



**Association for the Development of Education in Africa**

**Biennale on Education in Africa  
(Libreville, Gabon, March 27-31, 2006)**

**Effective Literacy Programs**

**Parallel Session A-5**

**From Literacy  
to Lifelong Learning**

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**The NQF and its Implementation  
in Non-Formal Education – With Special Reference  
to South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Kenya**

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**Working Document**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABEP	Adult Basic Education Program
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACE	Adult Continuing Education
AUPE	Adult Upper Primary Education
BNLP	Botswanan National Literacy Program
BOTA	Botswana Training Authority
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CLDC	Community Learning Development Coordinator
COSDEC	Community Skills Development Centers
DABE	Directorate of Adult Basic Education
DAE	Department of Adult Education (Kenya)
DoE	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labor
DLO	District Literacy Organizer
DNFE	Department for Non-Formal Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
HE	Higher Education
LLL	Lifelong Learning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Kenya)
NAMCOL	Namibian College of Open Learning
NLPN	National Literacy Program in Namibia
NQA	Namibian Qualifications Authority
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NTA	National Training Authority
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
PED	Provincial Education Department
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Policy
QA	Quality Assurance
RLO	Regional Literacy Organizer
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
Seta	Sector Education and Training Authority
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises
UIE	UNESCO Institute for Education
US	United Standards
VET	Vocational Education and Training
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TIVET	Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (Kenya)

## 1. ABSTRACT

1. This paper locates the development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) within the perspective of *lifelong learning* (LLL). LLL is presented as an organizing principle for all education, including non-formal education, in developing countries since it offers the theoretical and epistemological framework necessary for addressing the challenges posed by the low levels of basic education. This paper argues that learning acquired non-formally should be located within the (existing or emerging) NQFs to ensure the validation, accreditation and certification of non-formal learning. It is argued that changes in the global social fabric have made it necessary for adult learners to move beyond the mere communal validation of knowledge to a more public and national system of validation. The paper stresses the need for the development of NQFs and (consequently) the development and implementation of a regional qualifications model. The central function of the NQF in all its stages of development is to accredit unit standards which culminate in qualifications for even basic level learners; and to permit portability, accessibility and transferability of credits, knowledge and abilities across qualification levels and across education and training and to recognize and accredit prior learning.

2. This study examines the experience in four non-PRSP countries which have developed (South Africa and Namibia) or are in the process of developing (Botswana and Kenya) and NQF. The study outlines the experiences and stages of development with the NQF processes in these countries and concludes by outlining lessons learned from the investigation with regard to difficulties in implementation arising mainly from systemic and capacity problems. It also refers to the experience in countries with operational NQFs (or the beliefs and expectations in countries with an emergent NQF) of the difficulties associated with the practical application of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) at any degree of scale.

3. The study outlines a number of challenges which would need to be considered by countries if the system is to be fully implemented, especially for non-formal education where ways of accrediting, validating and authenticating learning will need to be established if, indeed, lifelong learning as a necessity of a learning society is to be established.

## 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 2.1 OVERVIEW: LOCATING ADULT LEARNING WITHIN THE PARADIGM OF LIFELONG LEARNING

4. This paper locates the development of National Qualifications Frameworks (NQF) within the perspective of *lifelong learning* (LLL). LLL is presented as an organizing principle for non-formal education in developing countries since it offers the theoretical and epistemological framework necessary for addressing the challenges posed by the low levels of basic education in these countries. This paper argues that learning acquired non-formally should be located within the (existing or emerging) NQFs for ensuring the validation, accreditation and certification of non-formal learning. It is argued that changes in the global social fabric have made it necessary for adult learners to move beyond the mere communal validation of knowledge to a more public and national system of validation in order for people *inter alia* to access opportunities for learning and further development. The new knowledge economy and the trend of social interactions increasingly transcending national borders as people are compelled to pursue work opportunities, highlight the need for the recognition of basic learning.

5. The paper stresses the need for the development of NQFs, and (consequently) the development and implementation of a regional qualifications model. Globalization and the new emerging economic and social order demand new, wider and more complex competencies for people to be able to understand, anticipate and deal with new and changing social realities. The realities of the poor are not excluded from these changes – they have to address acute knowledge needs to cope with the impact of globalization. Globalization and the knowledge society of the 21st century pose challenges for illiterates and people with low levels of education which are exacerbated by problems including drought, famine and increasing poverty, illiteracy, racism, unemployment and work instability, violence, conflict, environmental degradation and the impact of HIV/AIDS, all of which contribute to furthering the poverty and knowledge gap. Moreover, as Torres (2005:47) points out, with transnational corporations “running the world” beyond national and regional boundaries, new forms of social exclusion and poverty and an increasing gap between the rich and the poor globally and within each country are common.

6. Torres (2005) argues that there is a renewed need and a renewed acknowledgement of the importance of *education*, *basic education for all* and *lifelong learning* in the shaping of the new social order. *Education for All* is not sufficient as the social and economic development of a country increasingly depends upon the knowledge and skills of its citizens in the global knowledge economy. LLL has been activated today as the key organizing principle for education and training systems, and for the building of the “knowledge society” of the 21st century. Moreover, she points out, the new economic, social and cultural changes mean a change to *knowledge* or *information* societies which require *permanent learning* throughout our lifespan.

7. The expanding learning needs and the need to enhance human capability to satisfy them are particularly important for learners in the most disadvantaged situations. It is the poor who are mostly excluded from information and knowledge. Given the growth of poverty worldwide, adult basic education has come to be viewed as a key strategy within the overarching goal of poverty alleviation. However, this also implies ensuring that the poor have opportunities for meeting their basic learning needs and to go beyond basic learning, and that they also have their learning and knowledge validated to enable the latter to happen. Torres (2005) refers to the necessity to shift the focus from *education* to *learning* and from time and space bound education to *lifelong and lifewide education*. The term “learning” therefore refers to learning which takes place across a variety of sites and through a variety of modes, and which spans the lives of people. The LLL paradigm goes beyond the appeal for *education for all*. It stresses the right of all to learn and to *continue* learning as part of

the “learning-age population” – giving recognition to learning which cuts across the dimensions of *time* and *space*.

8. Contemporary adult learning cannot afford to overlook the need for lifelong learning. In fact, unless adult learning embraces the philosophy of lifelong learning, it runs the risk of failing the poor. Lifelong learning can be a mechanism both for facilitating development as well as for exclusion and control. The North/South divide is still prevalent here and LLL runs the risk of creating new and powerful inequalities. In knowledge-based economies, those who have the lowest levels of skill and the weakest capacity for constant updating are less and less likely to find paid employment. Individualization, one of the impacts of modernization and globalization, has also meant that the traditional support networks are weakened.

9. Torres (2005: 12) explains that LLL is acknowledged as a *need* and a *principle* for education and learning systems worldwide, hence it is being actively embraced by the North where it plays an enabling role. But it sits uneasily for national governments in the South, which prescribe narrow primary education ceilings for poor countries. In the South non-formal education continues to be associated with remedial education for the poor. Torres cautions against the “dual education agenda” which is currently being shaped and in terms of which *lifelong learning* is actively adopted in the North while *basic education* and *completion of primary education* are promoted in the South. This consolidates and deepens the gap between North and South. Lifelong learning, she argues, must be adopted as a paradigm for *all* countries, as a principle for (re)shaping education and learning systems.

10. The system of LLL as an organizing principle is therefore contingent on a national or even regional qualifications framework. In this paper we discuss endeavors in different countries to use a qualifications framework to support the process of LLL. The coupling of national (and regional) qualifications frameworks with the philosophy of LLL presents an epistemological and “mechanical” scaffold for recognizing prior learning and for enabling access to further learning opportunities.

11. Adult education needs to have systems for learning validation which are equivalent to the systems of formal education, regardless of where and when the learning occurred. Basic and informal education needs to be included within the NQFs in order that they might access the “ladders” and “bridges” which avert educational dead-ends. This requires articulation between the different levels and kinds of learning.

## 2.2 THE SCOPE OF THIS PAPER

12. This ADEA-commissioned research study focuses on a theme which has tended to be neglected in deliberations on adult and non formal education – namely the assessment and the accreditation of learners in the non-formal system within the thematic paradigm of lifelong learning. This paper argues that LLL and its implementation as an organizing principle is contingent upon the establishment of national qualifications framework systems. Accordingly, this study examines the use of these systems/frameworks as they exist in two African countries (South Africa and Namibia) and examines the developments in this regard in two countries where the development of qualification frameworks is in process (Botswana and Kenya). The four countries under investigation are countries which fall outside of the structural adjustment framework.

13. The study was undertaken with a view to examining national visions and coordination of their frameworks for qualifications, accreditation and certification. Across the countries there are various approaches to dealing with assessment and accreditation within this sector of education and there is a growing movement that assessment and accreditation can be dealt with along the lines of being *equivalent* to the mainstream formal system. This would enable access and portability between the non-formal and formal systems and, in some countries, it would endeavor to enable this across the education and training divide.

14. This study thus presents a synthesis of the findings, lessons of experience and influence of the NQF on the basic educational sectors of the various countries (although it is only in the embryonic stages in three countries).



15. The research examines the accreditation frameworks where institutionalized (South Africa and Namibia), and the process of developing qualifications frameworks into which literacy and basic education might be situated (Kenya and Botswana, currently in the process of establishing qualifications frameworks that will incorporate the areas of basic education).

16. Presently, South Africa (in particular) and Namibia have gone some way towards establishing their qualifications framework, while Botswana and Kenya are currently engaged in the development of the framework.

17. The study examines critically:

the need for basic learning to be integrated into the NQF;

the lessons learned from the implementation and the experiences of the qualifications framework for literacy and basic education in South Africa and (to a lesser extent Namibia given the “newness” of their system);

the extent to which basic education is affected (both positively and negatively) by the development of unit standards and outcomes/competencies via a process of standards generation and standards setting in South Africa;

the extent to which various sectors/stakeholders in the countries that have experience in utilizing “outcomes/competency” based systems perceive the system to be relevant (or irrelevant) for adults engaged in basic education and literacy programs;

the extent to which these countries have found or believed the NQF to be useful for integrating education and training, facilitating transfer between formal and non-formal education programs, recognizing prior learning, facilitating access for adults to career-pathing and also for opening access to adults who have previously been excluded from the formal systems of education;

the extent to which the various countries have found or believe standard setting and outcomes/competence-based approaches in literacy to be responsive to the social and/or economic demand as well as factors impacting on their implementation.

## 2.3 METHODOLOGY

18. The research strategy employed for the collection of information included a documentary review and an analysis of official documents and grey literature. A semi-structured interview schedule, which is appended, was developed and used in each of the countries for interviewing government officials from the Departments of Education, qualification bodies and basic education providers. In addition, interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with adult learners, educators and providers of adult education

## 2.4 SOME LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

19. The lessons learnt from countries experimenting with these systems as they pertain to basic education and literacy need to be shared and their impact needs to be examined since they will inevitably impact on neighboring countries within the region. The interrogation of these systems at this stage is therefore imperative as countries like Botswana and Kenya (and partially Namibia) embark on such non-formal education systems. In South Africa, the NQF has been established for a decade, and a number of studies (including the current research) have been done to explore its effects and continued challenges.

20. The central function of the NQF in all its stages of development in the countries under investigation is to accredit unit standards which culminate in qualifications for even basic level learners, to permit portability, accessibility and transferability of skills, knowledge and abilities across qualification levels and across education and training as traditionally separated fields.

21. In Namibia, an NQF following very closely on the South African one has only recently begun to be implemented. The Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) was mandated to set up and

administer an NQF for Namibia by creating a forum for matters pertaining to qualifications; setting the occupational standards for any occupation in any career; promotion of the development (and analysis) of benchmarks; accreditation of persons, institutions and organizations providing education and training courses that meet certain requirements; evaluation and recognition of competencies learned outside formal education (RPL); establishment of facilities for collecting and disseminating information pertaining to qualification; and provision of services for evaluating the qualifications of almost 40000 Namibians who have obtained qualifications abroad. While the NQA is in place, the system of accreditation for adult basic education is in the process of development, with equivalences between the school-based system and non-formal education being established.

22. In Botswana and Kenya, the NQF is also still in nascent form. In both countries the intention of the NQF is, as in South Africa, to put in place a system that is predicated on developing and assessing learning in terms of “learning outcomes” – a system which is aimed at giving status and recognition (also) to learning occurring outside of formal educational contexts.

23. RPL as a principle has been accepted within all four countries of this research – while processes of implementing (and planning for implementation of) the RPL are proving to be complicated and cumbersome. While RPL holds great promise, it has not yet been implemented sufficiently and more work must be done to render it “operational”. In South Africa, respondents agree that problems with regard to the RPL have a bearing on its relative inaccessibility and cumbersomeness. It is thought that there has been little progress on redress through the process of RPL as redress requires that learners are able to “cash in” their credits – a process which is not as yet effective.

24. In South Africa, where the NQF is operational, challenges are still evident in ensuring the effectiveness of qualification design, the portability of qualifications and of qualification uptake. Moreover, the “reluctant” accreditation of assessing bodies (with there presently being not one for basic education other than the under-capacitated provincial department) is resulting in a degree of paralysis in the ABE sector. This is a result of legislative anomalies leading to dual accreditation, lack of trust (for example, between ETQA bodies), overlapping responsibilities of ETQAs and QA mechanisms being set up (in institutions) for the sake of compliance rather than to improve quality. The lack of understanding of non-formal education and the uncertainty about registration of institutions with the DoE are issues that have remained unresolved and need to be given attention.

25. In South Africa, integration and moving between academic and vocational qualifications remains difficult, and cooperation between formal education and the world of work remains limited. With regard to the specific problems in the field of basic education, the paper refers to problems in the design and management of provider accreditation and program approval in the scattered and diverse range of provision that resorts under the name of ABET.

