



## INTER-COUNTRY SEMINAR OF ICQN/TVSD ON NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS (NQF)

08 AND 09 JULY 2013 - ABIDJAN

### CONCEPT PAPER

#### INTRODUCTION

At the second meeting of the Inter-Country Quality Node on Technical and Vocational Skills Development (ICQN/TVSD), which was held in Abidjan from 19 to 21 September 2011, the ministers and representatives of the 20 countries present decided to create three thematic groups: one on the transition to work, one on national qualification frameworks and one on the role of trade/business associations in the field of TVSD. This concept paper focuses on the setting up of the thematic group on national qualification frameworks (NQFs) and preparation of a seminar on this topic to be held in late spring 2013. The seminar follows the one on youth integration that took place on 3 and 4 December 2013 in Abidjan. It aims to pursue the debate on the design and creation of NQFs in Africa, drawing on the experiences of countries that have made significant progress in this area, in particular regarding the recognition and accreditation of skills acquired outside formal training and qualification systems.

#### BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The issue of national qualification frameworks has become particularly important since the decision to replace the concept of TVET with that of TVSD was approved at the ADEA Triennale. This paradigm shift is based on the fact that NQFs should no longer be reserved for qualifications in the formal system, as is currently the case in most countries in the region, but should also take into account all the various different ways, means and methods of acquiring technical and vocational skills. In other words, NQFs should cover skills acquired through both formal and non-formal/informal training and qualification channels.

Several countries have made attempts and taken initiatives to recognize the various forms of skills. Examples include the Vocational Qualification Certificate (CQP) and Vocational Trades Certificate (CQM) in Benin, the Basic Qualification Certificate (CQB), Vocational Qualification Certificate (CQP), Vocational Qualification Diploma (BQP) and Technician Qualification Diploma (BPT) in Burkina Faso and the Apprenticeship Completion Certificate (CFA) in Mali. However, these forms of recognition are still struggling to be included in NQFs, which are based solely on qualifications issued by the formal system.

Two countries, South Africa and Mauritius, have developed NQFs that provide recognition for all the ways in which skills are developed. South Africa's **National Accreditation System** was developed in the 1990s and took over 15 years to achieve a system that recognizes 10 certification levels. Business organizations and professionals participate in the certification process. Mauritius's **NQF** was established in 2001. It also has 10 levels of certification and

recognizes and validates skills acquired outside formal education and training using the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. The design and creation of NQFs that aim to take into account the whole field of TVSD are also identified as key training policy objectives in countries such as Ghana, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Tunisia, Nigeria and Senegal.<sup>1</sup>

The creation of NQFs is a trend in almost all education and training policies in developed, transition and developing countries.<sup>2</sup> There is now a debate about how best to do this, which has raised the following questions:

- is the purpose, as the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) puts it, to recognize, validate and certify skills that have been acquired non-formally or informally, by establishing a unified certification system that covers the entire field of education and training, as in South Africa and Mauritius, and which would suggest a NQF **similar to the “Anglo-Saxon” model** based on the recognition of small units of skills that are clearly integrated into an overall scheme encompassing the various types and levels of qualifications?
- is it, on the other hand, to develop a much less ambitious but more concrete support system for the establishment of training and qualifications options and schemes enabling a maximum number of people, without recognized qualifications, to acquire the skills they need for employment or professional activity and thus earn more money while also being entitled to national recognition of the level of skills they have reached?

There is in fact no single model or ideal type of NQF, but rather a variety of examples that entail a mixture of the two approaches outlined. The paradigm shift whereby TVET is becoming TVSD suggests that schemes should focus less on helping countries establish comprehensive accreditation systems and more on ensuring esteem for all the types of training and skills that lead to employment and therefore to the socio-economic inclusion of groups in the population, the vast majority of whom have until now been excluded from all forms of recognized certification. As and when they are introduced, priority should therefore be given to the recognition and certification of various apprenticeship and qualification schemes, dual training combining work experience and classroom learning and job schemes for young people excluded from the formal TVET system. It will also be necessary to create the tools and means for recognizing and certifying levels of skills acquired by working people during the exercise of a given profession.

## THE OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR

There are currently a limited number of studies giving up-to-date information on existing NQF models in Africa and current experiences of processes for certifying non-formal and informal TVSD. The two studies conducted for the ADEA Triennale give some insight into the more developed models and outline an approach that highlights the need for an African approach to NQFs and the need to take a progressive, flexible and sustainable view of the NQF concept. They can serve as a basis for structured debate in the field, but do not reflect the current certification trends in the various countries.

In deciding to set up a thematic group on TVSD certification arrangements and opportunities, the member ministers of the ICQN/TVSD wanted make progress on the development of

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<sup>1</sup> The countries listed here are mentioned in the study *“National qualification frameworks developed in Anglo-Saxon and French traditions”*, which was produced under the responsibility of SAQA, in the framework of Sub-theme 2 of ADEA’s Triennale 2012 preparation process.

