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Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning in UNESCO Member States



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List of acronyms and abbreviations

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training (South Africa)
ACBS	Academic Credit Bank System (Republic of Korea)
A&E	Accreditation and Equivalency (Philippines)
ALS	Alternative Learning System (Philippines)
ANQ	<i>Agencia Nacional para a Qualificacao</i> /National Agency for Qualifications (Portugal)
APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
B-L-KG	<i>Bund-Länder-Koordinierungsgruppe</i> /Federal Government/Federal States Coordination Group (Germany)
BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Germany)
BNCQF	Botswana National credit and Qualifications Framework
BOTA	Botswana Training Authority
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CHED	Commission on Higher Education (Philippines)
CNQ	National Catalogue of Qualifications (Portugal)
CoEU	Council of the European Union
CONOCER	National Council for Standardization and Certification of Labour Competence (Mexico)
COTVET	Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (Ghana)
CSQ	Sectoral Councils for Qualification (Portugal)
DQR	<i>Deutscher Qualifikationsrahmen</i> /German Qualifications Network
DTM	<i>Davlat Test Markazi</i> /State Testing Centre (Uzbekistan)
EQF	European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning
EU	European Union
ESF	European Social Fund (the Netherlands)
ETA	Employment and Training Administration of the US Department of Labor
ETEEAP	Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (Philippines)
EU-IPA	European Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance
EVC	<i>Ervaringscertificaat</i> /Certificate of Experience (Netherlands)
FET	Further Education and Training (South Africa)
GET	General Education and Training (South Africa)
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	International Labour Organization
InfEd	Informal Education
ISFE	Information System of Further Education (Slovakia)
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Board (Ghana)
KOMPAZ	<i>Kompetenzanerkennungszentrum</i> /Centre of competence recognition (Austria)
KQF	Korean Qualifications Framework
KSS	Korean Skills Standards
LEP	Ladderized Education Program (Philippines)
LLAS	Lifelong Learning Account System (Republic of Korea)
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LO	<i>Landsorganisasjonen</i> /Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions
MEXT	Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
MHLW	Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

MOCCA	Modernisation of Curricula, Certification and Assessment in vocational education for youths and adults in Slovenia
MQA	Mauritius Qualifications Authority (Mauritius)
MSMT	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic
MSZS	Ministry of Education and Sport of Slovenia
NAM	National Association of Manufacturers (USA)
NCCE	National Coordinating Council for Education (Philippines)
NCSS	National Competence Standard System (Mexico)
NEF	National Empowerment Foundation (Mauritius)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHO	<i>Næringslivets Hovedorganisasjon</i> /Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry
NPPT	Programme for Personnel Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSO	National Statistics Office (Philippines)
NSP	National System of Occupations (Czech Republic)
NTA	Namibia Training Authority
NTA Gambia	National Training Authority (The Gambia)
NZCER	New Zealand Council for Educational Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OKKR	<i>Országos képzési keretrendszer</i> /Hungarian National Qualifications Framework
ONEC	Office of the National Education Commission (Thailand)
ONIE	Office for Non-Formal and Informal Education (Thailand)
PMETYC	<i>Proyecto de Modernización de la Educación Técnica y la Capacitación</i> /Technical Education and Training Modernization Project (Mexico)
PNQF	Philippine National Qualifications Framework
PTQF	Philippine TVET Qualification Framework
Rede CERTIFIC	<i>Rede Nacional de Certificação Profissional e Formação Inicial e Continuada</i> /National Network of Professional Certification and Basic and Continuing Training (Brazil)
RNFIL	Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (OECD programme)
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RVA	Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (of Non-formal and Informal Learning)
RVCC	<i>Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências</i> /Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competency (Portugal)
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SEAMEO	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
SNC	<i>Sistema Nacional de Competencias</i> /National Competence Standard System (Mexico)
SQA	Seychelles Qualifications Authority
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (Philippines)
TQF	Transnational Qualifications Framework (Mauritius)
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVETQF	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework (Ghana)
UIE	UNESCO Institute for Education (re-named UIL in 2006)
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UVM	<i>Undervisningsministeriet</i> /Ministry of Education (Denmark)
VAE	<i>Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience</i> /Validation of Acquired Experience (France)
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VPL	Valuation of Prior Learning
WIA	Workforce Investment Act (USA)

Foreword

Today, in a complex and fast-changing world, as knowledge, skills and attitudes are acquired on a lifelong and life-wide basis, all kinds of learning and training outcomes deserve to be valued and validated, regardless of where and how they were obtained. However, when it comes to giving people access to either education or employment, many societies still focus exclusively on the outcomes of formal learning in educational institutions. As a result, a great deal of learning remains unrecognised, and many people are denied the opportunities, motivation and confidence to continue learning. Therefore, the learning outcomes that young people and adults acquire over the course of their life in non-formal and informal settings need to be recognised, validated and accredited.

This concern was expressed in the *Belém Framework for Action* (UIL, 2010), adopted by 144 Delegations of UNESCO Member States at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in Brazil in December 2009. It called on UNESCO to develop guidelines on all learning outcomes, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning, so that these may be recognised and validated. At the same time, Member States committed themselves to developing or improving frameworks and mechanisms for the recognition of all forms of learning.

In order to move the commitments in the *Belém Framework for Action* forward, the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, on behalf of UNESCO, took the initiative to develop with Member States the *UNESCO Guidelines on the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation (RVA) of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning* (UIL, 2012). The *UNESCO Guidelines* were developed through a participatory process involving consultation with 42 Member States to reflect their experience and diverse needs, followed by professional advice from an Expert Group comprising representatives of each of the regions and of leading international agencies. It also reflected insights from studies on RVA policy and practice. The *UNESCO Guidelines* were launched and made accessible to all Member States in 2012.

The present document, entitled *Synthesis Report on Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in UNESCO Member States*, was the principal source (knowledge base document) for the *UNESCO Guidelines*. It set out to promote and strengthen mutual learning and to facilitate collaboration between Member States where interest is growing in the development of recognition practices and flexible mechanisms of transition between levels and systems of education. The report comparatively analyses a series of case studies in order to promote and share knowledge, ideas and experiences in different contexts, and to advocate for the importance of recognising the value of non-formal and informal learning.

The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) is happy to respond to the call from Member States to promote and expand quality lifelong learning opportunities for all. I am therefore especially grateful to the author, former UIL Senior Programme Specialist Jin Yang, for his important contribution through this publication.

Arne Carlsen
Director, UIL

Introduction

Background

In recent years, the development of lifelong learning policies in many UNESCO Member States has shown that there is a growing demand by adults and young people for the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in the course of their life experiences to be made visible, evaluated and accredited within different contexts (work, education, family life, community and society). Besides some already-established systems of recognising formal learning, some Member States have developed mechanisms to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning, and many more are in the process of doing so. This acknowledges that alternative and complementary non-formal and informal learning pathways are prerequisites for successful learning and personal development. It is expected that the recognition and accreditation of all forms of learning will improve people's ability to cope with current and future challenges and integrate broader sections of the population into the learning process, thus promoting lifelong learning for all.

Following 33C/Resolution 10 of the 33rd session of UNESCO's General Conference (UNESCO, 2005a), the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) has conducted studies on recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and has promoted the sharing of information and mutual learning through international meetings. In March 2010, UIL organised a meeting on "Linking recognition practices to qualifications frameworks – North–South collaborative research". Results from this (Singh and Duvokot, 2013) and other research activities and international exchanges have shown that recognition and validation practices can be an important part of lifelong learning strategies, national qualifications framework reforms, and human resource management in enterprises and public organisations.

The *Belém Framework for Action*, adopted by 144 Delegations of UNESCO Member States at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) in Brazil, December 2009, called for UNESCO "to develop guidelines on all learning outcomes, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning, so that these may be recognised and validated" (UIL, 2010, p. 9). Member States committed themselves to "developing or improving structures and mechanisms for the recognition, validation and accreditation of all forms of learning by establishing equivalency frameworks" (ibid., p. 7).