26. At the time of writing, Botswana was in a phase of re-curriculumization in the non-formal sphere, and accordingly the report straddles the present and the proposed. It is important to note that the new curriculum is being developed in tandem with, and is indeed contingent on, the development of a new language policy and the proposed National Qualifications Framework, which are both in process. These “movements” are integral to the systemic process of reform as the entire system of education gears itself for a qualifications framework. Given this situation, the general lack of a structured qualifications framework, including a learner performance assessment and evaluation system, is presently reported to be affecting the current education and training system. A coherent process for basic education is proposed within the national framework as well as defined general guidelines, benchmarks, indicators and outcomes.

27. The Botswanan proposal for an ABEP system also (as is the case with the other countries under study) proposes linkages between other “sectors” of education, training and development which will facilitate the access to, and the progress of a learner into, higher levels, thus enabling the process of lifelong learning. The ABEP component of learning fits into the larger NQF system insofar as it has opened possibilities for career-pathing and access to additional learning which includes both general subjects and vocational training components. This calls for enhanced collaboration and coordination

between the Ministry of Education and other ministries offering relevant educational and training programs for youth and adults (e.g. Labor, Health, Agriculture, Family, etc.), as well as with BOTA (Botswana Training Authority) in order to assist in the provision and assessment of vocational skills.

28. **General lessons** learned with regard to:

a. **Accrediting adult learners.** It needs to be recognized that not all adult learners want to join a class in order to be accredited. Many come to learn focused skills, e.g. writing one's name, and learning enough literacy to pass a drivers' license test. Older learners and learners with special learning niche needs are not necessarily interested in being accredited, but providers are often only resourced or funded if they teach so-called accredited programs. This forces learners into straitjacketed learning programs.

b. **Demystifying unit standards (US).** It takes an inordinate amount of training to equip a teacher to understand what the unit standards require and how to apply them in the learning environment. Unless these are written in teacher and learner friendly ways, the system becomes self-defeating.

c. **A cautionary note about packing too much into ABE programs.** Proposed programs should take into account what is possible and what minimum learning adults need to access further learning options rather than making the required exit level of competence for adult learners a formidable and unachievable obstacle to further learning.

29. **Key Recommendations:**

1. **The practical application of the NQF.** It is not easy to apply RPL at any degree of scale. If the system is to be fully implemented, ways of accrediting and validating learning will need to be established. For systems of lifelong learning to be effective, the systems for recognizing and accrediting learning will need to be in place.
2. **Public awareness and advocacy campaigns** should be aimed at all levels of learners (including basic learners) and should stress the benefits of the NQF.
3. **Capacity building** should continue to enhance national and regional capacity for the development of new qualifications frameworks and systems for skills recognition in prior learning.
4. **Regional cooperation is essential.** Countries in the region will need to look to each other for help and cooperation in this regard. For example, the establishment of a national learners' database of learning records is not possible for all countries and shortcuts, using and adapting systems from elsewhere, should be considered. There is a need for greater sharing of information and best practices developments at a regional and a continental level for the harmonization and articulation of regional qualification frameworks once countries have developed their NQFs.
5. **This process of implementing an NQF** needs to happen irrespective of whether countries have adopted strategies that involve the review of the existing qualifications base or whether countries, e.g. South Africa and Namibia, have used the NQF not as a rearrangement and/or re-collation of existing qualifications, but as a tool for social justice which necessitated a transformation of the entire education and training system.

### 3. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

30. This paper begins with a fictitious case study which is intended to situate discussion on the importance of *lifelong learning* as an organizing principle for non-formal education in developing countries. It is intended to show how, when applied to non-formal education, the principles of lifelong learning can address many of the challenges posed by the low levels of basic education in the context of a developing country.

Mr X lives in a remote rural village – a village where he, his parents and grandparents have all spent their lives. Although Mr X is the son of the village headman, he was only able to attend primary school for two years after which time he was needed as a herder at the cattle post. However, despite not going to school, Mr X has a wealth of knowledge. He has learned a lot from his father and from working and living in the village. The people in the small village community recognize Mr X for the knowledge that he has – there is no question about what Mr X knows. In small communities, people know who can help them with sick children or with problems they have with their cattle or with their gardens or if a water pump breaks down. So even though people like Mr X may not have certificates or diplomas, their knowledge and skills are authenticated and recognized by the community itself.

However, about a month ago, Mr X left the village to try his luck in getting work in the capital city. Mr X's brother recently died of an HIV-related illness and now Mr X has to care for his late brother's three children in addition to his own children. Moreover, it is not so easy providing food for everyone as the drought is now running into its second year and the war on the eastern border keeps affecting the flow of food and its cost. Also, the impact of globalization means that there is a greater need for people to have cash in the village. The fact that people in the region are able to move around with greater ease means that the village is no longer self-sufficient.

Mr X's one-month search for work in the city was in vain. Although he has knowledge and skills, he does not have any certification. While his knowledge is authenticated in the village, in the larger world his knowledge is unrecognized and therefore has no currency. Mr X, like many other people all over the world, is doubly disadvantaged. He was disadvantaged in that he missed out on basic education due to poverty, and so the knowledge and skills he has are neither accredited nor recognized. But his disadvantage does not end there: because of his unfortunate circumstances, it is unlikely that Mr X will get work or gain access to further education or training.

31. Who is Mr X and where does he come from? Mr X could be any adult (male or female, old or young) in any country on the African continent. The fictitious Mr X draws our attention to the plight of illiterate adults and youth who have missed out on basic education and who are forced, for whatever reason, to compete in the socio-economy of a modern society. The case study is intended to focus our attention on how the knowledge society of the 21st century poses challenges for illiterates – challenges which differ from the problems of previous generations. The impact of globalization or (what Torres 2004 terms *glocalization*), coupled with the problems of HIV/AIDS, drought and famine, impact on the lives of all communities. Moreover, the porous borders between countries and the consequential high levels of migration increase competition for shrinking work opportunities. To disregard Lifelong Learning as a central organizing principle for education and training systems is to deny the disadvantaged any possibility of participating in the knowledge society of the 21stst century.
32. In this regard, Torres (2004:10) suggests an overall shift in focus from *education* to *learning* and from *lifelong education* to *lifelong learning*. *Learning* is emphasized over *education* as the key organizing category and within a *lifelong learning* framework. She (2004:12) stresses the importance of learning both within and beyond educational provision: learning in the family, in the community, at work, with friends, learning through the mass media, libraries, traditional and modern technologies, learning by observing, by doing, by working, by teaching, by participating.
33. While the term “learning” therefore refers to learning which takes place across all the aforementioned sites and modes, the concept “lifelong” is an all-embracing category that

includes youth, adults and the elderly, thus stressing learning across the life span (i.e. learning of all people, irrespective of age, gender and of the country and zone where they live) and that people have a right to learn and to continue learning and must thus be considered learners and part of the “learning-age population” for basic education/training/learning purposes.

34. In this sense McKay and Makhanya (2006) point out that lifelong learning (LLL) needs to be recognized as an important organizing principle for learning in the 21st century. LLL gives recognition to learning which cuts across the dimensions of *time* and *space*. In terms of the framework of LLL, our fictitious character Mr X should, and would, benefit by having his prior informal learning recognized but also enabling him to access further learning pathways and learning opportunities. While the philosophy of LLL is taken up in section 3.5 of this paper, it is important to note that this fictitious case study is intended to “set the scene” for this ADEA paper on LLL and its implementation through the establishment of national qualification framework systems in developing countries.

### 3.1 BACKGROUND

35. This ADEA-commissioned research study focuses on a theme which has tended to be neglected in deliberations of adult and non-formal education – namely the assessment and accreditation of learners in the non-formal system within the thematic paradigm of lifelong learning. Across the countries there are various approaches to dealing with assessment and accreditation within this sector of education. There is also a growing movement that assessment and accreditation can be dealt with as being an equivalent to the mainstream formal system and as such enabling access and portability between the non-formal and formal systems and, in some countries, endeavoring to enable this across the education and training divide. The lessons learned from countries experimenting with these systems as they pertain to basic education and literacy need to be shared, and their impact needs to be examined since they will inevitably impact on neighboring countries within the region. The interrogation of these systems at this stage is therefore imperative as countries like Botswana and Kenya and (partially Namibia) embark on such systems for non-formal education themselves. In South Africa, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has been established for a decade, and a number of studies (including the current research) have been done to explore its effects and continued challenges. In Namibia, an NQF following very closely on the South African one has only recently begun to be implemented; and people interviewed have indicated that it is still too early to consider its workability in practice. In Botswana and Kenya, the NQF is also still in nascent form. In both countries, the intention of the NQF is, as in South Africa, to put in place a system that is predicated on developing and assessing learning in terms of “learning outcomes” – a system that aims to give status and recognition (also) to learning occurring outside of formal educational contexts.
36. Accordingly, this study proposes to examine the use of these systems/frameworks as they exist in two African countries (South Africa and Namibia) and to examine the developments in this regard in two countries where the development of qualification frameworks is in process (Botswana and Kenya). Because a separate (ADEA-commissioned) study has been undertaken by the Department of Adult Education at the University of Nairobi (coordinated by Joyce Kebathi, 2005) this study will not repeat findings from that research, but will include only areas where comparisons can be made in relation to the other three countries. Therefore, the material on Kenya will be placed in comparative text boxes, along with comparisons being made between the other countries (such comparisons also being placed in text boxes for easy identification by the reader).

### 3.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

37. This study is based on research undertaken in four countries which were outside of the structural adjustment framework, with a view to examining national visions and coordination of their frameworks for qualifications, accreditation and certification. The research examines

the accreditation frameworks where institutionalized (South Africa and Namibia), and the process of developing qualification frameworks into which literacy and basic education might be situated (Kenya and Botswana, currently in the process of establishing a qualifications framework that will incorporate the areas of basic education).

38. Presently, South Africa (in particular) and Namibia have gone some way towards establishing their qualifications framework, and Botswana and Kenya are currently engaged in the development of the framework.

39. The study will critically examine:

the lessons learnt from the implementation and the experiences of the qualifications framework for literacy and basic education in South Africa and (to a lesser extent Namibia given the “newness” of their system);

the extent to which basic education is affected (both positively and negatively) by the development of unit standards and outcomes/competencies via a process of standards generation and standards setting in South Africa;

the extent to which various sectors/stakeholders in the countries who have experience in utilizing “outcomes/competency” based systems perceive the system to be relevant (or irrelevant) for adults engaged in basic education and literacy programs;

the extent to which these countries consider the OBE system to be useful for integrating education and training, facilitating transfer between formal and non-formal education programs, recognizing prior learning, facilitating access for adults to assume career-pathing and also for opening access to adults who have previously been excluded from the formal systems of education;

the extent to which the various countries have found or believe standard setting and outcomes/competence-based approaches in literacy to be responsive to the social demand for literacy and/or the economic demand as well as factors impacting on its implementation (e.g. whether it is un/manageable, cost effective);

The extent to which these systems have enabled (or are perceived to enable) integration of education and training;

The extent to which prior learning is (will be) recognized and accredited;

40. While the development of the establishment of the NQF work is recently completed in Namibia and is in process in Kenya and Botswana, the study will explore the extent to which these developments are informed by the lessons learned from elsewhere and how they propose to adapt or customize these systems to their own contexts.

41. The study proceeds to document the lessons learned from the use (or development) of National Qualification Frameworks in four non-PRSP<sup>1</sup> African countries. To this end, stakeholders such as the Ministries of Education, assessor bodies, the NQF machinery, basic education service providers and teachers and learners themselves will be regarded as resources for information and experiences on the impact of the implementation of the NQF or of its emerging components on adult education/literacy<sup>2</sup>.

42. This study thus presents a synthesis of the findings, lessons of experience and the influence of the NQF on the basic educational sectors of the various countries (although it is only in embryonic stages in three countries). It will examine the experience of the accreditation bodies, adult learners and basic education/literacy service providers in the four countries under consideration, i.e. South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, and Kenya.

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<sup>1</sup> The countries under study do not have **Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)**. These papers describe a country's macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs which are intended to promote growth and reduce poverty, as well as pinpoint associated external financing needs. PRSPs are prepared by governments and development players, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund

<sup>2</sup> It is recognized that concepts require definitions when used out of context, but for the purposes of this discussion the authors will use both terms and will differentiate between concepts in use only when essential.

43. The objectives of the study are directly linked to the research questions posed above.

### 3.3 METHODOLOGY

44. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. The research strategy, methods and instruments employed for the collection of information are as follows:

- a. Documentary review and analysis of official documents, project documents, studies and other related materials. These official documents included Legislation and Policy on Qualification Frameworks (where they existed), discussion documents pertaining to quality and accreditation in the various countries, throughput statistics, and registered unit standards/outcomes/competencies where they existed.
- b. A semi-structured interview schedule was developed and used in each of the countries for interviewing government officials from the Departments of Education, qualification bodies and basic education providers. The questions were based on perceived successes and weaknesses in the system both for implementation and with regard to “limiting” and “furthering” basic education (a schedule is appended).
- c. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with:
  - o adult learners
  - o educators, and
  - o providers of adult education
- d. The reports were circulated to stakeholders for comment and for input into the discourse.

### 3.4 THE NEED FOR LLL IN THE NEW SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORDER

45. The case study of Mr X in paragraph 1 above refers to a number of reasons why adults like Mr X are disadvantaged both by the lack of basic education and by the consequential fact that they are denied access to further or lifelong learning opportunities. Our fictitious Mr X also draws our attention to fact that globalization and the new emerging economic and social order demand new, wider and more complex competencies to be able to understand, anticipate and deal with new and changing social realities.

46. Knowledge and learning are the critical factors in the changing reality, since it requires social citizens to have new skills and competencies. However, the concept of learning is made more complex by the fundamental changes in the context of the global knowledge economy. One important source of change is the accelerating speed of scientific and technological advancement – a phenomenon that has resulted in massive changes across all societies and the economy (or labor market) at any given time. The realities of the poor are not excluded from these changes – they have to address acute knowledge needs to cope with the impact of globalization. Indeed, the new economy and the new rules of governance (at all levels, from the local to the global) bring new Basic Learning Needs and redefine many of the old Basic Learning Needs, not only for the poor but also for the world population.

