and training (TVET) sector; and
- Qualification processes in the tertiary sector.

Non-formal and informal learning were also taken into account through the practices of the schools delivering learning programmes on the basis of key competences (ECB, religious school (Daara Koranic Schools) or 3<sup>rd</sup> type institutions such as mobile training units for which the principle has been accepted that they deliver official qualifications as well (see page 18)). The approach aims at identifying all existing systems and sub-systems in order to map qualifications in preparation for the next stage. This next stage aims at making explicit the findings according to a story line outlined in Questionnaire 2.

**Second Stage:** Analysis of the substance of the qualifications and their currency in Senegal and possibly outside of Senegal. It will be about identifying the opportunities for evolution, and even possible bridges given the socioeconomic issues that are to be addressed at the moment.

This stage – with a common questionnaire allowing for a mapping of existing qualifications for each sub-system – is a first attempt to position them in the Senegalese context, and beyond. For example, there might be issues for their evolution and the recognition of their currency for the world of training, for the world of work, or in the case of mobility within the training system in Senegal or abroad on the basis of a reflection based on Questionnaire 3.

**Third Stage:** Definition of national framework in terms of objectives and methods in two steps:

- A first step will consist of pooling the work of the sub-groups; and
- A second step that should lead to pooling the conclusions and recommendations of each sub-group along the following lines:
  - . The objectives of the framework (for what, for whom?);
  - . The principles of its elaboration (which structure for which legibility?);
  - . The characteristics of its content (which certifications will be in it and why others will be excluded?);
  - . The conditions to register qualifications in the framework; and
  - . The modalities for formalisation (legal support) and dissemination (communication support).

### A Note on the Concepts Beyond the Terms

The English term “qualification” translates into “*certification*” in French, which can be used in English too and we use “formal certification” as a synonymous for “qualification” in English. It is not



the case in French where certification and qualification are different concepts. In French, the term “qualification” indicates the position of an occupation in a work organisation on the basis of a description of the tasks implied in this occupation (possibly of the required competences) and of the duties attached to this occupation. Typically, this description is the basis for the remuneration. The French “certification” is only one of the criteria or indicators leading to the French “qualification”.

Another important point is that the value of a qualification, and therefore its currency, often comes from a negotiation – sometimes formal and official, often informal – between the authorities that award them and the end users, employers typically. In the field of vocational education and training, the elaboration of the qualifications requires the involvement of the stakeholders of the labour market to achieve the recognition of the individual qualification of the owner upon recruitment.

## **Preparation of Workshops with the Aim of Implementing a National Qualifications Framework in Senegal**

### **Stage 1: Description of the Qualifications Systems**

Each system or sub-system could be described using the questionnaire presented in Table A.1.

**Table A.1. Questionnaire for Stage 1**

<b>Wording of the qualification</b> (name of the qualification)
<b>Type of qualification:</b> . Academic (general or theoretical) . Vocational . Mixed (academic and vocational)
Subject(s) for which this qualification can be awarded (speciality, domain, discipline)
<b>Pathways leading to this qualification:</b> . Initial education and training . Continuing training and adult learning . Alternating scheme (dual system) . Recognition of non-formal and informal learning . Other
<b>Type of institution</b> where this qualification can be prepared?  Is there a <b>specific accord or legal agreement</b> or are there <b>specific conditions</b> for an institution to be allowed to prepare the learners for this qualification?
Which are the <b>competent authorities</b> involved in: - The elaboration of the standards (“ <i>référentiels</i> ”)? - The checking or the assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences of the applicants? - The validation and/or the awarding of qualifications to successful applicants at the end of the assessment process?  - The legal validation of the standards and how: . By Ministerial Decree (provide details)? . By Ministerial Decision (provide details)? . Other (provide details)?
<b>Which currency?</b>  Are they pre-requisite for being awarded this qualification: - Through a pre-requisite for accessing the preparation leading to the qualification? - Through a pre-requisite for being assessed or seating at the examination?
<b>Does this qualification allow the owner to access:</b> - Specific regulated occupations? - Occupations falling under collective agreements? - Occupations in the formal economy? - Further education and training? - Further qualifications?
Is this qualification <b>recognised abroad</b> ?
Are they <b>equivalencies</b> between this qualification and other qualifications: - In Senegal? - Abroad?

## **Stage 2: Synthesis**

Stage 2 requires the preparation and analysis of Tables A.2 and A.3.a to A.3.f.