Against this background and on behalf of UNESCO, UIL took the initiative to work with Member States to develop *UNESCO Guidelines* on recognising all forms of learning with a focus on non-formal and informal learning. These *Guidelines* proposed principles, tools and mechanisms supported by research-based evidence and analysis that can assist Member States in recognising all forms of learning, of non-formal and informal learning (UIL, 2012).

The drafting of the *UNESCO Guidelines* was a participatory process based on the results of consultation with Member States. In order to make the *Guidelines* reflect the different Member States' diverse experience and needs, UIL invited them in May 2011 to participate actively in a broad consultation process leading to the preparation of the draft *Guidelines* through the following means:

- Organising broad national consultations with all stakeholders, including relevant Ministries, education and training institutions, social partners (employers and trade unions), private providers, and voluntary and community organisations.
- Providing relevant inputs to a set of consultation questions on recognition policy and practice.

Resources, aims and contents of this report

By the end of September 2011, 42 Member States had provided feedback. The present report is based on these responses and on the results of various UIL activities and research programmes in recent years pertaining to RVA of non-formal, informal and experiential learning, including:

- *Recognition of Experiential Learning: An International Analysis* (Proceedings of a seminar organised by the French National Commission for UNESCO in cooperation with the UNESCO Institute for Education in 2005; UNESCO, 2005b);
- *Recognition, Validation and Certification of non-formal learning and informal learning* (Synthesis Report of the first international survey; UIE, 2005);
- *Creating Flexible and Inclusive Learning Paths in Post-Primary Education and Training in Africa: NQFs and Recognition of non-formal and informal learning – the key to lifelong learning* (one of UIL’s contributions to the 2008 ADEA Biennale; Singh, 2008),
- *Linking Recognition Practices and National Qualifications Frameworks: International benchmarking of experiences and strategies on the recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning* (Documentation of the UIL International Meeting on Linking Recognition Practices to Qualifications Frameworks, March 2010; Singh & Duvekot, 2013);
- *Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning and NQFs: critical levers for lifelong learning and sustainable skills development. Comparative analysis of six African countries* (one of UIL’s contributions to the 2012 ADEA Triennale; Steenekamp and Singh, 2012); and
- A study on Key issues and policy considerations in promoting lifelong learning in selected African Countries (one of UIL’s contributions to the 2012 ADEA Triennale; Walters et al., 2014).

In some cases, reference is also made to published evidence in relevant fields, including notably the “Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning” (RNFIL) programme of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015) and the European Union’s comprehensive recognition and validation system (European Commission, 2008).

This report intends to promote and strengthen mutual learning and to facilitate collaboration between Member States where interest in developing recognition mechanisms and linkages with qualifications frameworks are increasing.

In accordance with the questionnaire sent out to Member States, the content of the report covers the following areas:

- How are non-formal and informal learning recognised in a country's education and training system?
- What significance is given to further education and training and progression pathways that take account of informal and non-formal learning, recognise competences, and accompany individuals' social and economic integration?
- How are informally acquired competences recorded, documented and certified? What instruments and methods (skills records, portfolios, assessment, etc.) are used?
- Is a national qualifications framework being adopted as a way of systematising different learning venues, qualifications and certifications?
- What challenges and opportunities arise when translating informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences into formal education requirements via the recognition of the former?
- Who uses recognition programmes? How do they support the integration and empowerment of groups and individuals (particularly the low-skilled or those with low levels of education)?
- What are the key recommendations as regards priorities, strategies and solutions for recognising all learning?

Clarification of key concepts

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing understanding that lifelong education/learning includes formal education/learning, non-formal education/learning and informal education/learning, with the focus gradually moving from education towards learning. In the first *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE; UIL, 2009) UIL endorsed the following definitions used by the European Commission (2000, 2001).

- **Formal learning** occurs as a result of experiences in an education or training institution, with structured learning objectives, learning time and support, leading to certification. Formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- **Non-formal learning** is not provided by an education or training institution and typically does not lead to certification. It is, however, structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support). Non-formal learning is intentional from the learner's perspective.
- **Informal learning** results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured (in terms of learning objectives, learning time or learning support) and typically does not lead to certification. Informal learning may be intentional but in most cases it is non-intentional (or "incidental"/random).

There is increasing acknowledgement that learning takes place on a continuum and that the boundaries between different forms of education and learning are porous. Therefore the definitions of the terms quoted above are not intended to suggest a rigid separation between them.

Recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) refers to the establishment of arrangements to make visible and value all learning outcomes (including knowledge, skills and competences) against clearly defined and quality-assured standards. RVA covers the whole process, including identification, documentation, assessment and accreditation of learning outcomes from different settings.

UIL places special emphasis on the particular mechanisms for recognising knowledge, skills and competences acquired through non-formal and/or informal means and settings. In this regard, RVA underlies the integration of non-formal, informal and formal learning as well as the transfer of knowledge derived from work, family and leisure activities to mainstream education systems. Ideally, such mechanisms should have equivalence with formal qualifications, and should lead progressively to them.

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1. The position of non-formal and informal learning in the education and training system

In a lifelong learning system, learning opportunities must be made available through all channels: formal, non-formal and informal. As lifelong learning values all kinds of learning experiences, learning outcomes should be recognised and validated independently of how, where and by whom they are acquired. All UNESCO Member States require an approach to education and training that accepts that learning is a continuum ranging from formal to non-formal and informal learning and encompassing all people at all stages of life. This acceptance is a prerequisite for developing a RVA system for non-formal and informal learning. In other words, an inbuilt mechanism for the recognition, validation and accreditation of all kinds of formal, non-formal and informal education must be part and parcel of lifelong learning (Ouane, 2011).

This chapter provides an overview of the position of non-formal and informal learning in the education and training systems of Member States.

Legislation and policies valuing non-formal and informal learning as an integral part of the education and training system

1.1

In some countries, non-formal and informal learning have a high standing alongside the formal education system. This is reflected in major legislation and policies.

In many **African** countries, non-formal education is seen as an integral part of the overall educational system. In **Ghana**, the 10-Year Education Strategic Framework developed by the Ministry of Education adequately caters for both non-formal and informal education (Government of Ghana, 2009). In **Nigeria**, non-formal education appears to receive greater attention in the country's current educational system than ever before. "Recognition" of the achievement of learning outcomes through non-formal education is spelt out in the country's National Policy on Non-formal Education.

In **Japan**, the *Lifelong Learning Promotion Act* was formulated in 1990 (MEXT, 1990). The philosophy of lifelong learning was also clearly stated in the revised *Basic Act on Education*, enacted in 2006 (MEXT, 2006). In the Japanese context, non-formal education is most associated with "social education" which refers to organizational education activities conducted outside the field of school education. Libraries and museums play an important role as a venue for social education. In addition, the *Human Resources Development Promotion Act* (MHLW, 1969) states the basic philosophy that it is essential for workers to be able to demonstrate their abilities throughout their working lives. This enhances job security and workers' status. Employers should strive to promote the development of their workers' vocational skills by providing them with necessary job training and giving them the necessary assistance.

In **Thailand**, the *National Education Act* (ONEC, 1999) and the *Second National Education Act* (ONEC, 2002) state that education must be managed through a lifelong and continuing process. These

Acts identify the meaning of lifelong education as the integration of formal, non-formal and informal education, enabling learners to improve their quality of life continuously throughout their life span. This lifelong process is intended to make Thai people more complete human beings and to help them live more fulfilling lives. More specifically, the *Promotion of Non-Formal and Informal Education Act* (ONIE, 2008) states that all sectors of society should participate in the provision of education. Educational establishments should provide education either formally, non-formally or informally – or in a combination of all three forms – as a means of improving the quality of life.