47. Torres (2005:40) lists some of the competencies that are needed to deal with the new economic and social order. These include competencies to deal with

market forces and transnational corporations “running the world” beyond national and regional boundaries’

redefinition of the role of the nation/state and the nation/government which is itself subject to sub- and supra-reconfiguration processes;

the blurring of boundaries between the public and the private sectors, as well as of so-called “civil society” and international organizations within that context;



what she terms “glocalization”, which refers to the contradictory tendency towards both globalization and further localization;

cultural homogenization;

massive (and new forms of) social exclusion and poverty, and an increasing gap between the rich and the poor globally and within each country;

high levels of family disintegration;

increasing environmental degradation;

unemployment and work instability;

the growth of an informal economy and the emergence of new forms of production and of a popular economy;

decentralization and transfer of responsibilities at local level, often with wider demands for (economic, social, civic) participation by intermediate and local actors;

continued erosion of public schooling and trends towards privatization of education and training;

the digital divide;

new and enhanced forms of connectivity together with exacerbated individualism, competition and consumerism;

ageing, coexistence of three to four generations, and older people viewed as a new “problem” to cope with;

continued subordination of women and lack of respect for children, youth and the elderly, and for minority groups;

poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, migration, racism, intolerance, violence, war and terrorism as structural dimensions; and

the impact of HIV/AIDS and other illnesses which plague the developing world.

### **3.4.1 LLL AS A KEY ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE FOR THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER**

48. There is a renewed need for and a renewed acknowledgement of the importance of *education, basic education for all* and *lifelong learning* in the shaping of the new social order. It is recognized that the *Education for All* initiative is not sufficient, as a country’s social and economic development is increasingly dependent upon the knowledge and skills of its citizens in the global knowledge economy. Lifelong learning (LLL) has been activated today as the key organizing principle for education and training systems, and for the building of the knowledge society of the 21st century.
49. LLL also implies an overall shift in focus from *education* to *learning* and from *lifelong education* to *lifelong learning*. This, Torres (2005:40) points out, is as much a necessity for societies in the South as it is in the North, for the young and for the old. As an organizing principle, LLL transcends the dimensions of time and space. It acknowledges that
  - learning is lifelong and is not confined to a particular period in one’s life – in other words learning is not time bound; and
  - learning is life wide and is not confined to school or to the formal education system and is therefore not confined to any particular space.
50. According to these two premises, it can be said that lifelong learning is more than just education and training beyond formal schooling. A lifelong learning framework encompasses all learning throughout the life cycle, from birth to the grave and in different learning environments – formal, non-formal and informal.
51. Social analysts who focus on modernity, such as Ulrich Beck (1992) and Anthony Giddens (1990, 1991) argue that the new economic, social and cultural changes mean a change to



*knowledge* or *information* societies, and they point out that these new societies have strong individualizing tendencies (as opposed to communal social relations) and have a requirement for *permanent learning* (reflexivity). This means that as humans we are required to take part in organized learning throughout our lifespan if we are to make informed choices about our lives and the societies in which we live. Even inter-subjective decision-making is predicated on knowledge and the sharing of knowledge by individual subjects.

### 3.4.2 LLL FOR DEVELOPMENT

52. The expanding learning needs and the need to enhance human capability to satisfy them is particularly important for learners in the most disadvantaged situations. It is the poor who are mostly excluded from information and knowledge. Given the growth of poverty worldwide, adult basic education has come to be viewed as a key strategy within the overarching goal of poverty alleviation. Since the poor are faced with specially disadvantaged economic and social conditions that have a negative impact on learning, democratizing learning among the poor implies ensuring essential living conditions that provide them with free time and energies to learn (Torres 2005:20). However, this also implies ensuring that the poor have opportunities for meeting their basic learning needs and going beyond basic learning, and that they have their learning and knowledge validated to enable the latter to happen.
53. It is important to note that while traditional adult education (for liberation or empowerment or for development) has focused on (or claimed to focus on) ways of empowering learners while addressing their learning needs, contemporary adult learning cannot afford to overlook the need for lifelong learning. In fact, unless adult learning embraces the philosophy of lifelong learning, it runs the risk of failing the poor. In this regard, Smith (2003) points out that lifelong learning can be both a mechanism for facilitating development as well as one for exclusion and control. He (2000:3) asserts that: Lifelong Learning has created new and powerful inequalities. There are issues around access to knowledge, and around individualization. In a knowledge-based economy, those who have the lowest levels of skill and the weakest capacity for constant updating are less and less likely to find paid employment. Individualization (one of the impacts of modernization and globalization) has also meant that access to social support mechanisms has weakened.
54. It is for this reason that LLL has, according to Torres (2005:12), been acknowledged as a *need* and a *principle* for education and learning systems worldwide, and is being actively embraced by the North for its own societies. However, it sits uneasily for national governments in the South who prescribe narrow primary education ceilings for poor countries. While LLL has played an enabling role in the developed Northern hemisphere, she argues that in the South non-formal education continues to be associated with remedial education for the poor. She refers to the “dual education agenda” which is currently being shaped and in terms of which *lifelong learning* is actively adopted in the North while *basic education* and *completion of primary education* are promoted in the South. This consolidates and deepens the gap between North and South. Lifelong learning, she argues, must be adopted as a paradigm for *all* countries, as a principle for (re)shaping education and learning systems. In support of the agenda for human development, she argues that *education* and *learning* are not objectives in themselves. They are a means for personal, family and community development, for active citizenship building, for improving the lives of people, and for improving the world in which we live. Thus, she argues, they must be explicitly framed within and oriented toward social transformation and human development. Learning to be, to know, to do and to live together is not enough. Learning to “adapt to change” is not enough. Learning to *change*, to proactively direct or re-direct change for human well-being and development, remains a critical challenge and the central mission of education and learning systems.

### 3.4.3 BUILDING AN LLL SYSTEM

55. Lifelong learning as a continuous process thus requires a system of learning which provides every citizen with many routes to learning opportunities, including multiple levels and forms of education and training beyond EFA, as they need the knowledge rather than because they have reached a certain age. In developing an LLL system, a number of infrastructural mechanisms are needed to recognize the skills acquired through different channels so that people can move from one level or one form of learning to another. In addition, the principles of LLL acknowledge that:

There is a need for multiple providers of learning.

Learners require access to a variety of learning paths with different entry and exit points.

Information and career counseling (knowledge of learning and work opportunities) are central to the process of LLL.

LLL requires close linkages between education/training institutions and the labor market.

56. The above requires articulation between the different levels and kinds of learning, Articulation defines bridges, credits and modules to connect learning in different modalities and places and recognizes combinations of qualifications

57. The system of LLL as an organizing principle is therefore contingent on a national or even regional qualifications framework. In the following sections of this paper we discuss endeavors in different countries to use a qualifications framework to support the process of LLL.

## **4. LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE NQF IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

58. One of the pillars of the new education strategy in South Africa after 1994 was the development of the South African Qualifications Act (No. 58 of 1995).
59. In 1995, the government established the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). One of SAQA's key functions was to develop and implement the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which proposed to:
- create a national framework for learning achievements;
  - facilitate access to – and mobility and progression within – education, training, and career paths;
  - enhance the quality and integration of education and training;
  - accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training, and employment opportunities;
  - contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social development of the nation at large.

### **4.2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH**

60. Training is a vital part of many learning programs administered in schools, teachers' colleges, technical colleges and universities. Education and training are each essential elements of human resource development. Rather than viewing them as parallel activities, South Africa recognized that they are, in fact, closely related, and in order to maximize the benefits of this relationship, SAQA was committed to an integrated approach to education and training as vital for a national human resource development strategy.
61. An integrated approach implies a view of learning which rejects a rigid division between “academic” and “applied”, “theory” and “practice”, “knowledge” and “skills”, “head” and “hand”. Such divisions have characterized the organization of curricula and the distribution of educational opportunity in many countries of the world, including South Africa. They have grown out of, and helped to reproduce very old occupational and social class distinctions. In South Africa such distinctions in curriculum and career choice have also been closely associated, in the past, with the ethnic structure of economic opportunity and power.
62. An integrated approach to education and training, linked to the development of a new National Qualifications Framework (NQF) based on a system of credits for learning outcomes achieved, has encouraged creative work on the design of curricula and the recognition of learning attainments wherever education and training are offered. The intention of RPL is to open doors of opportunity for people whose academic or career paths have been needlessly blocked because their prior knowledge (acquired informally or by work experience) was not assessed and certified, or because their qualifications have not been recognized for admission to further learning or employment purposes. The process of lifelong learning was thus adopted as the organizing principle of a national human resource development strategy. The concept of lifelong learning organized in terms of a National Qualifications Framework underlies the South African government's human resource development strategy.

NQF LEVEL	BAND	QUALIFICATION TYPE	
Higher Education & Training (HET)			
8 7	HET	- Doctorates - Masters degrees - Professional qualifications - Honors degrees	
6	HET	- National First Degrees - Higher Diplomas	
5	HET	- National Diplomas - Higher Certificates	
Further Education & Training Certificate (FETC)			
4 3 2	FET	National Certificates/MATRIC	
General Education & Training Certificate (GETC)			
1	GET	Grade 9	ABET level 4
		Grade 7	ABET level 3
		Grade 5	ABET level 2
		Grade 3	ABET level 1

**Figure 4.1 National Qualifications Framework**

63. As is indicated in the diagram, the NQF has eight levels and three main bands. The bands are:

- general education;
- further education; and
- higher education

64. ABET falls within the same band as schooling up to Grade 9 (or Standard 7) and, as is evident from the diagram, ABET is divided into four levels. All qualifications may be obtained from learning acquired at school or college, in apprentice training or NGO training, or from training by an accredited provider. The NQF provides “ladders” and “bridges” to avoid educational dead-ends for learners. It is therefore important that ABET is included within the framework

to give access and pathing for basic education learners. The NQF requires all programs, including ABET programs, to be designed around a common core of fundamental concepts, knowledge and skills on which further learning, knowledge and skill formation could be built. The expected outcomes, or learners' achievements, should therefore be formulated in progressive steps which are appropriate to the learners' circumstances and experience and which enable learners to be assessed and credited with nationally recognized standards of attainment (White Paper).

### 4.3 THE FUNCTIONS OF THE NQF

65. The central function of the NQF is to accredit unit standards which culminate in qualifications for even basic level learners. It permits portability, accessibility and transferability of skills, knowledge and abilities across qualification levels and across the education and training as traditionally separated fields. In terms of the NQF, people may shift across the modes of training across the varying sites of delivery. It aims to allow both for “bridges across” and “ladders up”.
66. The South African Qualifications Act (No. 58 of 1995) indicates that one of the functions of the South African Qualifications Authority is to ensure that standards and qualifications registered on the NQF are internationally comparable. Since the global trend is moving towards describing qualifications in terms of achieved learning outcomes and their associated assessment criteria, articulation of South African qualifications with their international counterparts is facilitated if South African qualifications are described in terms of required standards of achievement.

#### 4.3.1 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NQF AND OBE

67. The NQF with its commitment to outcomes-based education and training is the means that South Africa has chosen to bring about systemic change in the nature of the education and training system. The purpose of the systemic change is also to transform past practice and associated injustices, as described below.

##### ***The problem of access***

68. The NQF is also intended to address issues of access especially for people who were previously denied access to education. The objective of policy is a national ABET program, focused on particular target groups which have historically missed out on education and training, and providing an appropriate ABET curriculum whose standards will be fully incorporated in the National Qualifications Framework.
69. The main organizational principle of the national ABET program is the *building of partnerships of all constituencies* with a vital interest in the ABET enterprise, including organized labor and business, women's and youth organizations, civics, churches, specialist NGOs, learner associations, all levels of government, media and other stakeholders. The partnerships are expected to undertake planning, arrange public advocacy, and sponsor research.

##### ***Problem of status of institutions***

70. One of the criticisms of the past system of education in South Africa was that certain institutions were privileged above others because of the policy of unequal allocation of resources to learning institutions, based on race (SAQA position paper, 2005).
71. As a result of this financial discrimination, the perception grew that the standard of provision at these institutions was superior to that of other institutions. Consequently, students from these institutions were granted preferential treatment in access to further education opportunities and in the labor market. In other words, the qualification obtained was more important than what qualifying students actually knew and could do (SAQA position paper, 2005).

### ***Problem of portability***

72. In addition to problems of access, there was the problem of portability in that institutions arbitrarily chose to recognize or not recognize qualifications achieved at other institutions; employers actively sought graduates from certain institutions and ignored graduates from other institutions. The impact of such practices on the economic and social fabric of South African society is self-evident (SAQA position paper, 2005).
73. The historical imperative of the NQF was to correct injustice by now focusing on what learners know and trying to be less exclusionary. There is hence a historical imperative in the fragmentation of our [SA] society, to focus on what it is that a learner knows and can do as described in standards, rather than where the learner did his or her studying. It is necessary to address this problematic aspect of our [SA] history [that was associated with exclusionary practices] (SAQA, 2005).

## **4.4 THE NATIONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ACT (1998) AS CONTINGENT ON THE NQF**

74. The National Skills Development Act underscored the government's commitment to overall human resource development, which included education reform. The Act stipulated that in order for South Africans to participate meaningfully in the country's economic and social development, as well as in their own advancement, they must have basic competencies including the ability to read, write, communicate effectively, and solve problems in their homes, communities and workplaces. The Skills Development Act 1998 and Skills Development Levy Act 1999, introduced by the Department of Labor, reflected the government's commitment to promoting active labor market policies. These Acts provided new institutions, programs and funding policies for skills development. Under the auspices of the Acts, Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were charged with the responsibility of transforming the skills base in their respective sectors through the implementation of targeted training at all levels of the workforce (further discussion on the importance of the SETAs and the Department of Labor is taken up in the section on important innovations below).