<b>Table A.2. Compiling Pieces of Information about the Different Systems</b>				
	<b>System A</b>	<b>System B</b>	<b>System C</b>	<b>System X</b>
Type of qualification				
Competent Authorities for the Elaboration of the Standards (“ <i>référentiels</i> ”)				
Position in the Education and Training System				
Places to Prepare the Qualification				
Competence Authorities for Certifying				
Currency in the Society				
Position in the Qualifications System				
Issues				
Evolution in terms of Engineering				
Evolution in terms of Policy				
Meaning of a Framework				

Implementation in the Context of the Workshops of January 2010 (Analysis by Sub-systems)

<b>Table A.3.a. Analysis – Primary Education</b>	
<b>Primary Education</b>	<b>Currently</b>
Types of qualifications	CFEE
Foundation documents	Decree 90-1463 of the 28 <sup>th</sup> of December 1990
Authority in charge	DEXCO
Access modes	Formal application and free application
Bridges	Vocational Education and Training
Issues	Issues with civil status
Position in the education and training landscape	First academic qualification that allows entering the labour market
Statistics	

<b>Table A.3.b. Analysis –Middle Secondary Education</b>		
<b>Junior Secondary Education</b>	<b>Currently</b>	
Types of qualifications	BFEM	BAC
Foundation documents	Decree 2004-912 of the 13 <sup>th</sup> of July 2004	Decree 95-947 of the 18 <sup>th</sup> of October 1995 modified by the Decree 2000-586 (in Arabic) appended with the Decree 2002-330 of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> of April 2002 (S4-S5)
Authority in charge	DEXCO	Bureau of the BAC
Access modes	Formal application and free application	Formal application and free application
Bridges	Secondary education, Vocational education and training	Tertiary education and Technical vocational education and training (TVET)
Issues	Organisational issues	Organisational issues, issue with career guidance
Position in the education and training landscape	2 <sup>nd</sup> academic qualification	3 <sup>rd</sup> academic qualification
Statistics	49'162 successful applicants in 2009	19'961 successful applicants in 2009

<b>Table A.3.c. Analysis – Tertiary Education</b>	
<b>Tertiary Education</b>	<b>Currently</b>
Types of qualifications	DUT, DTS, Vocational or Academic Bachelor (" <i>Licence</i> "), Master (" <i>maîtrise, master et DESS</i> "), PhD.
Foundation documents	Each qualification is governed by a Decree
Authority in charge	University
Access modes	Guidance – Entry test
Bridges	Mobility, technical vocational education and training (TVET)
Issues	Long waiting lists
Position in the education and training landscape	Allows entering the labour market
Statistics	NA

<b>Table A.3.d. Analysis – Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)</b>					
<b>TVET</b>	<b>Currently</b>				
Types of qualifications	ISCED 2 and 3 Vocational Qualification (CAP, BEP, BT, BP, BTS).				
Foundation documents	Decree				
Authority in charge	Ministry				
Access modes	Formal application and free application				
Bridges	<b>C A P</b> : 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade + 3 years of education and training.	<b>B E P</b> : 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade + 2 years of education and training.	<b>B T</b> : BFEM + 3 years of education and training or: BEP + 2 years of occupational experience.	<b>B T S</b> : BAC + 2 years of education and training or: BT + 3 years of occupational experience.	<b>B P</b> :
Issues	Organisational issues				
Position in the education and training landscape	First academic qualification that allows entering the labour market				
Statistics	NA				

<b>Vocational Examinations</b>	<b>Currently</b>
Types of qualifications	CEAP, BSC, CAP
Foundation documents	Decree
Authority in charge	DEXCO
Access modes	Examinations
Bridges	Promotion in the professional body and perspective of promotion
Issues	Lack of the Arabic language as an option for the BSC since the Decree of 1967.
Position in the education and training landscape	Allows access to higher levels
Statistics	NA

<b>Non-formal and Informal Learning</b>	<b>Currently</b>
Types of qualifications	CFEE
Foundation documents	Decree 90-1463 of the 28 <sup>th</sup> of December 1990
Authority in charge	DEXCO
Access modes	Formal application and free application
Bridges	Vocational Education and Training
Issues	- Issues with civil status; - Low academic level of the facilitators and voluntary workers; and - Issues with assessment.
Position in the education and training landscape	First academic qualification that allows entering the labour market
Statistics	NA

### **Qualification Landscape in Senegal**

By way of conclusion of Section 2, a summary of the landscape of the qualification is provide in table A.4.