Box 1.1

DEFINITION OF FORMAL, NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION IN THAILAND

The *National Education Act* of 1999 states that Thai education should be lifelong and should integrate formal, non-formal and informal learning so as to provide lifelong enhancement of people's quality of life. The Act clearly defines three modes of education:

1. Formal education shall specify the aims, methods, curricula, duration, assessment and evaluation conditional to its completion.
2. Non-formal education shall have flexibility in determining the aims, modalities, management procedures, duration, assessment and evaluation with regard to its completion. The content and curricula for non-formal education shall be appropriate, respond to stated requirements, and meet the needs of individual groups of learners.
3. Informal education shall enable learners to learn by themselves according to their interests, potentialities and readiness, and should make use of the opportunities provided by other people, society, environment, media, and other sources of knowledge.

Source: ONEC 1999

In 2002, the European Council *Resolution on Lifelong Learning* stressed that lifelong learning must cover learning from pre-school age to post-retirement, including the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Furthermore, lifelong learning must be understood as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.

1.2 Legislation and public policies endorsing the recognition of outcomes of non-formal and informal learning

Various laws have been enacted in order to recognise the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, most notably in Europe. In 2002, the European Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning (CoEU, 2002) reaffirmed the effective validation and recognition of formal qualifications, as well as non-formal and informal learning, across countries and educational sectors through increased transparency and better quality assurance. The Council invited EU Member States to encourage cooperation and take measures to validate learning outcomes. These were seen as crucial for building bridges between formal, non-formal and

informal learning, as well as being a prerequisite for the creation of a European area of lifelong learning. In 2004, the European Council adopted common principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission, 2004).

The validation of non-formal or informal learning is a key element in national lifelong learning strategies developed by countries participating in the “Education and Training 2010” programme of the European Union (EU). Countries are at different stages in developing systems to support this validation: some have established systems already, while others are only just beginning to develop provision. A number of steps have been taken at European level. An inventory of validation of non-formal and informal learning has been produced on behalf of the European Commission and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), with a detailed survey of developments in European countries.

The **Norwegian** concept of “*realkompetanse*” [literally: real/actual competency] refers to all types of prior learning – formal, non-formal and informal. The importance of guaranteeing the right of the individual to such validation is reflected in key legislation and national strategies. In the *Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2007* (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2007), the validation of informal and non-formal learning was a main priority. The government Initiative on Lifelong Learning 2009 (Government of Norway, 2008–2009) stated that the system for validating prior learning must be promoted.

In **Denmark**, Law Act 556 of 6 June 2007 (UVM, 2007) made it possible to recognise non-formal and informal learning in the education and training system. Adults have the right to ask an educational institution to assess their prior learning in order to obtain a recognition of their competencies in the adult and continuing education system.

The legislative framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the **Czech Republic** is represented in the *Act on the Verification and Recognition of Further Education Results* (MSMT, 2006). The recognition of further education results passed into law on 1 September 2007. This law defines the term “qualification” (full or partial) as well as the National Qualifications Register. According to this law, any person who is older than 18 years and who has achieved a minimum of basic education can request the assessment of their learning outcomes in order to achieve a partial qualification.

In **France**, the Validation of Acquired Experience (*Validation des Acquis de l'Expérience*, VAE) was introduced via the *Social Modernisation Law* of 2002 (Government of France, 2002) and extended by further laws (including the *Decentralisation Act* of 2004; Government of France, 2004), as well as many agreements between professional sectors or companies. The strong legal base gives the right to each individual to have his or her formally, informally and non-formally acquired experience assessed. In **Finland**, RVA is enabled in national legislation at all levels of education. In the **Netherlands**, the development and implementation of RVA has been promoted by the government since 1997.

In **Hungary**, the Strategy for Vocational Training Development (2005–2013) declares unambiguously: “Recognition of previously (formally, informally and non-formally) acquired competences should be made possible at each level of vocational education” (Government of Hungary, 2005).

In **Lithuania**, legal preconditions have been established for recognising skills and knowledge acquired in various environments (learning according to formal and non-formal programmes, by work experience or informal learning). The amended Laws on Education (Government of Lithuania, 2011) and Vocational Education and Training (Government of Lithuania, 2007) set out the key elements in certifying competences acquired through non-formal or informal learning. In addition, the *Strategic Guidelines for the Development of Education for 2003–2012* (Government of Lithuania, 2003a), the *Strategy on Vocational Guidance* (Government of Lithuania, 2003b) and the *Strategy for Ensuring Lifelong Learning* (Government of Lithuania, 2008), aim to build bridges between formal, non-formal and informal education and training. They

foresee concrete measures for the further development of a national knowledge and competence assessment system, including official validation of non-formal learning experiences.

Poland has long-established practices for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning. For instance, in the training for craftsmen and candidates for the diplomas of apprentice and foreman in crafts, the *Crafts Act* (Government of Poland, 1989) stipulates the conditions for carrying out examinations. These examinations can be taken by both young people who have completed vocational education and training in crafts and adults wishing to validate their knowledge and skills acquired through work or theoretical training (Duda, 2010).

Chile recently passed a new Education Act (Government of Chile, 2009), which recognises not only the right to education but also learning acquired outside the education system or the workplace.

1.3 Strategies and practices in supporting the provision of non-formal and informal learning opportunities and recognition of learning results

In many countries, there is no specific legislation for recognising non-formal and informal learning. However, policies and strategies have nevertheless supported the provision of non-formal and informal learning opportunities and the practice of recognising the results.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, the new education strategy paper (Government of Kyrgyzstan, 2012) considers all aspects of formal, non-formal and informal education. This document foresees education from early childhood through to academic categories and takes into account lifelong learning principles.

In the **Philippines**, basic education offers two equal and parallel learning systems: the Formal Basic (school-based) System and the Alternative Learning System (ALS, community-based). The ALS provides an Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Programme outside of the school system to address the learning needs of those who wish to acquire basic or functional literacy skills equivalent to elementary or secondary levels.

In **Myanmar**, non-formal and informal learning are recognised as important modes of learning in addition to formal education, and all are seen as complementary to each other in assisting individuals in their professional development and preparation for life. In **Pakistan**, the education system is beginning to recognise non-formal and informal learning. Non-formal basic education schools have been established out of the government's regular Annual Development Programme, and Parliament has approved the budget for non-formal and informal schools.

In **Poland**, the education system allows adults to continue their education after it has been interrupted or when they are already in employment ("second-chance"), leading to recognised certificates. To validate vocational skills, an adult who wishes to acquire vocational qualifications does not have to finish vocational school. Having acquired vocational experience, he or she can obtain authorisation to practise a given vocation by passing an examination performed in front of a special examination board (appointed by regional school superintendents) and receive the title of qualified labourer or master in a given occupation.

In **Lithuania**, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) confirms the procedure for qualification examinations including the validation of non-formal and informal learning. Vocational schools and vocational training institutions are responsible for providing applicants with the necessary support to validate their knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education through final qualification exams. Social partners are responsible for assessing the acquired qualifications of those who decide to legitimate their non-formal and informal learning achievements in vocational schools. The full organisation and administration of the final

exams was taken over by the Chambers of Industry, Commerce and Crafts and the Chamber of Agriculture. Regional Chambers approve the requests of those willing to validate their knowledge in vocational schools.

In **Slovakia**, non-formal learning is recognised within the education and training system through the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports. The Ministry's Accreditation Committee for Adult Education accredits many different institutions to run their programmes according to certain rules and qualifications standards.

Finally, it is worth noting that in some countries the concept of non-formal and informal learning is still uncharted territory. In **Uzbekistan**, for example, since the primary, secondary and vocational education system covers all school-age children and the literacy rate is close to 100 %, adult learning and non-formal learning programmes are mostly oriented towards personal development and empowerment. These programmes stimulate the establishment of professional associations and the development of civil society, promoting the concept and practice of human development.