<sup>2</sup> This observation was made in another study for the Triennale on the introduction of NQFs, which was conducted by the German Agency for International Cooperation Agency, GIZ: *“Lessons learned from selected National Qualifications Frameworks in Africa.”*

means for recognizing, validating and accrediting technical and professional skills in their country and on the continent. To do this, they have given priority to sharing experiences about the certification of skills acquired, the intention being to make the ICQN a place for pooling information and thus for making concerted progress in the field. It will therefore be necessary to organize the seminar so as to provide a good insight into and understanding of different national TVSD certification practices, and then to see how a comparative analysis of such practices can help certain countries draw on **other countries'** experiences to ensure that the design of their own NQF is both sustainable and equitable.

The ultimate objective of the seminar is to give substance to the transition from the concept of TVET concept to that of TVSD by helping African countries adopt a gradual and flexible approach to the construction of an NQF that corresponds to Africa's socio-economic circumstances. These are clearly characterized by a lack of security in the labor market, and the production of skills mainly through professional development in the workplace.

As AFRISTAT notes in its survey of the informal sector in seven West African capitals, all of those who find work in the informal sector learn their trade on the job. As various national surveys note, the vast majority of young people and adults in the informal sector, who in many sub-Saharan African countries account for between 80% and 95% of the workforce, have not been trained in the formal TVET system. In Morocco, for example, 80.3% of informal sector workers have had training on the job, and only 4.5% of them have gone to formal training institutions.<sup>3</sup> In the case of Ethiopia, 0.9% of the sector's **workers** have had formal training, while 68% of them have acquired their skills through self-study, 27% within their families and 4% through traditional apprenticeship.

These data highlight the importance and even urgent need to get to grips with the issue of how to accredit skills produced in this way. It is firstly necessary to do justice to those who have been trained on the job and who are entitled to have their professional abilities recognized. Every effort must be made to ensure, as suggested by the ADEA Triennale, that such recognition serves to raise the qualification levels of young people and adults, to enable them to earn a better living and facilitate their transition from subsistence work to entrepreneurial activity.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

Initially, it will be necessary to invite not just the ICQN/TVSD member countries to attend the seminar, but also countries that have positive experiences regarding the accreditation of prior learning, namely:

- South Africa and Mauritius, which have developed and introduced a highly structured NQF for the entire field of education and training (ADEA/SAQA study);
- Senegal, which began to adopt a skills-based approach in 2005 and then, as from 2010, introduced a NQF that permits the accreditation of formal and informal training (ADEA/SAQA study);
- Ghana, which is working on the establishment of a NQF as part of a reform of TVET aimed at ensuring it takes account of labor market skills needs (ADEA/SAQA);
- Mozambique, which introduced, as part of the PIREP program, a National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) covering schemes and courses run both by the National TVET Directorate (DINET) under the authority of the Education Ministry, and the National Institute of Employment and Vocational Training (INEFP) under the authority of the Labor Ministry;
- Uganda and Malawi, for which the German International Cooperation agency has conducted an assessment of the introduction of a NQF (ADEA/GIZ).

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<sup>3</sup> Direction de la Statistique, (2005), *Synthèse des principaux résultats de l'enquête nationale sur le secteur informel non agricole*, (1999/2000), Rabat.

Aside from these examples, incomplete experiences of setting up NQFs should be added, for example those of Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali, as well as those that seem to be underway in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Tunisia and Nigeria.

It will also be necessary to check whether all these countries are able to attend the Abidjan seminar, and if so, to ask them to describe and present their experiences using a common format for all countries. This common approach will thus make it possible to:

- understand and describe the various approaches currently being used for setting up NQFs;
- analyze the similarities and differences of approach of the participating countries;
- identify, at the end of seminar, courses of action that should promote the development of efficient and flexible NQFs that give priority to the recognition and certification of skills acquired non-formally and informally.

Given the analyses already undertaken by ADEA on existing NQFs or those that are being developed, it will be essential and even unavoidable to invite to Abidjan the experts who were involved, and to entrust them with the task of reviewing and further developing the work of the seminar. The people concerned here are the two experts from SAQA and MOF, the two German experts (GIZ) and the French (CNCP) who were involved in the studies. All four undertook significant research and analysis, which will be highly beneficial to the participants of the seminar and help achieve the desired results. It will also be appropriate to invite a representative of Norway. The country has considerable experience in the field (see the study conducted for the Maputo Biennale) and expressed interest in sharing its own experiences and supporting the organization of the seminar.

#### TIME TABLE

The seminar on NQFs is planned for 8 and 9 July 2013. The first day of the seminar will enable participating countries to present their experiences of NQFs using a common structure for their description and analysis. On the second day the countries will work together and the experts mentioned above will review their work. A final synthesis will be adopted by the participating countries, which will be submitted to the ministerial meeting of the ICQN/TVSD in mid-September 2013.

#### BUDGET

Each country will appoint two experts to participate in the seminar: one with responsibilities in the field of TVSD (Ministry of TVET and Employment and Training) and one involved in the process of national certification. The seminar will involve more than 15 countries, or 30 national experts in total. The four experts involved in the two ADEA studies and the ADEA coordinators responsible for the ICQN and the TVSD theme will also be invited.

ADEA will cover the travel and living expenses. To do so it will seek support from the German Cooperation Agency (GIZ), the French Development Agency (AFD) and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The Ivory Coast Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Training will cover the cost of receiving participants and meetings.