<b>Sub-systems</b>	<b>Under an Official Authority</b>	<b>Standards and Prescribed Documents</b>	<b>On-going Qualifications</b>	<b>Planned Qualifications</b>	<b>Bridges</b>
Elementary Education	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Middle Secondary Education	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Tertiary Education	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
TVET	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Vocational examinations For teachers	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Non Formal Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**Stage 3: Questionnaire for stage 3. Grid for the reporting from the sub-groups.  
Objective: Delineation of the Senegalese national qualifications framework.**

Content of the framework:

- Types and nature of the qualifications included in the framework;
- Are there qualifications awarded in Senegal that are not included in the national qualifications framework and, if yes, why?
- What are the criteria for including a qualification in the framework and which institutions have the decision making power to include it?
- What are the principle underpinning the qualifications framework in terms of quality (quality of the training, of the standards (“*référentiels*”), of the training providers, of the qualifications providers...)?
- Is there a hierarchical classification system? If yes, which one and for whom?
- Which institution is in charge of coordinating the elaboration of the qualifications framework? Which authorities will be in charge of implementing the work for the referencing to the qualifications framework? Is it suitable to consider the creation of a Registration Commission (“*Commission d’homologation*”), and with which missions?
- Which uses of the qualifications are at stake in the qualifications framework:
  - . Individual mobility among Senegalese qualifications systems or sub-systems (legibility for the world of education and training under the form of equivalences or bridges, whether complete or partial)?
  - . Individual mobility abroad?
  - . Legibility for the labour market and the world of work?

**Formalisation of the Qualifications Framework**

Key issues are:

- Which legal approaches are to be considered for elaborating, establishing and using the qualifications framework?
- Which approach is being considered for communicating about the qualifications framework; whether among institutions, for the greater public in Senegal and abroad?
- Which financial investment must be planned? By whom?
- To which institution the different actors of the preparatory work should report about the progressing and the monitoring of the work?

The response to these different questions should allow for the establishment of a comprehensive list of the points that need to be formalised and for the preparation of the terms of reference for a working party for the year to come with the objective an initial sketch of the qualifications framework and its establishment.

## **Initial Questioning for the Elaboration of a Regional Qualifications framework (RQF)**

### **1. Is there a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the countries belonging to this Region?**

If yes:

- Which institution has the authority on it? When was it established?
- Why was it established in the first place? Which qualifications are included in this framework?
- Is the public aware of the existence of this qualifications framework in the country? How is, or was, this qualifications framework communicated to the wider public?

If not:

- Is there a project – or official statements – to elaborate/establish a qualifications framework?
- Are there barriers to the elaboration/establishment of a qualifications framework, and which ones?

### **2. What are the Processes to Elaborate National Qualifications Frameworks?**

- Who are the actors involved?
- Is the approach to elaborate the qualifications framework based on existing methods, and which model(s) is being used?
- What are the advantages of a qualifications framework in the national context?
- What are the difficulties encountered for the elaboration or the establishment of the qualifications framework, and for maintaining it?
- Does the qualifications framework allow for an improvement of the education and training systems?

### **3. Is There a Regional Approach to Establishing National Qualifications Frameworks?**

- In which region(s) are there national qualifications frameworks? Where is it planned to integrate national qualifications frameworks in a RQF?
- What are the reasons for the existence of a qualifications framework in a region, and for its absence in another one?
- If a RQF is in place, how does it work?
- What is the role of the RQF and what is the added value for the countries involved in this RQF?
- What were the necessary political/policy and legal steps to establishing the RQF?

#### **4. Additional Potential Questions**

If the approach is specific to the qualification process, the participants may want to also think about the following issues:

- Is there an inventory of the principles and systems adapted to the national context?
- Which qualifications are currently being awarded after training pathways?
- Are there bridges, or plan to build them, among the sub-systems?
- Do all qualifications have currency in the labour market and do they have a role for school-to-work transition? Do all qualifications have a role for individual mobility, whether for young people or for adults? Are all qualifications relevant to the expectations of the labour market, or are they irrelevant?
- Are the prevailing reference (key competences, knowledge) mainly in line with an approach by competences or with a focus on knowledge?
- Do the processes for the assessment of the learning outcomes allow the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes as well?
- Is it planned to make sure that the processes leading to the systematic awarding of a qualification in the formal education and training system would also include the possibility of recognising non-formal and informal learning outcomes to facilitate individual mobility, school-to-work transition and lifelong learning? If they exist, are these plans linked to the plans for the economic development of the country?
- Which political/policy processes, technical and financial means can be mobilised to anchor the qualification process in an approach that would be adapted to the issues and to the vision of the countries involved, and in a feasible and sustainable institutional framework?
- What is the role of the State, and what are the required institutional structures? What is the role of the different actors to involve in the process? What are the partnerships and socioeconomic regulation to implement?