In **Latvia**, only validation for professional qualifications is available at present. There is potential for the validation process to be further developed to include wider possibilities at all educational levels, from basic to higher. The validation system for knowledge and skills obtained in non-formal or informal ways is still new and no candidates have yet gone through it. However, the criteria and methodology for the maintenance of standards and identification of levels have already been agreed and legitimated.

2. The contribution of RVA to educational, social and economic development

Recent developments have shown that RVA becomes an important component of national lifelong learning policies and enables stronger links between the adult learning sector and the formal education and training system. Recognition provides a synergy between various forms of learning and enables learners to progress on a flexible individualised pathway. Furthermore, the development and recognition of learners' and potential learners' knowledge, skills and competences are crucial for the development of individuals themselves and for competitiveness, employment and social cohesion. In fact, RVA is gaining relevance not only with regard to education and training policies, but most importantly in relation to themes like poverty reduction, job creation and employment and social inclusion.

In analysing the roles of RVA in the countries participating in the UIL consultation, we focus on the following three broad areas:

- contributions to the building of progression pathways in the education and training system;
- contributions to human resources development and enhanced employability; and
- contributions to social inclusion, including reduction of poverty and empowerment of the marginalised in society.

2.1 Contributions to the building of progression pathways in the education and training system

RVA has been used as a way to realise government education and training policy: for example, to create more flexibility in the educational system; to create a system for quality control in assessment; to cope more efficiently with the costs of training and create more efficient learning routes; to increase learners' self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation; and to allow learners to obtain formal recognition for or exemption from part of a course of study.

In Africa, a strong force behind recognition is the desire to reform the education and training system into a diversified system which captures the full significance of alternative learning pathways.

In **Mauritius**, recognition of prior learning is being used to transform the education and training system by widening access to education and training with a view to promoting lifelong learning. The idea is to give people who have been left out of the system the opportunity to have the skills and knowledge they acquired elsewhere valued and recognised by formal qualifications.

In **Botswana** the acute shortage of tertiary institutions is forcing a change in attitudes towards full recognition of non-traditional modes of learning. A large college for open and distance learning has been established and many learners, particularly those who are employed, use the college for personal, academic and professional development.

In the **Seychelles**, recognition of prior learning (RPL) exists to promote equity of access and a fair chance for all learners. The system is intended to facilitate access, transfer and award of credits, leading to the certification of qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework.

In **Namibia** and **South Africa**, RPL is intended to support a transformation of the education and training system. All stakeholders are committed to removing barriers and extending benefits to all learners. The inclusive, holistic and learner-centred ethos is committed to the principles of human development and lifelong learning.

In Asia and the Pacific, RVA of non-formal and informal learning has been used to obtain credits which offer the possibility to transfer to formal educational credentials.

In **Japan**, in some cases, knowledge and skills gained informally can be translated into formal (school education) credits, through the acquisition of specified qualifications or credentials.

In Myanmar, those who participate in non-formal training are awarded certificates of completion at the end of each course. The skills gained in these courses afford participants access to higher level courses.

In **Pakistan**, learners who missed the chance to attend formal school can make up for the gaps in their education by attending non-formal schools. Through a specialised condensed course, these out-of-school learners complete primary education in a period of 36 months, and are then eligible to join Class VI in the formal school system. They are thus able to integrate into the mainstream system and join those who have been there since day one.

In the **Philippines**, performance in the Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Programme is assessed through the A&E Test for elementary/secondary level. Those who pass the A&E Test are recognised as elementary/high school graduates and are accepted as regular students in technical-vocational and higher education institutions.

In **Thailand**, four programmes exist to give every citizen the opportunity to learn continuously throughout his/her life: (1) Basic education; (2) Occupational development; (3) Education for life skills development; and (4) Education for community and social development. Most importantly, the credits accumulated by learners from these programmes are transferable within the same type or between different types of education, regardless of whether they were obtained at the same or at different educational institutions. This includes credits from non-formal or informal education, vocational training or work experience.

In **New Zealand**, the recognition and certification of non-formal and informal learning make an individual's skills, knowledge and competencies visible. By promoting the individual's self-knowledge and self-esteem, recognition encourages individuals who have not previously taken part in formal education to do so.

In Europe, further education and training offers increasing opportunities for translating non-formal and informal learning into formal (higher) education qualifications.

In **Austria**, many of the existing recognition mechanisms belong to the formal system, but relevant preparation courses take place in the non-formal system and are statistically recorded for the further education sector (Markowitsch and Luomi-Messerer, 2008). One of the most elaborate mechanisms in the field of further education is the *Weiterbildungsakademie* (WBA, Academy of Continuing Education). The WBA certifies and issues degrees to adult educators according to defined standards; a certain period of professional experience is required in order to obtain the certification. The certificate is gaining popularity in Austrian adult education institutions, no doubt because it also provides access to higher education (graduates of the advanced WBA diploma can attend selected University courses at Masters level).¹

Denmark has a long tradition of individual competency evaluation. In the past, this has resulted in a focus on individual skills identification for basic adult education (2001) and vocational education and training programmes (2003). Starting in 2004, an increased focus was placed on RPL, and in August 2007 the educational fields covered by the legislation were expanded to include the following: vocational training; single course subjects in general adult and upper secondary education; basic adult education; vocational education and training programmes (VET); further adult education (VVU) degrees; and diploma degrees.

In **Germany**, recognition of non-formal and informal learning provides access to tertiary education. For example, second-chance education can pave the way for working adults to enter higher education. The approach is regulated by each *Land* [German federal state] (Werquin, 2010, p. 35). In the area of vocational apprenticeships, Germany has a well-developed system to prevent candidates who have achieved the requisite learning outcomes from forfeiting the connection to formal learning in the dual system (ibid., p. 46). Germany has prepared recommendations in this regard since 2002. These are intended to facilitate the pursuit of studies and acquisition of qualifications, and to provide linkages between formal and informal learning (ibid., p. 21).

The New Opportunities Initiative in **Portugal** has been widely supported. While adult education and vocational training used to be peripheral efforts, the New Opportunities Initiative is a systematic and nationwide governmental policy which has provoked a massive positive response.

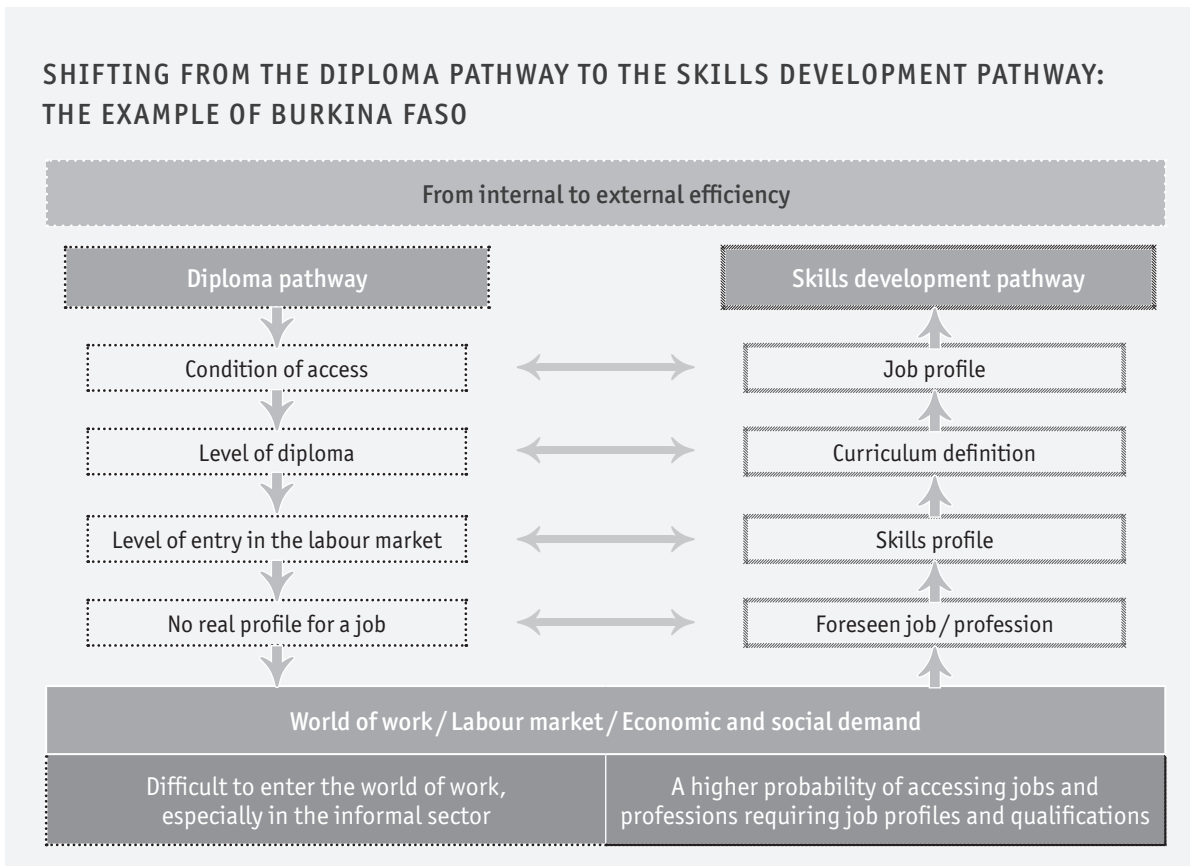
2.2 Contributions to human resources development and enhanced employability