### **4.4.1 LEADING THE NQF**

75. While the SA NQF is considered completely central to the reconstruction of post-apartheid society and has enjoyed widespread support in its eight years of implementation, the issue of leadership of the NQF has not been resolved. There is some lack of coherence in terms of the legislation that governs education and training in SA – and this is creating difficulties associated with the leadership of the NQF (SAQA 2005:29). In a report developed for SAQA dealing with the audit of the Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies in 2004, the independent auditors noted the lack of legislative coherence as an inhibitor to an efficient quality assurance system which should not be regarded as the property of either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Labor.

## **4.5 QUALIFICATION LEVELS FOR BASIC EDUCATION**

76. According to SAQA regulations the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) is awarded on the basis of credits. A credit is described as recognition of achievement that a learner has demonstrated to satisfy a set of criteria within a specific outcome. The GETC is unit standards based and is thus awarded on the basis of a learner obtaining 120 credits at ABET level 4 according to a balanced and weighted spread over the Fundamental, Core and/or Electives.

77. Unit standards are composed of specific outcomes which are all regarded as important but not of equal value. Specific outcomes that better reflect the essence of learning are given a higher weighting. This is done to ensure that educators spend sufficient time on those specific outcomes that reflect the essence of the learning area<sup>3</sup> (Ramarumo, 2005).

<b>Table 4.1: Unit Standards–based GETC</b>		
<b>Categories of Learning</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Credit</b>
<b>Fundamental</b>		
Language, Literacy and Communication		20
Mathematical Literacy		16
Selection to include US from both sub-fields of learning	30	36
<b>Core</b>		
Arts and culture		
Economic management sciences		
Human and Social Sciences		
Life Orientation		
Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences		
Natural Sciences		
Technology		
An Additional Language		
Selection of US from a minimum of 4 learning Areas (chosen in relation to electives if a learner is following that route)	45	54
<b>Electives</b>		
Agriculture		
SMME		
Ancillary Health Care		
Tourism		
Selection of US from any of the 12 Organizing Fields/Sub-Fields of Learning, including other electives developed for ABE	25	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>120</b>

78. The credits denote notional time, with each credit representing ten notional hours of learning. Technically the GETC should take a learner 12 000 hours to complete but this does not take into account the pre-levels 1 – 3 (this is discussed in 5.1 below).

#### **4.5.1 ORGANIZING FIELDS**

79. SAQA has proposed twelve “organizing fields” of learning in order to usefully group various kinds of education and training. Each field is divided into a number of sub-fields. The twelve organizing fields proposed by SAQA were considered too broad for general education when presented as schooling. This means that only eight “learning areas” from across the twelve organizing fields were identified for schools. In this way the GETC in schooling differs from a GETC in ABET as ABET has the potential to link into any twelve organizing fields in relation to learning areas for the purposes of equivalence.

<sup>3</sup> Subsequently the report will refer to some problems of implementation.

80. The following presents the above table more graphically:

<b>Table 4.2: GETC = Total of credits 120</b>			
<b>Fundamental 36 credits</b>	<b>Core 54 credits</b>	<b>Electives 30 credits</b>	<b>Combinations</b>
Communication 20  Mathematics 16	Arts and Culture Economic and Management Sciences Human and Social Sciences Life Orientation Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences Natural Sciences Technology An additional language	Agriculture Ancillary Health Care Small, Medium & Micro Enterprises Travel & Tourism  (More electives to be added)	Option 1 6 Core and 0 electives  Option 2 5 Core and 1 elective  Option 3 4 Core and 2 electives
<b>ASSESSMENT &amp; ACCREDITATION</b>			

**Table 4.3: The equivalence of the levels of basic education and the levels of schooling**

ABET falls into the General Education & Training band on the NQF			
NQF level 1	GETC	Grade 9	ABET level 4
		Grade 7	ABET level 3
		Grade 5	ABET level 2
		Grade 3	ABET level 1

81. ABET levels 1 to 4 fall into the NQF level 1. The exit qualification at NQF level 1 is the GETC equivalent to 9 years of schooling. SAQA (2005:26) notes that in SA “equivalence took on a much more important meaning than anywhere else in the world”. This was because the system of equivalence was meant to open up access to education and training routes that had previously been closed to people.

82. In the past, qualifications were defined in terms of their differences, and there was no attempt to find similarities in the level and depth of learning and in the key or core skills that are common to the different contexts of learning (SAQA, 2005:26). This recognition of similarities is intended to aid portability and horizontal and upward progression and equivalences. In SA the establishment of an NQF was strongly linked to issues of social justice. So the effort to find “equivalence” has this historical root.

In Namibia, as Keevy notes (2003:3–4), a Namibian Qualifications Framework (NQF) has also been set up and is embarking on national qualification regulation processes. Keevy points out that the Namibian NQF is “virtually identical to the South African example” and is an attempt to “provide multiple pathways for Namibians to gain qualifications and to redress the injustices of the past by recognizing competencies of Namibians regardless of where they learned these”. The Namibian example illustrates that “the transformation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in SADC countries is linked directly to the development of national and regional qualification frameworks, which in turn is very much dependant on the development in South Africa”. Keevy



contains that the strong focus in the South African NQF on the integration of education and training combined with strong labor union support will continue to influence TVET in the whole SADC region.

As in South Africa, in Namibia the NQF is intended to be a mechanism for *redressing past injustices* (as well as a mechanism for *integrating education and training*). Further discussion on the VET in Namibia is offered in Section 5.5 below.

Commenting on the aim of NQF for ABET in South Africa, Kebathi (co-coordinating the Kenyan team of researchers) notes that its aim was to “address the issue of recognition and standards and thus raise the low status of certificates obtained by adults and youth outside the formal education system. Such change was intended to create confidence in the education that was being provided through the alternative approach” (2005:3). She comments that it is likewise considered important in Namibia that: “an NQF, which presents competency-standards for a qualification at different levels, provides a clear reference for individuals who plan to start, or move to, different learning and career paths and for education and training institutions that attempt to accredit individuals’ prior learning as part of the requirements for obtaining a qualification. Transparency and clear pathways which indicate clear routes for career development and desired skill standards are considered important factors in the development of NQF” (2005:4). She recommends in this regard that it is important for Kenya to “establish an institution with the mandate to develop the NQF. The establishment of an executive authority similar to the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) could take a lead on the development of the NQF. This authority should consist of key sector players.”

Thus Kebathi considers that the basic philosophy behind the NQF in South Africa is accepted in Kenya and that the task now remains to further the philosophy in practice.

#### 4.5.2 ACCUMULATING CREDITS

83. The NQF makes provision for learners to accumulate credits towards a qualification as they become competent and are assessed as such. Within the system of ABET in South Africa, the levels 1–3 which learners need to undertake to acquire the necessary competence to complete the ABET level 4 (or NQF level 1) do not contribute towards the required number of 120 credits required for the GETC. This is found to be a *demotivating* feature of the present system and the Department of Education (DoE) – in discussion – has stated that no known person has successfully moved through the system from level 1 to level 4 of the GETC.

In this regard, the endeavor in Botswana<sup>4</sup> to enable learners to accumulate credits towards the Grade 7 equivalent will build in a dimension of motivation which is lacking in the South African system.

84. The system of gathering and accumulating credits in skills training (short course) programs is currently being understood by the ABET target group where, especially in industry, workers have the opportunity to attend courses and obtain credit/recognition for them. A worker may, for example, attend a skills program in bricklaying and accumulate credits and then do a course in plastering, then one in tiling, and so on, with each skills program enabling the build-up of credits.
85. The notion of accumulation of credits has been found to be motivating for learners as it exists in short course programs – a motivation which practitioners in ABET find to be missing for learners in the earlier levels. It is at these levels that learners need the most motivation and it is in the lower ABET where the earlier levels technically are not accredited. It is recognized, however, that not all learners wish to be accredited when they join literacy/basic education classes. Nevertheless, progression along learning paths from levels 1 to 4 usually requires the learners to write examinations which are accredited by independent examining bodies. This

<sup>4</sup> Presently in process

has the disadvantage of constraining new learners as they are directed along learning paths to achieve an examination. This discussion is taken up further in the section on Botswana.

In Namibia, learners who have undergone a three-year course in literacy and development (see Section 5.4 below) which consists of 8 hours of classes per week over a 40-week program per annum, receive a certification of attendance thereafter (and require further stages to achieve recognition equivalent to Grade 7). As far as the Vocational Educational and Training system is concerned, Ndjode-Siririka (from the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology) notes (2003) that the levels on the VET system had been incongruent with the NQF. To correct this incongruity, the VET system in Namibia now offers three-level vocational certificates in an effort to “lend credibility to the pronouncement of an outcome-based flexible system” (Ndjode-Siririka, 2003:13).

## 4.6 RECOGNIZING PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)

86. Although the system of RPL has begun to work at the level of higher education in South Africa, where up to 50% of a qualification can be awarded by way of recognizing prior learning or where RPL is used to enable learners access into programs, the recognition of prior learning in the ABET field has not really been implemented. Most respondents to the SAQA survey felt that while the recognition of prior learning holds great promise it has not yet been implemented sufficiently (SAQA, 2005:77).
87. It could, however, be argued that the assessment of learners for placement into a level higher than level 1 (within the ABET NQF 1) could be regarded as using the principles of RPL for access. Learners are interviewed and assessed (either by way of a portfolio of evidence or by writing a placement assessment against certain unit standards) and they are placed at a particular level. This is an extremely common form of RPL at the ABET level and if the instruments are well conceptualized, they can be administered and interpreted by an educator.
88. The “hype” and advocacy around the introduction of the NQF and the discourse in the workplace and ABET centers have meant that even at the level of ABET, people have some perception or understanding of the qualification. In that sense, the ABET levels and the notion of accreditation have become part of learners’ discourse, where already at the initial ABET level, learners are able to explain in their level in relation to others. The SAQA (2005) study in fact records that 77.8% of respondents in the survey stated that the implementation of the NQF had led to an increased awareness of the need for lifelong learning and a large number of the respondents (77.5%) felt that the implementation of the NQF has led to an increased awareness of the need for career and learning pathing (SAQA, 2005:76).
89. One respondent on the SAQA study suggested (in interview) that:

... [what is] working is the spirit of the NQF. I think the legislation works well. Whether companies apply it properly is another matter. But I think the framework has been set up and those who make use of it ... gain from it. ... We had a long history of not providing quality education for everybody (SAQA, 2005:77).
90. Most teachers are unlikely to ever need to write a unit standard. The process of unit standard generation in South Africa (and to be used in Namibia as well as Kenya) follows a specific format. Simply put, the unit standard tells us the following:
  - What level the learning is.
  - What the purpose of the learning outcome is (Why is it relevant?).
  - How the learning outcome will be assessed.
  - How the critical cross field that are supported by the unit standard.

In all the countries researched, it appears that RPL is not yet sufficiently established. Kebathi (2005: 9) notes in regard to Kenya that “Ways of determining RPL needs to be established. The framework proposes equivalencies to allow possibilities of re-entry from either side, into formal or non-formal system. The framework moves up to provide opportunities for higher education and training to the graduates of the ABET programme. It means that through this alternative route a learner can progress to the highest level possible in the education ladder. Of important note here are training opportunities in TIVET [Technical, Industrial, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training] and open pathways to occupational careers and lifelong learning”. Kebathi notes that the proposed structure for the Kenyan NQF (which she states is not yet in place) incorporates this principle.

## 4.7 UNIT STANDARDS DO NOT EQUATE TO GOOD TEACHING AND LEARNING

91. Outcomes education aims at *shifting* teachers and learners from rote methods towards a more *critical and applied approach*.
- how to read texts critically and engage dialogically therewith;
  - how to recognize stereotyping and use of rhetoric in texts;
  - how to recognize when judgments made in texts are “manipulative”;
  - how to communicate with an attitude of respect for others;
  - how to demonstrate tolerance towards people who speak different languages and language varieties;
  - how to consider power relations that may affect use of language;
  - how to recognize intolerance;
  - how to develop (one’s own) dialogical attitude while engaging with texts and with people;
  - how to participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities; and
  - how to be both culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts.
92. When addressing “information” or knowledge, also, learners are meant to develop the facility to be culturally and contextually tolerant and sensitive in the process of information gathering – recognizing that when applying knowledge to life situations there is not necessarily one way of seeing “the information”.
93. The emphasis on numeracy skills is on how to render these skills applicable in daily life.
94. In terms of managing to solve problems responsibly, learners are required to display responses that show that responsible decisions imply critical and creative thinking (as well as working effectively with others in teamwork).
95. The overall aim is also to help people to communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral or written presentation, to use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others. This also includes learning to use a variety of strategies to learn – that is, not relying on only one way of “learning” how to act responsibly in the world.
96. However, in spite of the laudable efforts that have gone into the construction of unit standards and ensuring this view of learning and teaching, teachers struggle to plan and deliver lessons when guided by the unit standards. The reason for this is that the unit standards themselves are written in a language that is incomprehensible to most teachers. Moreover, even if the teacher can understand the unit standard, *it requires a lot of high level knowledge to know how to*

*operationalise the unit standard in the teaching situation. As one ABET practitioner puts it, “If we do not understand what they mean, we don’t know what to do.”<sup>5</sup> So, while teachers are trained in the methodologies most aspired to across all education sectors, they are hampered by not being able to put their skills into practice as they are unable to demystify the unit standards!*

97. Whether these “outcomes” have been achieved in practice is difficult to say as a whole – because, as Diale notes, there is as yet no robust system in place for monitoring and evaluating ABET, let alone via methods that would seek to gather such “qualitative” information about people’s development as persons. As Diale notes, even when such effects could be said to be “achieved” they have gone largely undocumented.
98. How informal is non-formal learning?
99. While some learners enroll for literacy or agriculture with no intention of gaining anything more than the knowledge or skill they require or simply for the social benefit of taking a class, the “new system” can be regarded as a straitjacket. Since “everyone” is now teaching towards and assessing against unit standards, those learners who wish simply to drop in and drop out for certain unaccredited learning are often forced into a constraining and contrived formal mode of learning which does not always suit everyone. There are many learners who simply are not interested in gathering unit standard credits, or who will never need a certificate. Care needs to be taken not to over-regularize the system, as this will intimidate learners.