## Appendix 2 - The Glossary of the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF)

<b>Articulation</b>	Active linking between vocational and academic streams.
<b>Benchmarking</b>	Practices that enable us to make mutually intelligible and useful judgements about the comparative value of qualifications.
<b>Credit value</b>	Value assigned to a qualification that represents the notional learning time required to satisfy the performance requirements and standards of the qualification.
<b>Credit transfer</b>	Granting of credit towards a qualification on the basis of credit already earned in another qualification or at another institution.
<b>Comparability</b>	Capacity to compare qualifications or credits in order to make decisions, with appropriate economy of effort, about such issues as employment or admission, including ease of access to reliable information, the status of the information and practical, well-made guidelines and resources for making a comparison.
<b>Equivalence</b>	Accepted arrangements of quality of educational competence and qualitative value of the various levels of the education and training systems and of whole education systems.
<b>Harmonisation</b>	Agreed and accepted arrangements, which match the educational competence and qualitative value of one education and training system with another or among a group of education and training systems.
<b>Level descriptors</b>	Set of statements that describe the levels of a qualification framework in terms of progressive stages of achievement and complexity.
<b>Mobility</b>	Improved access of learners to education and training institutions across SADC Member States.
<b>Mutual recognition</b>	Acknowledgement of the status of different but related qualifications that satisfy the requirements of the SADCQF.
<b>National Qualifications Framework</b>	Set of agreed principles, procedures and standardised terminology intended to ensure effective comparability of qualifications and credits within a particular country.
<b>Outcomes</b>	Required qualities of those considered qualified or competent at a certain level of learning.
<b>Programme</b>	Structured pathway of learning or training designed to equip a person with the competencies relevant to requirements for the award of a qualification.
<b>Qualifications</b>	Planned combination of learning outcomes with a defined purpose or purposes, including defined, applied and demonstrated competence and a basis for further learning.

<b>Quality Assurance</b>	Ways in which evidence for qualification is collected, interpreted and used, it has both a disciplinary and developmental role, attempting to overcome the conventionally recognised difficulty of nurturing and judging performance at the same time.
<b>Recognition of Prior Learning</b>	Acknowledgment through evaluation of a person's skills and knowledge acquired through previous training, work or life experience, which may be used to grant credits.
<b>Regional Qualifications</b>	Set of agreed principles, procedures and standardised.
<b>Framework</b>	terminology intended to ensure effective comparability of qualifications and credits within a particular region.
<b>Regional Standards</b>	Standards agreed and adopted by a majority of Member States in a particular region (e.g. in SADC).
<b>Standardisation</b>	Agreed arrangement of fixed same levels of educational competence and quality attached to whole education and training systems.
<b>Standards</b>	explicit statements about expected capabilities to be met as an expression of accomplishment.

Source: Towards a SADC Qualifications Framework – March 2005

### Appendix 3 – The Glossary of European Qualification Framework (EQF)

For the purposes of the Recommendation, the definitions that apply are the following:

- (a) ‘**qualification**’ means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent body determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards;
- (b) ‘**national qualifications system**’ means all aspects of a Member State's activity related to the recognition of learning and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. This includes the development and implementation of institutional arrangements and processes relating to quality assurance, assessment and the award of qualifications. A national qualifications system may be composed of several subsystems and may include a national qualifications framework;
- (c) ‘**national qualifications framework**’ means an instrument for the classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims to integrate and coordinate national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society;
- (d) ‘**sector**’ means a grouping of professional activities on the basis of their main economic function, product, service or technology;
- (e) ‘**international sectoral organisation**’ means an association of national organisations, including, for example, employers and professional bodies, which represents the interests of national sectors;
- (f) ‘**learning outcomes**’ means statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence;
- (g) ‘**knowledge**’ means the outcome of the assimilation of information through learning. Knowledge is the body of facts, principles, theories and practices that is related to a field of work or study. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, knowledge is described as theoretical and/or factual;
- (h) ‘**skills**’ means the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments);
- (i) ‘**competence**’ means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy.

Source: EQF Recommendation, June 2008