In Africa, where many people are employed in the informal economy, there is a growing tendency to move away from overemphasis on formal diplomas and towards an emphasis on skills development. Efforts are also being made to change the current skills development logic from one of internal efficiency to one of external efficiency, as shown in Figure 2.1 for **Burkina Faso**.

¹ For more information on the WBA see Prokopp and Luomi-Messerer, 2010; and Brandstetter and Luomi-Messerer, 2010.

SHIFTING FROM THE DIPLOMA PATHWAY TO THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY: THE EXAMPLE OF BURKINA FASO

 **Figure 2.1**



Source: Savadogo and Walther, 2010

This new paradigm would include the following shifts:

- from a centralised and state-controlled system to a decentralised, regulated, coordinated and partnership-based system;
- from a “diploma oriented system” to a system whose target is the professional inclusion of youth;
- from a formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system to a system integrating the diversity of formal, non-formal and informal pathways;
- from school-based training to skills development pathways based on apprenticeship;
- from a knowledge-based national certification framework to a framework which recognises and validates all types of skills and work experiences; and
- from a system based on exclusion to a system based on equity of access and outcomes.

In **Japan**, for example, specific qualifications and credentials may be acquired not only in professional areas but also in fields of special interest. In many cases, participation in learning activities relating to such fields leads to improvement and diversification of career development and skills assessment. In addition, practical learning activities which encompass volunteer work play a major role in promoting community development, both through the activities themselves and through the utilisation of their outcomes.

In the **Philippines**, the National Certificate (NC)/Certificate of Competency (CoC) awarded by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to TVET graduates and workers are recognised as proof of their competencies both locally and abroad. Foreign employers, in particular, look

for this document among the applications they receive. NC/CoC holders therefore do not encounter so much difficulty in finding a job, as the qualification serves as their passport to employment. Since a large majority of workers going abroad come from poor families, getting certified by TESDA helps them a great deal to gain employment and earn income for their families.

In **Uzbekistan**, recognition of skills helps youth and adults to take advantage of new employment opportunities. New educational standards adopted by the government in 2001 allow educational institutions to determine their own curriculum and to introduce new training facilities. These new standards are focused on:

- expanding the labour market in the service sector, manufacturing and farming;
- supporting the development of small-scale enterprises and private entrepreneurship;
- strengthening democratic institutions; and
- promoting values of constructive critical thinking, innovation and responsibility.

In accordance with the *Law on Education* (Government of Uzbekistan, 1997a), both the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education are actively involved in social partnership with civil society organisations and private sector institutions, focusing on the further development of curricula and teacher training. This partnership gives adults the opportunity to gain recognised educational qualifications, thus enhancing their employability.

In **Austria**, recognition and validation are used to promote more comprehensive and efficient use of human capital in companies, to achieve higher productivity, and a to improve the general qualification level of the population. Recognition of competences allows the profiles of those seeking employment to be better matched to labour market demands.

In **France**, VAE is a key factor when it comes to recognising the experience gained through work. VAE gives greater visibility to acquired knowledge and skills and encourages businesses to explain the skills they expect. It confers validation in the form of collectively guaranteed certifications, emphasising skills that are useful in the labour market and thus helping to mark out career paths more clearly. Finally, it improves workers' employability and encourages each person to progress and continue learning throughout their life. Because it promotes progression, VAE is a tool for mobility. It is an essential guarantor of career security for those who change jobs, professions or trades.

In **Norway**, experience so far shows that validation is often geared towards obtaining a trade certificate, as many adults have worked in a trade for years without much schooling and with no certificate. Validation contributes to greater flexibility in working life, for example when changing jobs, and eases access to higher education. For the individual, validation and recognition of non-formal and informal competences can lead to improved standing in the job market (e.g. more interesting tasks, better wages), but also to improved social integration by facilitating access to the labour market for those previously excluded from it.

In **New Zealand**, RVA of non-formal and informal learning has a significant positive impact on both employees and organisations. Employees become more competent, confident, reflective, and analytical. They become better team members and have better communication skills. Employees who experience on-site work-relevant learning show higher motivation and improved overall productivity. Recognition of existing competencies may lead to an increased willingness among employees to take part in workplace training or learning. Recognition procedures may motivate individuals to look upon learning as both a lifelong and a life-wide opportunity, encouraging individuals to start new learning experiences.

In 2009, the **Brazilian** government created the National Network of Professional Certification and Training (basic and continuing) known as "RedeCERTIFIC". The creation of this network is a social

inclusion policy from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Employment, designed to promote recognition of basic knowledge and training throughout life and work.

In **Chile**, the *Framework of Labour Competences* (Government of Chile, 2008) has been used mainly for workplace-based training with a focus on assessment of existing skills, rather than for technical/vocational education (ILO, 2010). The recognition of experiential learning through the certification of labour competences was acknowledged as yielding good returns. This approach was used by companies and countries for the following purposes:

- (1) to identify the abilities, attitudes and knowledge required to make people employable and able to contribute to the productivity and competitiveness of companies;
- (2) to improve the quality and relevance of professional, vocational and labour training in response to demand;
- (3) to identify learning and capacities acquired by people in non-formal and informal learning environments;
- (4) to contribute to labour mobility between or within companies through the certification of workers' competences;
- (5) to support the evaluation of the impact of training policies;
- (6) to contribute to labour market transparency through an occupational language that would facilitate a meeting point between work supply and demand; and
- (7) to support management in aligning different human resource processes and systems.

In **Mexico**, the Secretariats of Education, Labour and Economy have worked together on issues such as:

- (1) workplace training, evaluation and certification of workers;
- (2) identification and definition of key sectors of the Mexican economy to emphasise in terms of human capital building; and
- (3) adjustment of educational curricula to productive sectors' needs, through the use of standards of competence defined by sector committees within the framework of the National Competence Standard System (NCSS).

Contributions to social inclusion, including reduction of poverty and empowerment of the marginalised in society

2.3

The **South African** government has identified the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as having the potential to redress the discrimination suffered by racial groups who had no or limited access to education and training opportunities under the apartheid regime. The government recognises that widespread availability of RPL can extend the reach of the formal education and training sector by providing a means by which individuals can access further learning and receive recognition for knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in non-formal and informal learning contexts.