Adding further insights into these considerations, Kebathi notes, in regard to the research in Kenya, that the “NQF emphasizes learners’ activity and suggests a cognitive orientation to learning. However, the standards framework as a whole, the specific outcomes, performance criteria and so on remain behaviorist in orientation. The modular structure which is commonly used in the NQF is an example of behaviorist learning theory. Consequently the way knowledge production is seen can be constrained by curriculum framework” (2005:27). She adds that to make provision for the “unpredictable process of socially constructing knowledge” those involved have to bear in mind the philosophy supposedly penetrating the NQF framework – otherwise the focus is on unit standards to the exclusion of the process of constructing knowledge. This echoes concerns that have been raised in South Africa regarding the “reduction” of the philosophy underlying the outcomes-based approach to a narrow focus on unit standards.

## 4.8 PROVIDERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF SAQA

100. Apparently (see SAQA, 2005:73) there are some cases of dual accreditation of providers. This is because of legislative anomalies between the SAQA Act and the Higher Education Act. ETQAs themselves have expressed frustration that, even though common audit criteria for accreditation as a quality assurance body are used, there is little trust between ETQAs (SAQA, 2005:73).
101. Some ETQAs feel that bodies that are more advanced in their processes are helpful to others. But some feel that the Council for Higher Education (CHE) in particular creates blockages in the system. For example, as one respondent stated: it came from the point that CHE is all powerful and they felt that they had the power to close institutions if they liked ... (SAQA, 2005:73).
102. Meanwhile, parity of esteem between private and public providers linked to different ETQAs has not been achieved:  

They don’t accept [the learners]. [The learners] have done exactly the same curriculum ... [they] don’t allow a learner with a ... qualification from a private institution (SAQA, 2005:73).

<sup>5</sup> Discussion with ABET teachers in KwaZulu Natal.

103. According to the ETQAs responsible for private providers, the Department of Education (DoE) is not helpful in facilitating QA between public and private provisioning. And the Department of Labor (DoL) seems to duplicate the QA processes put in place by the ETQAs, for smaller, more informal education and training providers. This could result in training that cannot be recognized in terms of credits towards skills programs and qualifications. One DoL respondent suggested: “the SETAs [ETQAs] work with the formal sector; we work with the smaller, informal sector (SAQA, 2005: 74)”.
104. Nevertheless there is evidence that the DoL is increasingly using accredited providers to carry out ABET programs on its behalf: “we prefer to use [accredited providers] and encourage the others ... to make sure that they are quality assured in terms of what they are offering (SAQA, 2005:74)”. The benefits of QA, including the standardization of education and training against nationally developed standards, are emerging – but there is a feeling the ETQAs do not yet have sufficient capacity and that there are many inconsistencies between QA processes (SAQA, 2005:74).
105. Despite the bureaucratic nature of achieving accreditation, the stringent requirements for accreditation as education and training providers are welcomed (in some sense) : “we started our QA office five years ago and we are already in the third year of our own internal self-evaluation cycles in faculties (SAQA, 2005:74)”. But still, from the provider’s perspective, the development of QA mechanisms links to the requirement for accreditation by the appropriate ETQA. This, as SAQA notes, can point to a culture of compliance rather than deep change (SAQA, 2005:75): “we are all forced to have a QA committee [but] it hasn’t met once, it hasn’t discussed a single issue on QA (SAQA, 2005:75)”.
106. Yet there is some evidence that quality management is becoming embedded in practice (SAQA, 2005:75).
- We have questionnaires that students have to fill in – what are the problems that they experience in the class .... You can alter your approach.
- The implementation [of QA mechanisms] has already [enabled] a new mind set for all our lecturers ... because it helps them to structure [their processes], it keeps them on track [and] that is a good thing.
107. Yet again, while providers may feel that being accredited gives a certain assurance of quality, there is no doubt (according to SAQA, 2005:75) that providers are finding the development of QA mechanisms time-consuming, bureaucratic, complex and difficult to achieve. And some private providers expressed concern that the interpretation of the SAQA Act requires them to be registered before they can initiate an accreditation process, while DoE seems to have placed a hold on registration (SAQA, 2005:75). In short, there is much evidence to support the principle of QA, but problems have been expressed regarding their implementation (SAQA, 2005:76).
108. The accreditation of ABET providers is carried out by the ETDP Seta, which needs to ensure that the provider meets certain standards and in this way protects the learner. However, the assessment process is extremely bureaucratic and is often exclusive and limited. For example, an assessor might ask to “see” that copies of unit standards are available without considering a qualitative dimension actually needed for assuring quality – in this case a question pertaining to the application of the unit standard. And indeed, while red tape questions like “do you have a fire extinguisher?” could well form part of such evaluations of sites, there needs to be a balance between quantitative and qualitative criteria used for assessment.

In Namibia, a system of Literacy Committees operating at national, regional, district and community levels has been put in place to oversee the way in which the three-year literacy program is run – that is, to ensure that both teachers and learners have adequate materials and also to ensure that lessons take place as scheduled.

Unlike the other countries examined, the Kenyan Directorate of Adult Basic Education – DABE – employs full-time officers as materials developers for learners. This means that the Department produces some of the materials for learners, especially in the indigenous languages. The way in which promoters/educators operate in the classroom is overseen by the literacy class committees, who obtain support from district officers. Feedback from educators as well as learners (as developed from fact-finding missions at national level and also through the regional literacy committees) indicates a general satisfaction with the system (see also Section 5.4 below.) This is not to say that the system is necessarily geared to being learner-centered. Indeed, interviews with DABE personnel indicated that they still experience problems in getting many promoters (educators) to adopt a learner-centered approach in their (literacy and development) classes. According to these personnel, many of them appear to relapse into being more “teacher-centered”.

In the context of Kenya (and by implication for other countries), Kebathi (2005) notes that “an effective quality assurance system that enables effective NQF quality practices serving the learners, whom the system is ultimately designed to cater for, is vital”. She notes that in Kenya the issue of whether the existing quality assurance body in Kenya (the Directorate of Quality Assurance in the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) has the knowledge and capacity to undertake this new massive change, or whether a new institutional body needs to be established, is a matter of debate.

Considering the Kenyan situation, Kebathi (2005) comments: “teachers already in position such as those in the Department of Adult Education would benefit from upgrading in-service courses to strengthen the academic content of their knowledge. The supervisors of teachers will also need training for more effective supervision and mentoring. Other providers may be no better in terms of teacher strength and the same suggestions should apply to them. It is also likely that with improved ACE [Adult and Continuing Education] many more providers will be brought in whose teachers/facilitators may not have adult education methodologies. Such teachers will require training to build their competence. While the above observations are important, it is recognized that learning takes place in the entire community environment. It is not only teachers that are involved in facilitating learning. The capacity of the whole community should be improved to enable the development of learning communities” (2005:20).

In this way, Kebathi (2005) points out, echoing in some way the Namibian experience in the National Literacy Programme (based on involving the community through the system of committees), that issues of quality require that teachers are trained in adult education methodologies and that communities are involved in developing a quality learning environment.

**In any case, it is clear that in whatever country under consideration, efforts need to be made to prevent a concern with quality from being reduced to a bureaucratic filling in of checklists.**

#### **4.9 WHAT LESSONS HAVE BEEN LEARNED FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NQF IN SOUTH AFRICA?**

109. The recent (2005) SAQA report uses a methodology of interviews, focus groups and surveys. From this certain lessons have been extracted:

While the overall finding was that learning programs had markedly improved since the inception of the NQF, some respondents had concerns about the onerous nature of the associated processes (SAQA, 2005:83).

Respondents believed strongly that NQF was contributing to other national strategies such as reducing illiteracy, upskilling the labor force, enabling communities to take

control of their socio-economic situation and improving HIV/Aids awareness. But this positive response, SAQA (2005) notes, may be because respondents are endorsing the principles and values of the NQF rather than suggesting that these were “fully operational”.

While NQF is seen to be aligned with other strategies, more work can be done to render it “operational”.

110. Clearly, lessons on the NQF pertain to its being inaccessible and somewhat cumbersome.

#### **4.9.1 RELEVANCE OF QUALIFICATIONS**

111. Learnership and skills programs were thought to be particularly relevant, but respondents thought there was still need to improve the scope and level of outcomes of these programs. Some university qualifications, school qualifications and in particular teacher education qualifications were frequently criticized for lack of relevance (to the world of work) (SAQA, 2005:83). This shows that teachers and others (other stakeholders interviewed) felt that the qualifications are not equipping them for the tasks required in their actual practice.

#### **4.9.2 QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

112. Respondents in the SAQA review report felt that more attention had been paid to the needs of learners. Examples were given of improvements in learner support – although there were also dissenting voices. The issue of support is one that still needs to be examined further.

#### **4.9.3 ASSESSMENT PRACTICES**

113. Respondents believed that such practices had improved. There was increased use of assignments and case studies, more continuous assessment and better links with workplace learning. But the evidence of standards was mixed. Some said there was more consistency, while others were concerned about the scope for subjectivity and even fraud (SAQA, 2005:84). Concerns about the bureaucracy and workload were expressed. Some felt it was a matter of getting used to the system; others were more pessimistic. In short, issues of how to operate an effective assessment system while keeping in mind workloads of educators still need to be explored.

#### **4.9.4 CAREER AND LEARNING PATHING**

114. Overall responses on this were mixed. But there was some evidence that progression pathways were becoming clearer. Further research is needed to examine this issue.

#### **4.9.5 OPERATIONALISATION OF CERTAIN AREAS**

115. The NQF was found to have a minimal impact on:
- effectiveness of qualification design;
  - portability of qualifications;
  - qualifications uptake;
  - integrative approach (to education and training);
  - redress practices;
  - number of registered assessors and moderators;
  - number of accredited providers;
  - quality assurance practices.
116. These are areas where the operationalisation/implementation of the NQF needs attention (SAQA, 2005:85).

#### 4.9.6 QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM AND ITS WEAKNESS

117. The majority of the respondents attributed many of the interrelated problems (see above) to the deficiencies in the quality assurance system. Deficiencies in this system in turn can be summarized as:
- lack of progress with memoranda of understanding;
  - legislative anomalies leading to dual accreditation;
  - lack of trust (for example, between ETQA bodies);
  - overlapping responsibilities of ETQAs;
  - too much power for CHE;
  - DoE's lack of understanding of non-formal education;
  - QA mechanisms being set up (in institutions) for the sake of compliance rather than to improve quality;
  - uncertainty about registration of institutions with the DoE;
118. Such issues have remained unresolved and need to be given attention.
119. It is thought that there has been little progress on redress (SAQA, 005:85). This is largely attributable to the lack of impact of RPL. Redress requires that learners are able to “cash in” their credits and most respondents believe this is not happening. It is said that the only route to further and higher education is through a matric certificate or other formal requirement.
120. Moving between academic and vocational qualifications remains difficult. Cooperation between formal education and the world of work remains limited. There appears not to have been significant progress towards the ideal of more “integration” (SAQA, 2005:85).
121. UMALUCI locates some of the problems/anomalies as follows:
- There is confusion regarding the authority for the different links in the adult GETC quality chain and ultimate authority for the status and scope of the GETC for adults.
  - There are anomalies in the structure of the GETC as it is being given shape in different sectors.
  - The divergence of qualifications from agreed policy – or alternatively, widely differing understanding of agreed policy.
122. There are challenges of feasibility and professional practice in the quality assurance of the GETC as presently constituted. For UMALUCI, these fall into three broad groups:
- Problems in the workability of new modes of assessment and moderation, and especially of developing credibility across qualifications where the content and the assessment processes differ radically, with little communication or harmonization between them.
  - Problems in the design and management of provider accreditation and program approval in the scattered and diverse range of provision that resorts under the name of ABET.
  - The number of learning areas that adults have to achieve in order to acquire the GETC is almost impossible<sup>6</sup> for many adults to attain within a reasonable time frame. If a learner has to work through the present ABET system from level 1 to level 4 to achieve the GETC it could take 15 years given that every 100 credits equate to 1 hour of learning.
123. UMALUCI recommends reducing the number of credit (from 120) to 90 credits across five rather than six learning areas.

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<sup>6</sup> One government official states that “no living human” has ever achieved a GETC starting from ABET level 1.



**2. EXAMPLE - RULES OF COMBINATION – GETC (ABET)**

FUNDAMENTALS	CREDITS
<b>Language Literacy and Communication</b> •Afrikaans •English •IsiZulu •Isindebele •IsiXhosa •SiSwati •Sepedi •Sesotho •Setswana •Tshivenda •Xitsonga	20 credits
<b>Mathematical Literacy</b>	20 credits
<b>Life Skills/ Life Orientation</b>	10 Credits
A RÉSUMÉ OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMMES FOR GETC (ABET)	CREDITS
1.Natural Sciences 2.Technology 3.Human and Social Sciences 4.Economic and Management Sciences 5.Arts and Culture 6.Mathematics and Mathematical Sciences 7.An additional Language 8.Travel and Tourism 9.Small Medium Micro Enterprises (SMME) 10.Applied Agriculture and Agricultural Technology 11.Environmental Management 12.Food and Fibre processing 13.Ancillary Health Care	All learning areas in this résumé have 20 credits.  One of the two learning areas chosen must be either Human Sciences or Human and Social Sciences combined with any other learning area totalling 40 credits.

8

**Figure 4.2 Example: Rules of combination GETC (ABET)**

## 4.11 WAYS OF IMPROVING THAT NEED TO BE CONSIDERED

124. The following are some recommended ways of improving efforts/achievements thus far:

Prioritize ABET at national level and fund it appropriately.