In **Austria**, recognition of non-formal and informal learning can enhance the integration of marginalised groups such as migrants, elderly persons or the unemployed by giving them a "second chance". The process of recognition can influence people's awareness of their knowledge, skills and competences, thus

strengthening their self-esteem, enhancing their careers and raising their motivation for further education. In France, VAE is also a tool for social mobility, enabling those who have not had the opportunity or inclination to acquire a good school education to obtain a qualification that is recognised in the labour market.

In **Norway**, as validation of non-formal and informal learning becomes part of the Public Employment Services (PES) and an alternative pathway to formal qualification, it can help marginalised persons and groups to have their competences documented, thus affording access to both working life and further education. For immigrants and refugees, identifying and validating competences from prior education and/or work experience can speed up inclusion and integration into society and help prevent racism and discrimination. For senior workers, validation of non-formal and informal learning can contribute to enhancing their careers, both in content and duration. Senior workers often possess long-term work experience but lack formal qualifications. Getting a job better suited to an individual's situation may also confer health benefits. Young school dropouts can get back into education or into employment through validation combined with tailored training schemes.

In the **United States**, with the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) (Government of the United States of America, 1998), the Department of Education set up a fund for Adult Basic Education (ABE) services to encourage the development of pathways for low-skilled adults to increase their educational attainment and obtain higher-skilled jobs. The fund targets at-risk youth, undereducated and/or unemployed/underemployed adults, youth and adults with disabilities, and English language learners (ELL) (Dann-Messier, 2011).

In **Japan**, while respecting the voluntary efforts of business owners, the national and prefectural governments provide assistance to promote job training and vocational skills development via the *Human Resources Development Promotion Act* (MHLW, 1969). They also offer public job training targeting displaced workers, those seeking a career change and young people not yet in employment.

In **Myanmar**, in addition to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Border Affairs and the regional and state governments are taking responsibility for education and training for marginalised populations and individuals (including the low-skilled and those with low levels of education) through formal, non-formal and informal modes of learning.

In **Thailand**, underprivileged groups (ethnic minorities, children from poor families, prostitutes, children and youths in prison, people living in border areas or remote rural areas, and people with disabilities) are served with various programmes of non-formal and informal education. Thai citizens living abroad are also supported by the Thai government through distance-learning programmes of non-formal and informal education.

In **Pakistan**, certification and recognition help the newly literate and newly skilled to seek employment and social acceptability via self-employed trades.

OUTCOMES OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING PROGRAMMES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Box 2.1

- Learners become leaders of their community because they have increased confidence and better access to information.
- They become community educators and organisers, helping other people in need of education.
- They learn livelihood skills which enable them to earn an income. They learn to participate in community affairs.
- Parents become involved in the education of their children and acquire literacy themselves.
- Learners are able to negotiate with the government regarding their rights and claims to social services.
- Women become more empowered and active in the community. They have greater access to information related to child health and welfare.

In the **Philippines**, those gone through the A&E programme are likewise accepted for employment in jobs that require an Elementary/High School diploma. In TVET, there are four qualification levels in TESDA's Philippine TVET Qualifications Framework (PTQF) which correspond to level of responsibility and complexity of tasks. Box 2.1 provides the multiple outcomes of non-formal and informal learning programmes in the Philippines.

In **Chile**, the reform of the *Adult Education Programme* (2003–2009) was initiated in response to the need of many young people and adults to catch up with their school studies in special integrated adult education centres that have been in place since the mid-1990s. This initiative has had major achievements and a highly positive social impact. Feedback shows that the recognition of informal learning is a very powerful tool for promoting inclusion in a country where almost 50% of the adult population did not finish school and where there are many unemployed young people with very low levels of training.

3. The procedures of RVA: principles, methods and instruments

Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning entails comparison of the learning and experience of a learner, howsoever obtained, against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification, and the acceptance for purposes of qualification of that which meets the requirements. Measurement of learning takes place against specific learning outcomes for a specific qualification and may lead to the achievement of credits towards that qualification.

As highlighted in the *European Guidelines for Validating Non-formal and Informal Learning*, learning that takes place outside formal education and training institutions is not standardised and predictable. The outcomes of these learning processes are – frequently and typically – diverse and multidimensional. The methods and instruments used to identify, assess and attribute recognition need to be open to the character of non-formally and informally acquired learning outcomes (Cedefop, 2009).

Feedback from UNESCO Member States in this area demonstrates that countries across the world employ a range of different measures to validate and certify learning. In general, the process of RVA can be divided into four stages: (1) identification of learning outcomes; (2) learner's production of evidence of learning outcomes; (3) assessment of learning outcomes; and (4) certification.

3.1 Identification of learning outcomes

In **Portugal**, the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competency (RVCC) system, managed by the National Agency for Qualifications (ANQ), is used in the identification, documentation and certification of adults' competences. For the identification of learning outcomes, the ANQ has published a document which helps guidance counsellors to assess the applicant's skills, previous formal and informal learning and/or training experiences, as well as his/her needs and expectations.

In **New Zealand**, the identification of learning outcomes is carried out by extensive profiling. It entails carefully interviewing potential candidates to find out the qualifications, or parts of qualifications, that best reflect the understandings that they have; taking a holistic approach to ensure that the whole of a candidate's understandings are explored and expressed; valuing the insights that each learner brings; and providing expert facilitation to help draw out a candidate's learning and enable them to understand the level of learning outcomes they need to achieve. This process can take place at a distance or face-to-face, on an individual basis or via group work.

Production of evidence of learning outcomes 3.2

To document and “prove” acquired skills, **France** has chosen two methods. The main method is the declarative one, usually by written application in which the candidate describes the activities he or she has undertaken which relate to the desired diploma/degree. The candidate must clearly state and analyse the experience that these activities have enabled him or her to build up. All documents that can demonstrate and prove this acquired experience are attached to the application, such as work certificates, examples of professional achievements, assorted attestations, and so on. A less common method is to present a real or simulated situation in which the candidate demonstrates his or her acquired experience by performing professional tasks.

New instruments and tools, such as the portfolio of evidence

In **Mauritius**, informal and non-formal learning are presented in the form of a *portfolio of evidence*, where the RPL candidate provides evidence of past experience. The evidence may include, but is not limited to, formal statements of results; samples of work produced; performance appraisal reports; references from current or previous employers; job descriptions; details of relevant formal training, seminars, conferences and workshops attended; certificates of participation/achievement/award; letters of recommendation; video tapes, recordings and/or photographs of work activities; specific details of work and/or participation in projects; and written testimonials from managers or colleagues. It is the role of the RPL facilitator to make the candidate reflect on his/her past experience and to look for any type of evidence. The candidate also has the opportunity to write about his/her past experience.

In the **Seychelles**, a candidate wishing to participate in an RPL process will be required to produce a portfolio containing relevant documents, such as work and employment references, certificates, records of short courses, letters of appreciation for participating in relevant work and/or projects, individual or group photos at work, and other relevant documents. The content of the portfolio is assessed against learning outcomes and standards for a particular qualification. A process is then undertaken to award credits for those learning outcomes which have satisfactory evidence.

In **South Africa**, the form, quality and sources of evidence that leads to the attainment of credits depend on the particular qualification. Care is taken neither to require too much evidence nor to expect the candidate to completely cover the syllabus. Based on the evidence, candidates may choose the assessment methodologies they are most comfortable with.

In **Denmark**, individuals requesting a prior learning assessment must provide documentation of their competencies, such as:

- certificates from completed programmes or classes;
- employment contract (s);
- employer statement (s);
- a list of offices held within a trade organisation or other group;
- certificates from Folk High School, as well as statements from teachers and headmasters; and/or
- statements from leaders of civil society groups, including sports coaches.

3.3 The variety of assessment approaches in different learning environments

Combining traditional methods such as tests with other methods such as practical demonstrations

Many of the mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning are set within the formal system and/or aim at formal education and training qualifications. In **Austria**, assessment methods for recognition correspond to those used in the formal system. Written tests and oral exams are the most commonly used methods for external examinations; competences are usually assessed according to standards given in the formal system. The apprenticeship certification exam – also used in the case of an exceptional admission – consists of a theoretical (usually written) and a practical part where candidates have to furnish evidence of their practical know-how and job-related skills. A variety of portfolio approaches² is applied in the initiatives developed at adult learning institutions. In some cases the portfolio is combined with an assessment centre. The WBA is based on a combination of a portfolio approach and a three-day assessment: the so-called “certification workshop” where candidates demonstrate their professional competences and personal and social skills (Brandstetter and Luomi-Messerer 2010; Prokopp and Luomi-Messerer, 2010).

In **France**, in all cases, a candidate goes in front of a board of examiners for an interview. In general, candidates are instructed not merely to describe the work they have done but to present an analysis explaining how they have acquired the skills and knowledge, what they did to do so, where, in what context, by solving what problems and what results they obtained. By asking the candidate to adopt a more objective view, the board can better understand whether the acquired experience is closely dependent on the context in which it was obtained or whether it is transferable to other situations.

Formative assessment appears to be gaining in popularity

The assessment of prior learning in the non-formal and informal sectors can be summative, formative or both, depending on the aim and context of the programme. **Canada** provides an illustrative example of good practice in summative assessment with its focus on testing and practical examinations, rather than on the particular pathway through which the competences were acquired. However, formative assessment is becoming more popular, as it can be used not only to recognise learning outcomes but also to assess learning needs and to select learning materials and effective learning methods to achieve the expected outcomes.

² E.g. the competence portfolio for volunteers of a platform of Austrian Adult Education Associations, the *Ring österreichischer Bildungswerke* (Ring ÖBW; <http://msplhs15.bon.at/-admin87/ring/kompetenzentwicklung/> [accessed 20 March 2015]); the competence profile of KOMPAZ at the Adult Education Centre Linz [*Kompetenzanerkennungszentrum Volkshochschule Linz*]; the competence balance [*Kompetenzenbilanz*] of the Tyrol Centre of the Future, or a portfolio for family competences. For more information see Brandstetter and Luomi-Messerer, 2010 and Prokopp, 2011.

Some countries tend to use portfolio-based validation

Closely associated with formative assessment, some countries have used the portfolio-based approach. In French-speaking **Belgium**, for example, a candidate for validation needs to present a validation file which has two components. The first describes the training background of the applicant (titles, diploma, etc.) as well as his/her working experience. The second should describe at least four activities relevant to the application.

In **Norway**, the following methods are widely used:

- Dialogue-based method:
 - discussions between an assessor and the learner (one-to-one)
 - computerised or manual tool can be used
 - can be combined with portfolio assessment, self-assessment and testing
- Portfolio assessment:
 - based on written documentation, photos etc.
 - discussion after admission to tailor the course to the individual according to his/her knowledge and skills

A combination of interviews and practice

In many countries, for vocational subjects, a combination of interviews and practice is used, both to chart the learner's background, training, work experience, language skills and objectives, and to see his/her skills in practice. In this way both the theoretical and the practical side of the trade is assessed. Vocational "testing" provides adults with every opportunity to demonstrate what they can actually do in their own fields.

Certification 3.4

In some countries, government or para-governmental agencies assess and certify the outcomes of non-formal learning.

In **Thailand**, the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education has developed a Non-formal Education (NFE) Equivalency Programme through the use of the NFE Basic Curriculum (ONIE, 2008), which features the components of learning skills, fundamental knowledge, occupational skills, skills for living, social development, and quality of life development activities (Box 3.1). Assessment and evaluation of learning involve obtaining information and data which indicate learners' development, progress, successes and achievements.

Box 3.1

SOME EXAMPLES OF ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION VIA THE NFE EQUIVALENCY PROGRAMME IN THAILAND

Educational establishments formulate regulations and guidelines to be followed by all personnel concerned.

- Learning assessment is undertaken by subject, along with activities to identify learners' progress in different domains, such as knowledge, skills, morals, values, etc. Learners' performance in self-development and development of family, community and society is also evaluated.
- Assessment of learner's morals involves an evaluation of learners' activities in terms of self-development, career development, living happily with others, quality of life development, etc.
- All NFE learners are required to take the National NFE Quality Assessment Test in the final semester of each educational level. This helps improve the quality of NFE provision.

Educational establishments undertake equivalency transfer of educational results, knowledge and experiences based on the guidelines and criteria formulated by the Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE), Ministry of Education.

In **Pakistan**, the learning outcomes of non-formal school learners are examined by the Punjab Examination Commission in Class V. The Rules of Business 2011 have authorised the Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education Department to certify graduates of the non-formal school system. The department is currently trying to develop standards and benchmarks, learning from international best practice and expertise.

In **Uzbekistan**, the State Test Centre (independent state agency under the Cabinet of Ministers) is the principal organisation for assessment of learners' competences (both formal and non-formal), and for monitoring the quality of formal and non-formal educational programmes. The State Test Centre is also responsible for licensing and certification of institutions in the field of non-formal education.

In **Chile**, according to the procedures set forth in the Decree No. 2272 (Government of Chile, 2007), a person who applies for recognition of learning acquired outside the formal system must attend the office of provincial education and request to register for an exam known as "validation studies". Subsequently, the provincial education office designates an educational establishment recognised by the Ministry of Education which is to develop, manage and mark tailor-made tests for the person concerned, taking into account the objectives and content of the relevant programme of study. After marking the examinations and setting the scores, a certificate is granted under the Acts of Examination and Promotion.

In some countries, learning outcomes are socially certified by a third-party agency

In **Japan**, knowledge and skills gained informally are socially certified either through the acquisition of qualifications/credentials or through the acquisition of a certificate issued by a third-party agency. In addition, a system of proficiency tests and assessment standards for vocational skills serves as a mechanism to measure workers' vocational knowledge and skills.

Self-assessment implemented by the participants

In **New Zealand**, the non-formal education system has adopted a self-assessment approach implemented by participants themselves. Participants evaluate the results of their current learning process and its

effectiveness (the quality of the training organisation and its correspondence to the participant's expectations). Examinations and tests no longer take place; neither are methods of encouragement used, although mutual help and teamwork are encouraged. At the end of the training course, all participants are given the same "Certificate of participation".

New practices in recording, documenting and certifying credits/competences 3.5

Some countries have developed comprehensive systems to record, document and certify competences acquired informally. These systems may also have links with related tools and measures such as credit transfer.

In the **Republic of Korea**, the Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS) is relevant for a person who wishes to acquire a bachelor or associate degree by having any formally acquired learning outcomes recognised as credits. In addition, through the Accounts for Lifelong Learning, every citizen is eligible to plan RVA for Human Resources Development in communities and in companies. The Korean Qualifications Framework (KQF; Government of the Republic of Korea, 2011) will make it possible to design further pathways (vocational to academic; community college to university college; non-formal learning outcomes to qualifications; etc.).

France operates a similar system with a National Repertory of Vocational Certificates (*Répertoire National de la Certification Professionnelle*; RNCP). In **Denmark**, a skills portfolio (*My Competence Portfolio*)³ has been developed which serves as a documentation tool for anyone wishing to maintain an overview of the things they have learned and the skills they possess, particularly if they are involved in an adult or continuing education programme and request an individual competency evaluation from their educational institution. Companies interested in promoting prior learning assessments and employee skills development can also use the portfolio.

In **Germany**, the Profil-PASS has been developed for the recording and certification of learning outcomes. The system comprises the Profil-PASS tool and a guidance concept geared to it. The Profil-PASS is now being used across Germany as a means of providing evidence of acquired skills, helping to promote personal educational prospects, and drawing public attention to informal learning.