Capacitate provinces and districts to provide necessary support and funding.

Introduce, as soon as possible, the norms and standards for funding Adult Learning Centers (ALCs) and capacitate the provinces to aid centers to become certified (so that funding of ABET programs can proceed accordingly).

Offer more support for teachers – e.g. through better training on how to activate learning processes in the class (with a focus on quality of the learning experience), through workshops, etc.

Offer materials (as some basis).

Make QA systems more workable in practice (with also a focus on quality rather than just a culture of conformity to meet the QA body requirements).

Develop closer liaison between DoL and DoE (in order to help operationalise the link between education and training).

Introduce M & E system (that is at the moment in construction).

Concentrate on ways of addressing issues raised as problematic in the discussion above on lessons learned. (Sections 4. 9 and 4.10. above.)

It is important to note that in all the countries researched, it is clear that resourcing of the NQF in practice is problematic. Blom and Keevy (2005) note that most social constructs (including the NQF as a social construct) fail if they are not adequately resourced. Kebathi (2005) remarks in the context of Kenya that: “while the Kenyan Government is constitutionally mandated to provide quality basic education to its citizenry, it has been recognized that education is much too important to be left to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology and the Department of Adult Education alone. With limited financial and human resources, and with a focus on primary education, MOEST [the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology] and DAE [Department of Adult Education] cannot meet the needs of basic education and lifelong learning for the entire nation. Non-formal education, which serves a large number of out-of-school youth and adults, has a very limited budget for its programs. These two organs of Government cannot win the fight towards a lifelong learning in society alone. The MOEST and DAE, therefore, should be linked with non-governmental organizations, local government units, state and private universities and colleges, community-based organizations, faith based organizations and other government ministries and private enterprises as partners, not only *to fund* the non formal education programmes but also *to implement* and manage the NFE/ACE programmes in their respective localities” (p. 23). She points out that in Kenya partners have been identified with the intention to carry forward the NQF project in practice.

## 5. THE NASCENT NQF IN NAMIBIA

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

125. The idea of establishing an NQF in Namibia led to the promulgation of the Namibia Qualification Act, No. 29 of 1996. The Act in turn led to the establishment of the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA). It was mandated to set up and administer an NQF for Namibia (see [http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195\\_base/en/init/nam\\_4.htm](http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195_base/en/init/nam_4.htm)).
126. The NQA notes – [http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195\\_base/en/init/nam\\_4.htm](http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195_base/en/init/nam_4.htm) – that while the framework was being developed (and it has just recently come into effect) various standard-setting committees had to be set up. The idea was that the NQF should be consistent with SADC attempts to unify the qualification standards in the region. Keevy (2003) points out in this regard that “the transformation of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in SADC countries is linked directly to the development of national and regional qualification frameworks, which in turn is very much dependant on the development in South Africa”. Keevy notes that the Namibian NQF “is virtually identical to the South African example” (2005).
127. The NQA considers – [http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195\\_base/en/init/nam\\_4.htm](http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195_base/en/init/nam_4.htm) – that it is well acknowledged by Namibians that qualifications are a means to improving their quality of life. This has led to increased demand for education and training (and attendant qualifications). The Prime Minister Hage Geingob in 1999 commented on the positive as well as negative implications of this concern with qualifications. According to the newspaper *The Namibian*, as reported by Absalom Shigwedha, in a speech delivered on the Prime Minister’s behalf by Finance Minister Nangolo Mbumba (at the opening of a conference on Namibia's NQF), Geingob said qualifications play a positive role in as much as they facilitate the upward economic and social mobility of many Namibians: “By obtaining some kind of qualification, Namibians have seen their quality of life improve”. However, the Prime Minister admitted that the focus on qualifications has also played a negative role in society. As he put it: “We have become so obsessed with the need for qualifications that Namibians are now enrolling in almost any program that will give them a certificate of some sort”. The Prime Minister also expressed concern that many private institutions offering such programs, regardless of their quality, have consequently been doing good business. As he stated: “Regrettably, the quality of many of these programs is doubtful, to say the least. Namibia can ill-afford this wasteful investment by both individuals and institutions in worthless qualifications.”
128. The NQA - [http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195\\_base/en/init/nam\\_4.htm](http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195_base/en/init/nam_4.htm) - points out that the problem is that while many private institutions were offering various training programs (and certificates), the quality of their programs was regarded doubtful. Meanwhile, according to the 1991 census, 90% of Namibians in the workforce did not have a qualification in the field of their work. And without officially recognized qualifications, upward mobility of the majority of workers had been constrained.

As in South Africa, as noted in Section 4.1 above, the NQF was aimed not only at offering multiple pathways for Namibians to gain qualifications, but was also seen as an instrument to help redress the injustices of the past – by trying to offer recognition for competencies achieved.

## 5.2 THE NQA: MANDATE AND STRUCTURE

The NQA [http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195\\_base/en/rec\\_n/re\\_5e\\_na\\_end.htm](http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195_base/en/rec_n/re_5e_na_end.htm) - 3 was established (soon after the passing of the NQA Act in 1996) in order to set up a comprehensive and flexible NQF (along the lines of the South African example).

129. The composition of the NQA consists of members drawn from a wide spectrum of stakeholders such as employers, education/training providers, trade unions and various professional bodies. There are also full-time employees of the Ministry of Higher Education, which serves as the secretariat of the NQA.
130. This authority is tasked with the following responsibilities:
- setting up and administering a National Qualification Framework;
  - creating a forum for matters pertaining to qualifications;
  - setting the occupational standards for any occupation, job, post or position in any career;
  - development of the curriculum standards required for achieving the occupational standards for a given job, post or position in any career structure;
  - promotion of the development (and analysis) of benchmarks of acceptable performance norms for any job or position;
  - accreditation of persons, institutions and organizations providing education and training courses that meet certain requirements;
  - evaluation and recognition of competencies learnt outside formal education;
  - establishment of facilities for collecting and disseminating information pertaining to qualification;
  - provision of services for evaluating the qualifications of almost 40 000 Namibians who have obtained qualifications abroad (this service enabled these Namibians to find jobs).

## 5.3 STANDARD SETTING: RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRACTICES

131. The NQA takes responsibility for defining Namibia's standards in all sectors where education and training take place. It establishes policy and procedures for the evaluation and accreditation of qualifications in education and training. It also establishes policy and procedures for accrediting providers of courses aimed at national standards.
132. At the same time, the development of standards is primarily the responsibility of industry. Accordingly, industry proceeds to set standards in consultation with designated National Standard Setting Bodies. Designated committees, which consist of experts in respective occupational fields, are entrusted with the task of setting standards. These committees look into what is already available, assess whether it is sufficient and improve on those shortcomings. However, there are some areas where there is virtually nothing available. In these cases standards have to be developed from scratch, while also taking into account what other countries are doing and using those standards as a basis, adapting them to suit the Namibian situation.
133. The principle in terms of which the NQA proceeds is that existing international standards should be used as guidelines for determining the national standards. It is considered that Namibia should not train people below international standards, otherwise the qualifications will not be recognized elsewhere in the world.

As with the other countries researched in this study, one of the principles at work in establishing standards is that they should be internationally comparable, so that qualifications will (also) be recognized outside the country under consideration.

134. It is important to note that in the light of the nascent character of the Namibian NQF, interviews with respondents from the Directorate of Adult Basic Education (DABE) in the Namibian Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, as well as with the NQA, the University of Namibia (UNAM) and the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) showed that generally people suggest that it is simply too early in its establishment for any meaningful comments to be made on the NQF implementation thus far.
135. Even in SA, where the NQF is far more “mature” than in Namibia, Keevy (from SAQA) considers that it can be called “relatively immature”; and recommends that people should not be too hasty in evaluating the efforts undertaken. He adds that: “The current difficulties experienced in the design of the South African Impact Study has alerted role players of the time that is needed for such a large-scale transformation to be established, and then eventually to be effectively measured” (2005).
136. Bearing in mind the even more “immature” character of the NQF in Namibia, a few points can be made (see below) on its link with equipping/skilling/accrediting adults.

## 5.4 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL LITERACY PROGRAMME IN NAMIBIA (NLPN)

137. NLPN was established in Namibia in 1992 (prior to the development of the NQF). It was intended (in some sense similar to the learner-centered philosophy of the NQF) to introduce the principle of learner-centeredness by, in this case, encouraging extensive participation of local communities in the running of the program (this does not mean to say that in the classroom this principle was necessarily well effected). Intrinsic to the NLPN is the introduction of promoters (literacy educators), DLOs (District Learning Officers) and Community Learning and Development Centers CLDCs (one in each of the thirteen regions has been established). The DLO and the CLDC have, as one of their functions, to broaden the experiences of promoters and other educators involved in adult education. Regional Literacy Committees and Regional Literacy Organizers (RLOs) were also put in place, along with national coordinators.
138. The promoters themselves (who undertake a three-week training course followed by in-service training) are employed on a part-time basis and they earn, in rural areas, 800 Namibian Dollars(N\$) and N\$1500 per month in urban areas. Since the national minimum wage is about N\$450, it is reasonable to assume that the promoters are comparatively well paid. The NLPN encourages and promotes networking with other social development sectors, and it is up to the promoters, DLOs, etc., to work with these sectors to help with the education and skills development of the learners. Learners attend classes for eight hours a week for 40 weeks per annum, over a three-year period (with classes ranging from 15 to 30 learners). In Stage 1 (year 1) they learn basic numeracy and initial mother literacy; in Stage 2 (year 2) there is reinforcement and consolidation of mother tongue literacy and of numeracy. In Stage 3 (year 3) they are introduced to Basic English (official language in Namibia); Extending Numeracy; Life Skills; Basic Agriculture; and some business skills and entrepreneurship.

### 5.4.1 SOME EQUIVALENCIES

139. On completion of the third level the learners are considered equivalent to Grade 4 of the formal education system.
140. The adult education system does make provision for learners to continue their studies into Stage 4, viz., Adult Upper Primary Education (AUPE). In this stage English is exclusively used as the language of teaching and learning. While the exit point is “equivalent” to Grade 7

at the end of the three-year program, learners presently receive only a certificate of attendance as the mechanisms for establishing equivalences between AUPE courses (Adult Upper Primary Education – Stage 4) and examinations with the Grade 7 examination in Formal Education are yet to be put in place.

141. In stage 4, learners are expected to do the following courses:

1. English in everyday use
2. Know your land and people
3. Mathematics in our daily lives
4. Making a living
5. Science in our daily lives
6. Living off the land and water
7. Livelihood for all
8. Literacy, gender and HIV/AIDS
9. Understanding of yourself, body, mind and soul

142. While the courses are considered relevant to the lives of learners, the general consensus of all the interviewees (education officers, educators and learners) is that the jump from Stage 3 to Stage 4 is too big and that the materials in Stage 4 are very difficult and that in the main the learners find Stage 4 too difficult. It is possible that the use of English as the language of teaching and learning contributes greatly to the difficulties experienced by the learners. The problem could also be exacerbated by the way the materials are written and the fact that they are in general not easily accessible by most learners.

As mentioned earlier, just as in South Africa, given the difficulty of moving towards this (4th) Stage, it may be demotivating to receive only a certificate of attendance from the first three stages. Nevertheless, some statistics from this program (as offered below) are encouraging:

*Number of literacy groups in Namibia: 1317*

*Number of promoters: 1373*

*Male promoters: 424*

*Female promoters: 949*

*Number of learners Stage 1 – 3 = 18 270*

*Females: Stage 1-3 = 11633*

*Males : Stage 1-3 = 6637*

**AUPE (Adult Upper Primary Education) – Stage 4**

*Number of groups: 405*

*Promoters: 402*

*Male promoters: 143*

*Female promoters: 259*

*Number of learners: 5219*

*Female learners: 3735*

*Male learners: 1484*

*DLOs = 141 (1 DLO per 20 promoters)*

## **5.4.2 THROUGHPUT STATISTICS**

143. Since the launch of the NLPN in 1992 to 2004, about 443 500 adult learners have enrolled in the three stages of the program. Out of this total, 70% of the learners enrolled were women. Of the 443 500 learners, 74% or 327 636 were tested and 76% achieved basic competence in reading and writing. According to the last (national) literacy assessment, the literacy rate in Namibia of Namibians aged 15 and older is 83%. Of course, one can suggest that the claimed literacy rates are very high if measured against international standards. This

begs questions such as, “What definition of literacy is used?”, “What is regarded as functional literacy in Namibia?”, “How were learners assessed?”, “To what extent does the provision of a three-stage (about three years) adult basic education and training program equip people to function in a modern economy?”. Turning aside these questions, as seen above, the program is designed to proffer basic literacy, numeracy, life and entrepreneurial skills and could be argued to fulfill this function.

## 5.5 THE VET SYSTEM (VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING)

144. Ndjode-Siririka (from the Ministry of Higher Education, Vocational Training, Science and Technology) notes (2003) that various studies were undertaken in Namibia in regard to the question of how to streamline the vocational education and training system. He remarks that: “One thing is clear, the current system needs overhaul but that process needs to be managed delicately”. As a way of proceeding, it was proposed that a National Training Authority (NTA) planning unit be established. That unit would be responsible for seeing the NTA proposal through its phases.

145. But Ndjode-Siririka (2003) points out that in the Namibian context it “remains unclear whether the current National Vocational Training Act, Act 18 of 1994, would be amended or repealed”. He remarks that it is the intention of the Ministry to keep the details of the relationship between the various bodies out of the legislation and to manage that through Memoranda of Understanding or Regulations (between the unions, employer representatives and government).

### 5.5.1 ACCESS

146. Ndjode-Siririka (2003) indicates that the system currently caters for about a thousand two hundred trainees (1200). However, he recommends that this must be increased ten-fold – to about 12000 in five years’ time (from the time of writing – 2003). He suggests that this should then go a long way towards alleviating the situation of the unskilled unemployed. The aim is to generate access to the VET system for:

- school leavers;
- industrial workers;
- the unemployed youth and the general population;
- the socially disadvantaged;

### 5.5.2 COMPETITIVENESS AND RESPONSIVENESS

147. Ndjode-Siririka (2003) notes that it is intended that the VET system would be open to many players. It is designed be open to the providers as well as to the individual participants in the skills development process. The training providers involve the following institutions in Namibia:

- Public VET institutions that are currently under the Ministry’s control;
- community-based institutions such as Community Skills Development;
- centers (COSDECs);
- parastatals training centers e.g. NamWater Training Center;
- industry training centers e.g. building construction industry.

148. Ndjode-Siririka (2003) notes that the point of the newly established system is that “national common training standards are adhered to, facilities are shared, curriculum and learning elements that allow trainees to move about from one provider to another are in place”.

149. As for the current public providers it would be expected of them to be entrepreneurial in their conduct. They should be able to function “out there” at the market platform and be able to survive. Ndjode-Siririka (2003) argues that to meet the needs of the country, they must double or quadruple their current intake. This, he suggests, can be done through offering part-time, weekend or evening courses – something that they have thus far shied away from.
150. Ndjode-Siririka (2003) comments that the “VET system should indeed not be seen as a half or corrective measure but rather as an integral part of the economic system: its job is to supply the world of employment the human skills that are and would be needed, and to create new knowledge, which will sustain the national wealth by creating capabilities now and in the future.” He emphasizes that “the cost of not having a vocationally orientated education and training system is more than the cost of having it”.

### 5.5.3 MEETING INDUSTRY’S SKILLS NEEDS THROUGH VET

151. Ndjode-Siririka (2003) comments that to meet Namibian industry’s needs, this should be accomplished through the promotion of an integrated, demand driven, competency-based modularized VET system. That is, employment outcomes should be the rationale for all courses in the VET system. He points out that the VET system should be geared to:
- harmonizing general and vocational education and training;
  - breaking down barriers between studies in – school and outside it;
  - eliminating the phenomenon of rejection caused by failure in school when a system of “pass or fail” remains;
  - according high priority to education, skills and knowledge for national development and quality of life.
152. Ndjode-Siririka (2003) suggests that meeting industry’s skills involves having “skills competent workers (who can do their job well). This also implies learning the skills to adapt to new situations and to relate to other workers”. That is, such skills transcend a narrow, “mechanistic view of the world”. There must be input from industry in terms of appropriate skills and techniques that analyses workers’ skills and reconceptualizes their jobs.
153. As noted in Section 4.5 above, Ndjode-Siririka (2003) comments that initially there had been some confusion around the way the VET system related to the NQF. But subsequent to that, it was agreed to issue a three-level vocational certificate. This is in keeping with the NQA framework, and he believes this will lend credibility to the “pronouncement of an outcome-based flexible system”.
154. We can see from Ndjode-Siririka’s (2003) discussion, that his arguments are couched in terms of the VET philosophy to create an “outcomes-based flexible system” that will serve the needs of industry and equip people to be skilled in handling complex tasks (and not just seeing the work “mechanistically”). He points to the importance of seeing VET in these terms and implementing it accordingly. His argument is forward looking, rather than commenting on what has been achieved in terms of these principles to date. The same forward looking approach goes for his discussion of possibilities for quality assurance and for financing of the emergent system. As far as quality assurance is concerned, he remarks that “in particular those principles of equity, flexibility, accessibility and quality” need to be accounted for. He suggests furthermore that end-users’ inputs are important: “Quality will be predicated on customer satisfaction – learner and industry as end-users”. And he comments that the VET “would need to develop the Namibia Quality Management System (NQMS) for VET based on internationally accepted criteria”. As far as financing of the VET system is concerned, he remarks that “it cannot be over emphasized that the increasing demand on the VET system will require substantial input which Government on its own may not be able to provide”. Linked to this remark, he suggests that the NTA will need to strive to “broaden the funding base of VET”. This can be done, for example, through “cost-sharing with all stakeholders;



cost-recovery methods of training; cost effectiveness in training and combining income generation with training”.

Ndjode-Siririka’s (2003) forward-looking approach (in which he at the same time stresses the importance of partnerships) echoes Kebathi’s (2005) comment in the context of Kenya, that “While the Kenyan Government is constitutionally mandated to provide quality basic education to its citizenry, it has been recognized that education is much too important to be left to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology and the Department of Adult Education alone” (2005:23). See also Section 4.11 above.

155. In considering Ndjode-Siririka’s forward-looking approach (which refrains from “evaluating” practices to date), it is also worth reiterating Keevy’s argument (2003), set out below.

“Premature evaluation of the implementation of a qualification framework, be it the South African NQF or otherwise, will automatically lead to negative results. A full impact study is probably only possible after at least a ten-year period (some authors – such as Cosser, 2001:161 – even suggest 20 to 25 years) to allow sufficient time for implementation that results in personal and socio-economic transformation”. Clearly, this is not yet applicable in Namibia.

“The development of indicators of success that are used to measure the impact of a qualifications framework form one of the most important parts of the research design.” These still need to be established in Namibia in terms of considerations of how to “measure” the impact of the framework both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

“An impact study, NQF or otherwise, is premised on specific core assumptions. In the South African example it has been necessary to assume that the NQF objectives are still broadly accepted by stakeholder groupings, that the NQF is still the best vehicle for bringing about positive change and that the integration of education and training is still important. The measuring of impact does not imply a review of the current philosophy, but rather shows an acceptance of this”. Likewise, in Namibia it would be necessary to bear in mind the starting premises concerning what “transformation” via the NQF system is deemed desirable.

## 6. THE EMERGING QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK IN BOTSWANA

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

156. The Botswana National Literacy Programme (BNLP) was launched in 1981 following a recommendation of the 1977 National Policy on Education. Its target population was “adults and youth”, defined as persons of age 10 years and above, and its aims were:
- to enable an estimated 250,000 illiterate youth and adults (40% of the population aged 15-45 years) to read, write and calculate in Setswana in the period 1980–1985;
  - to enable participants to apply knowledge in developing their cultural, social and economic life;
  - to enable participants to perform community duties as well as to enjoy the rights and obligations of citizenship.
157. However, the BNLP has been running in Botswana for over 20 years and at the time of writing is under review with the intention of developing a curriculum which might offer learners a systematic program which will enable them to read the equivalent of the exit of Primary Education, i.e. Standard (UIE/DNFE Blueprint for Botswana, 2005).
158. This report was written during this phase of re-curriculumization in Botswana of non-formal education and thus straddles the present and the proposed. It is important to note that the new curriculum is being developed in tandem with, and is indeed contingent on, the development of a new language policy and the proposed National Qualifications Framework, both of which are in process. These “movements” will obviously impact on the document and on subsequent versions of this report.
159. As mentioned above, this report is written at time during which non-formal education in Botswana is undergoing a systemic process of reform but also while the entire system of education is gearing itself for a qualifications framework.
160. Given this situation, of the development of the NQF work in process in Botswana, the present study will explore the extent to which the NQF system is informed by the lessons learned from other countries and how Botswana proposes to adapt or customize these lessons to their own contexts.
161. The general lack of a structured qualifications framework, including a learner performance assessment and evaluation system, is presently reported to be affecting the current supervision and training system. A coherent process for basic education is proposed within the national framework as well as defined general guidelines, benchmarks, indicators and outcomes.
162. Presently the UIE team is working with the DNFE on the development of the proposed ABET system. The following is given as a work-in-process draft of a possible allocation of unit standards.

**OPTION 2 (of a range of other proposed options) not yet accepted**

Learning area	Learning to be, to do, to know, to live together & to change	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
		Std 1 - 3	Std 4 – 5	Std 6 – 7
Maths		110	10	10
Mother tongue		110	10	10
English		110	10	10
Health		General studies integrated into core 10	Integrated studies general 10	Integrated studies general 10
Social issues				
Economics & work				
Science & Tech				
Practical Skills			10	10
2 <sup>nd</sup> Language			10	
Total credits per level		40 credits 400 notional hours	40/50/60 credits	40/50 credits

**OPTION 2**

Learning area	Learning to be, to do, to know, to live together & to change	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
		Std 1 - 3	Std 4 – 5	Std 6 – 7
Maths		110	10	10
Mother tongue		110	10	10
English		110	10	10
Health		General studies integrated into core 10	Integrated general studies 10	Integrated general studies 10
Social issues				
Economics & work				
Science & Tech				
Practical Skills			10	10
2 <sup>nd</sup> Language			10	
Total credits per level		40 credits 400 notional hours	40/50/60 credits	40/50 credits

**Figure 6.1 Possible allocation of unit standards**

*From DNFE Draft Policy for ABEP in Botswana*

## 6.2 LEVELS OF BASIC EDUCATION AND ARTICULATION WITH THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

163. Learners should be able to get a quality certificate within the future National Qualifications Framework and reach a level equal to Standard 7 through the ABEP. While formal primary education is split in two levels – Lower Primary (Standard 1-4) and Upper Primary (Standard 5-7) – the proposed ABEP program is tentatively divided into three levels which will be equivalent but not equal to the school system:

- Level 1 (Standard 1-4);
- Level 2 (Standard 5-6); and
- Level 3 (Standard 7/form 3).

### 6.2.1 WHAT IS A LEVEL?

164. It is proposed that each level will be a “self contained” unit or cycle and that each cycle will comprise objectives to be assessed;
- each cycle will be terminal (in the sense that upon completion of each level, a coherent set of competencies is acquired that is not necessarily a prerequisite for the next level);
- each cycle will represent an exit point with some kind of accreditation being considered; and
- a primary education certificate will be provided upon completion of the third level (Standard 7) and a basic education certificate upon completion of Level 4 (Form 3).
165. There will be linkages/articulation with primary school education, and the current curriculum blueprints for primary and basic education in Botswana are used as a reference, in order that the ABEP program takes account of out-of-school learners (children, youth and adults, starting at 10 years of age).

## 6.3 THE PROPOSED ABEP PROGRAM

166. The program aims at developing and articulating both general and vocational education, knowledge and skills, theory and practice, scientific knowledge and popular wisdom, life and work oriented competencies. In this sense the ABEP proposal resonates the definitions of integrating education and training which underlie both the Namibian and South African qualifications frameworks.
167. While the NQF in Botswana is not developed, the ABEP system proposes bridges and ladders within the ABEP component, allowing for possibilities for vertical and horizontal movements in order that learners might widen/diversify their skill-base as well as go vertically or deeper into particular learning areas.
168. The ABEP system also proposes linkages between other “sectors” of education, training and development which will facilitate access to lifelong learning and the progress of a learner into higher levels.

The Blueprint (UIE/DNFE, 2005) resonates the sentiments of the South African and Namibian NQF (as well as the emergent Kenyan one) in that it states explicitly that ABEP will be focused on competencies, will be outcomes based, and will make provision for recognition of prior learning. These principles are evidenced as follows:

**Competencies-based approaches** refer to the development of knowledge plus know-how. This resonates with the applied competencies of the South African and Namibian systems. The competencies-based curriculum as defined in the Botswanan ABEP

Blueprint aims to ensure deep understanding of phenomena, connecting theory and practice, translating ideas into actions, using scientific knowledge in everyday life.

Kebathi (2005:III) likewise notes that one emerging issue in Kenya is that “Curriculum-based and subject-related competencies and basic skills do not capture the full range of education outcomes relevant to human and social development. In light of democratic societies and global challenges, what competencies are important for everyone because of their contribution to sustainable development, social welfare, cohesion and justice, as well as personal well-being?” These are questions that are being addressed within the competency-based framework in Kenya too.

**Outcomes based:** Outcome-based education and outcome-based curriculum focus on competencies, that is, on what learners can actually do with what they are taught, on the short-term and medium-term impact of learning on their daily lives. Therefore, assessment is not focused on the capacity to retrieve or repeat information but rather on the capacity to translate learning into better thinking, better doing, changing attitudes, anticipating and solving problems, etc.

**Recognition of prior learning:** Children, youth and adults, even those who are illiterate and have never attended school, have a wealth of competencies, knowledge and experience that must be acknowledged (a) as the starting point for the teaching process in every level, area, and lesson; (b) as valid knowledge and know-how to be accredited when deciding about the level learners must be placed when joining the program; and (c) for accreditation purposes, as regulated by the National Qualification Framework (DNFE/UIE, 2005). (As indicated in Section 4.6 above, RPL as a principle has been accepted within all four countries of this research – while processes of implementing them have been questioned to date.)

## 6.4 THE INTEGRATION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

169. The ABEP component of learning fits into the larger NQF system insofar as it has opened possibilities for career-pathing and access to additional learning. The ABEP bridges education and training and this is embodied in the curriculum, which includes both general subjects and vocational training components. This calls for enhanced collaboration and coordination between the Ministry of Education and other Ministries offering relevant educational and training programs for youth and adults (e.g. Labor, Health, Agriculture, Family, etc), as well as with BOTTA (Botswana Training Authority) in order to assist in the provision and assessment of vocational skills.

This of course also compares with the other country studies (see above) where the integration of education and training is seen as crucial as a way of redefining knowledge/known/skills/know-how in a way that transcends traditional conceptions of knowledge as independent of practice/daily life.

170. As in the other countries, the ABEP model bridges learning and work: the target population of this program is already engaged in work (domestic chores or income-generating, monetary or non-monetary, etc.). Thus, learning and work are intertwined in a number of ways, rather than the sequence normally contemplated in the formal primary education curriculum – learning to/for work, learning as a prerequisite for work.

## 6.5 CROSS-CUTTING OUTCOMES

The ABEP model, like the critical field outcomes of the SAQA model (which in turn influences Namibia and Kenya), aims at enhancing learners’ competencies by ensuring:

- enhanced critical thinking, problem solving and inquiry skills;
- enhanced attributes such as assertiveness, self-esteem, open-mindedness, respect for diversity, awareness of their rights and responsibilities, protection of one’s life and of the environment;

enhanced language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) to be able to express themselves appropriately in the mother tongue as well as in English;

enhanced knowledge and understanding of themselves and of their society through appreciation of their culture and tradition including languages, music, arts, crafts, ceremonies, customs, social norms and a sense of citizenship;

enhanced awareness of the realities of Botswana, Africa and the world, beyond one's own family, community and country;

enhanced awareness of the importance and presence of science and technology in everyday life, including mass media and modern technologies;

enhanced appreciation of the different types of work and ability to assess personal capabilities for livelihoods;

enhanced knowledge, skills and attitudes towards food production and industrial arts;

enhanced numeracy skills applied to daily life and problems;

development of basic entrepreneurial skills in business and everyday commercial transactions;

enhanced appreciation of family life, education and religion in the formation of positive values and attitudes;

enhanced appreciation of their own strengths, interests and talents in order to develop them to their full potential, be they physical, intellectual, artistic, spiritual, entrepreneurial, social, etc.

It could be argued that the ABEP Blueprint goes beyond the aspirations of the SAQA framework insofar as it vocalizes the need to enhance learners' knowledge and understanding of themselves, appreciate their culture(s) and traditions including languages, music, arts, crafts, ceremonies and other social norms.

It also views learners and their relationship with their worlds with regard to their strengths, interests and talents in order to develop them to their full potential, be they physical, intellectual, artistic, spiritual, entrepreneurial or social. And, in keeping with the philosophy of empowerment of the adult learner, it makes explicit enhanced attributes such as assertiveness, self-esteem, open-mindedness.

## 6.6. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ABEP AND OTHER LEARNING POSSIBILITIES

Note that herewith is included the extremely explanatory drawing of learning pathways as conceptualized by Rosa Maria Torres. Since approval has not yet been obtained from the DNFE, the diagram is used only for the ease of explanation.

171. The diagram shows the inter-connections as well as the entry and exit points of the program with respect to the current education and training provision in the country.

**Erreur ! Des objets ne peuvent pas être créés à partir des codes de champs de mise en forme.**

### **Figure 6.2 Entry and Exit Points within the national education and training system**

172. The Blueprint denotes that the dotted lines are used for programs or levels that are currently being developed or envisaged. Entry for levels 1 and 2 being developed under the Botswana Technical Education Program (BTEP) includes core skills together with work experience.

173. In keeping with OBE, the Blueprint (DNFE/UIE, 2005) states that learners' achievement and performance will be assessed through continuous assessment, tests and practical problem solving situations, for diagnosis, remediation and accreditation purposes. A learning and progress assessment will be carried out at the end of each level. Competencies and outcomes will be defined for each level and for each content area. Facilitators will be trained to develop student portfolios with records reflecting what each of them has learned, their strengths and weaknesses.

The challenge, however, resides in how, in the implementation, teachers themselves will be able to engage in the assessment of learners. This has been found to be a serious obstacle in the South Africa system, where teachers were neither able to interpret and apply nor indeed to devise mechanisms for assessing learners. The point at which capacity is critical to the implementation, is the point at which systems tend to fall apart.

174. Indeed, the Blueprint states that educators' performance will be assessed by students and by supervisors. Specific criteria and strategies need to be devised for assessing such performance in a multifaceted and non-threatening manner. While it is laudable that the Blueprint makes provision for a multifaceted evaluation of educators, it is stressed that the process of educator development needs to be set in process urgently so that there are educators to support the program at the start of delivery.

## 6.7 EVALUATING IMPACT

### 6.7.1 QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

The Blueprint (as with the proposed M&E system for South Africa) takes into account the need for multifaceted program evaluation. Program performance/impact must be continuously assessed, with the participation of all stakeholders involved.

175. As the Blueprint indicates, "Special alert and emphasis must be placed on the first few months of programme implementation, in order to test the various components and introduce the necessary changes before reaching full programme implementation."

176. In addition to the elaboration of the ABEP system, it is necessary that BOTA undertakes to incorporate the ABEP framework into the wider framework, and that BOTA or the DNFE

establishes the necessary EMIS system for addition monitoring of learners on the system and for accumulating recording of learners' records. Systems such as these can add to the data obtained via the aforementioned modes and contribute immensely to the planning of education systems.

## 6.7.2 QUANTITATIVE MANAGEMENT

177. While the National Household Survey on Literacy is a useful instrument insofar as it has tracked changes over the past decade, it serves to mention that the DNFE data management system is not yet linked to more established operating educational information systems such as the Education Information System of the MoE or the Central Statistics Unit. Coordination between these units is weak, and the DNFE has to collect and process statistical data on literacy itself, although expert, specialized data collection units do exist. Such data collection units do not process data on NFE. "There is no computerized data collection system existing in the field, there are not even computers available (no electricity, appropriate buildings) in most of the places"<sup>7</sup>.
178. The main causes of destabilization in the present system are probably related to a curriculum with no evaluation and improvement mechanisms embedded in the design, and the absence of a standardized system of assessment. In order to create a bridge between formal and non-formal standards of learning and to provide legitimacy to the non-formal program, this absence needs to be tackled as a first priority. Accreditation and validation of non-formal education are linked to this urgent process.
179. The shortcoming in the collection and the presentation of the public educational results and the quality of delivery constitute serious obstacles to the analysis of performance of the non-formal component of the educational system and for the accountability of the policy-makers responsible for its educational outcomes (UIE, 2005)

As shown in the discussion of lessons learned from the implementation of the NQF in South Africa (see Sections 4.8 to 4.10 above), the checking of educational outcomes requires a balance between quantitative and qualitative styles of approach – while trying to avoid a plethora of bureaucratic mechanisms which are cumbersome and non-effective.

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with Mr. Patrick Maphorisa, Director DNFE



## **7. CONCLUSION: SOME GENERAL LESSONS LEARNED RE THE NQF**

180. From the discussion in Chapters 4 to 6 above (with reference to the countries researched in this study), a number of general points can be isolated as “lessons” to bear in mind when considering the implementation of the NQF (in these countries and elsewhere).

### **7.1 THE PROBLEM OF STRAITJACKETING LEARNING**

181. It is recognized that not all adult learners want to join a class in order to be accredited. Many come to learn focused skills, such as writing one’s name, and learning enough literacy to pass a driver’s license test. Older learners and learners with special learning niche needs are not necessarily interested in being accredited, but providers are often only resourced or funded if they teach so-called accredited programs. This forces learners into straitjacketed learning programs. One can consider in this regard the three-year literacy and development sessions of the National Literacy Programme in Namibia (NLPN) – see Section 5.4 above – which has arguably brought benefits to large numbers of people, even though it does not earn “credits” for learners. While this has the disadvantage that learners have to move to a fourth stage to obtain formal recognition equivalent to Grade 7, it has still been experienced as a successful program by educators and learners interviewed. Compelling learners to go through the process of exams for certificates adds to the stress of the average learner (especially if they are not inclined to require formal recognition for their learning). These considerations need to be borne in mind when designing and implementing adult education programs.

### **7.2 DEMYSTIFYING UNIT STANDARDS**

182. It takes an inordinate amount of training to equip a teacher to understand what the unit standards require and how to apply them in the learning environment. Technically, this should permit learning to be tailored so that learners become competent and achieve unit standards according to their own specific and situational learning needs. In practice, teachers cannot make these applications and have to rely on programs presented in pre-developed learning materials (assuming that such materials are available).
183. Initially (for example in South Africa) it was believed that teachers would develop their own learning materials. In reality, materials development requires high level skills and teachers cannot, will not and should not need to undertake such tasks. See Section 4.7 above for a discussion around this issue.

### **7.3 TOO MUCH PACKED INTO ABET PROGRAMS**

184. Given that no one (according to the South African Department of Education) has ever progressed through all the ABET levels to achieve a level 4 qualification, it is recognized that too much is packed into the GETC/ABET level 4 qualification. This has resulted in attempts to reduce the number of credits required and also the number of elective that learners need to do (see in this regard Section 4.10 above). Proposed programs should take into account what is possible and what minimum learning adults need to access further learning options rather than making the required exit level of competence for adult learners a formidable and unachievable obstacle to further learning.

## **7.4 THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE NQF**

185. It is not easy to apply RPL at any degree of scale. If the system is to be fully implemented, ways of accrediting and validating learning will need to be established. If any system of lifelong learning is to be effective, the systems for recognizing and accrediting learning will need to be in place. Countries in the region will need to look to each other for help and cooperation in this regard. For example, the establishment of a national learners' database of learning records is not possible for all countries and shortcuts, using and adapting systems from elsewhere, should be considered. (See Section 4.6 above.)
186. Requiring teachers to be able to engage in the assessment of learners has been found to be a serious obstacle in the South Africa system, where teachers were neither able to interpret and apply nor indeed devise mechanisms for assessing learners. The general point to be made (see Section 6.6 above) is that educator capacity is critical to the implementation of the system. See also Section 4.8 above.

## **7.5 THE SADC REGION**

187. The establishment of a regional system of qualifications as part of SADC in 2002 is important since portability should imply portability across countries in the region as well. The movement of workers who are being trained in different workplaces in the region needs to be accommodated within the region (see, for example, Section 5.3. above).

## **7.6 FORMALIZING THE INFORMAL**

188. Although it is argued that the NQF recognizes learning wherever it happens, we need to sound a note of caution about the NQF inadvertently forcing informal learning into a formal mode of exams, certification and equivalence with the formal system, chasing outcomes, and commodifying education. This latter problem can be seen in the plethora of learning providers who "sell" learning packages (often at high prices) which are atomized and tailored for niche markets with certain credit values attached. See the discussion in Section 5.1 above around the positive and negative implications of the concern with qualifications expressed by Namibia's Prime Minister, Hage Geingob.

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<http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/directories/services/11475/14915>
- An internet site for information on the National Qualifications Framework in Namibia: National Qualifications Framework: Namibia: [http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195\\_base/en/init/nam\\_4.htm](http://www.logos-net.net/ilo/195_base/en/init/nam_4.htm)

## 9. LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

### **SOUTH AFRICA (PEOPLE SPOKEN TO BY THE AUTHORS: DISCUSSIONS/CONVERSATIONS)**

David Diale: CES (Director) Adult Basic Education and Training (DoE)  
Vernon Jacobs. (Acting director) Adult Basic Education and Training DoE  
Fezile May Adult Basic Education and Training DoE  
Johannes Geldenhuis Adult Basic Education and Training DoE  
Rodney Veldtman: Assistant Director NAPTOSA. (National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa).  
James Keevy Assistant Director: Research. SAQA  
Eardley Twigg. Assessments UMALUCI  
Teachers from the Department of Education KwaZulu Natal Province, South Africa.

### **BOTSWANA (PEOPLE INTERVIEWED/CONVERSATIONS HELD)**

Mr Patrick Maphorisa, Director DNFE  
Members of the DNFE steering committee for the proposed ABEP  
Dr Maruatona, University of Botswana and consultant to DNFE ABEP

### **NAMIBIA (LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED)**

Mr Justin Ellis, DABE Secretary Lifelong Education  
Mr Beans Ngatjizeko, DABE Director  
Mr Bornface Mukono, DABE Deputy Director  
Mr Cletious Mushaukw, DABE Education Officer: Materials Developer  
Ms Mary Matengu, DABE Education Officer  
Ms Himeesora Kaimu, NQA: Chief Higher Education Officer  
Ms Ndesihii Afunde, NAMCOL Distance Education Coordinator  
Mr Ephraim Dawids, NAMCOL Manager Marketing Learner Support Services

### **TRAINING OF TRAINERS**

Ms Ann Nujoma-Angula, DABE (Education Officer)  
Mr Joel Kavetuna, DABE (District Literacy Organizer and Community Learning Development Coordinator)  
Mr Steve Kaangundue, DABE (Education Officer)

### **ADULT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR SELF-EMPLOYMENT**

Ms Mavis Simasiku	UNAM	Student
Ms Juliet Buiswalelo	UNAM	Student
Ms Helena Ndeutapo	UNAM	Student
Ms Elvisa Tjituka	UNAM	Student
Mr Ben Munyandi	UNAM	Student
Ms Lydia Shaketange	UNAM	Lecturer
Mr Gilbert. Likando	UNAM	Lecturer

## 10. APPENDIX

### Interview Schedule: Lifelong Learning and the NQF

Do you have a qualifications authority?

What levels of qualifications exist in the country for basic education?

Are the levels of basic education equivalent to the levels of schooling? (explain)

How is the recognition of skills handled – do Unit standards exist to enable learners to build up to a qualification?

Are there possibilities for vertical and horizontal movement (that is, for people to widen/diversify their skill-base as well as to go deeper into particular subjects)?

Does the system facilitate the progress of a learner into higher levels and into a path of lifelong learning?

Mention some individual cases of learners whether the NQF system has opened possibilities for career-pathing and access to additional learning?

Do people find the Unit Standard system rigid in the sense of constraining people who feel they are forced into a formal mode?

Are people moving from non-formal education into the mainstream system?

How well subscribed is the non-formal system?

Are learners' records maintained by QA body?

How do educators perceive the QA body?

Are literacy learners accredited by body?

Has learner enrolment increased/decreased since QA framework has been in place?

How long has the QA been in operation?

What lessons have been learned from the implementation and the experiences of the qualifications framework for literacy in this country? Are any of these documented? Where?

To what extent is basic education affected (both positively and negatively) by the development of unit standards and outcomes/competencies via processes of standards generation and standards setting in the country?

Would you consider “outcomes/competency” based systems to be relevant (or irrelevant) for adults engaged in basic education and literacy programs? (Why?)

Is it useful for:

integrating education and training (explore reasoning given for what is stated),  
recognizing prior learning (again, explore reasoning and try and locate evidence),  
facilitating access for adults to assume career-pathing. (Offer detail),  
and also for opening access to adults who have previously been excluded from the formal systems of education,

What challenges would you say are faced in practice?