Some countries have taken a personal approach to recording and documentation. For example, in **Norway**, the voluntary sector has developed the Personal Competence Document (PCD) tool, a system for mapping and documenting competencies based on self-evaluation. **Japan** employs a job card system which resembles a CV and is used to list non-formal and informal learning in the employment sector. In **Germany**, the Employer's Reference, with its foundation in law, is an important tool for strengthening mobility in working life and must be issued by the company at the employee's request. One of the tools **Portugal** uses is biographical, narrative-based assessment that allows individuals to present their experiences less formally than in the usual documentation.

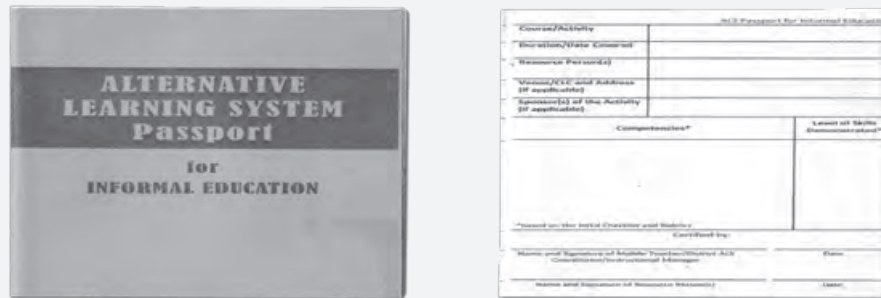
The **Philippines** has developed the Alternative Learning System Passport for Informal Education (Figure 3.1). With the use of this passport, learning competencies acquired are documented and validated for accreditation/equivalency in employment, higher learning, or the social sphere. For any course of informal education, the following procedures are observed:

³ For an idea of the structure (in Danish or English), see <https://minkompetencemappe.dk/> [accessed 10 March 2015].

- each learner is given a passport;
- each course attended is recorded and skills acquired are evaluated/measured and certified by a credible resource person; and
- after the course, a passport may be presented to institutions, organisations or groups for accreditation/equivalency in employment, higher learning, etc.

Figure 3.1 

THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING SYSTEM PASSPORT FOR INFORMAL EDUCATION IN THE PHILIPPINES



3.6 Credit transfer

In addition to accumulation, credit transfer has been initiated in some countries, and is becoming one of the focal points of competence-based recognition. The Academic Credit Bank System developed in the **Republic of Korea** helps candidates work towards bachelor or associate university degrees. **Thailand** encourages transfers of credit between the formal, non-formal and informal systems in order to make it easier to recognise the vast amount of informal learning that takes place in the country.

In **Germany**, a credit point system to shorten study periods is being developed. Appropriate credit procedures are currently being piloted as part of the federal government's initiative entitled "Credit for vocational competences towards higher education study programmes" (*Anrechnung beruflicher Kompetenzen auf Hochschulstudiengänge*; ANKOM), which facilitates the recognition in higher education of "relevant competences acquired elsewhere in previous study". This opens admission to universities for those who have undergone training as a master craftsman, technician, business administrator or similar. In South Africa, recent developments that support credit accumulation and transfer include the registration of generic and professional qualifications on the NQF, the recognition of professional bodies and the registration of professional designations.

Finally, it needs to be pointed out that in many countries, such as **Kyrgyzstan**, **Myanmar**, **Uzbekistan**, **Peru** and **Honduras**, informally acquired competences are not yet recorded, documented or certified. The feedback from **Bosnia** and **Herzegovina** indicates that the country must urgently develop its own system for the recognition of different learning modes and venues, opening a pathway to qualifications and certification. A project on adult education (under the European Pre-Accession Assistance programme EU-IPA 2009) which started in 2011 is intended to develop a system for the recognition and integration of all learning.

4. Reference points for RVA: standards, qualifications and national qualifications frameworks

As indicated in the previous chapter, the recognition of learning outcomes requires clearly defined standards which in most cases correspond to qualifications. Qualifications, such as degrees, diplomas, and certificates, signify that the bearer possesses some knowledge or competencies, or that he/she has successfully completed a particular learning programme (ILO, 2010). All countries have developed or adopted some kind of qualifications system as part of their education and training system. In recent years, it has become widely accepted that there is a conducive link between qualifications systems and lifelong learning. Reformers of qualifications systems have advocated the establishment of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs). OECD synthesises some of the policy aims of reforming qualifications systems (OECD, 2007), striving to:

- increase flexibility and responsiveness;
- motivate young people to learn;
- link education and work;
- facilitate open access to qualifications;
- diversify assessment processes;
- make qualifications progressive;
- make the system transparent;
- review funding and increase efficiency; and
- manage the system more effectively.

It is important to point out that, whilst qualifications systems used to be associated exclusively with formal education, they are now considered an important mechanism for recognising the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. This has necessitated the enrichment and reform of many qualifications systems the world over.

Feedback from UNESCO Member States shows that qualifications, as reference points, have been used in the following three ways:

- to recognise an individual's learning outcomes according to fixed standards;
- to relate an individual's learning outcomes to skills required and occupational standards set in particular industrial or economic sectors or vocational qualifications; and/or
- to organise a systematic framework that supports the use of learning outcomes, standard setting, curricula and assessment.

4.1 Recognition according to fixed standards or qualifications in education and training systems

Many countries have chosen national diplomas and existing certifications as references. In **Bhutan** numerous activities are undertaken for supporting lifelong learning such as community learning centres, resource centers, continuing and distance education. There is however no means to validate the learning outcomes from these activities.

In **Norway**, adults without prior primary and secondary education have the individual right to have their prior learning outcomes assessed, related to national curricula at relevant levels of education and training (Box 4.1). Those with more than five years of work experience may obtain a certification by having their proof of learning outcomes documented. Enrolment in higher education is also possible, based on the proof of learning experiences equivalent to formal entry requirements.

Box 4.1

THE NORWEGIAN SYSTEM FOR VALIDATING NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING AT ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Primary education: Adults who are entitled to primary education have a statutory right to have their prior learning validated. Their competence is assessed against national curricula and approved subjects are certified in their final primary education diploma.

Lower and upper secondary education: Adults who are entitled to lower and upper secondary education also have a statutory right to have their prior learning validated. This applies both to adults wishing to enter lower and upper secondary education and to those who want to have their competence certified. In the validation process, the candidates' competence is assessed against national curricula. Afterwards, candidates may obtain a diploma or competence certificate stating which topics from the curriculum have been approved.

Tertiary vocational education: Normally, enrolment in tertiary vocational education is based on upper secondary education. However, it is possible to apply for enrolment without an upper secondary diploma if the candidate can prove equivalent non-formal or informal competence from elsewhere.

Higher education: Adults (25 or above) without a general college and university admissions certification can apply for enrolment to a specific study programme on the basis of documented prior learning. Documentation of informal and non-formal learning may also provide a basis for exemption from certain modules in the programme.

Documentation of prior learning in working life: The Basic Agreement for 2009–2013 between the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO) and the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) emphasises the importance of making prior learning visible, stating: "It is important that the enterprise has a system for documenting the individual's experience, courses and practice related to the employment relationship" (NHO & LO, 2009).

In **Denmark**, *Anerkendelse af realkompetence(r)* or “Recognition of Prior Learning” (RPL) has a long tradition. The public sector started to work on policies relevant to RPL in 1997 (adult vocational training programmes) and expanded these in 2001 (adult education and continuing training). The key policy document *Recognition of Prior Learning within the education system* was published in November 2004 (UVM, 2004).

Chile has an institution-based, traditional model for qualifications whereby educational providers have total autonomy over the qualifications they issue. There are 440 higher education and training centres in the country which together issue around 9,000 titles and grades, ranging from technician to doctor.

Recognition according to skills and occupational standards in economic sectors or vocational qualifications

4.2


There is a growing tendency in developing countries and emerging economies to set up vocational qualifications systems or frameworks for the vocational education and training sector. In **Burkina Faso**, where the informal sector is the largest training facility, a new paradigm for skills recognition and training is being developed. A shift is taking place away from the old diploma-oriented system towards a national qualifications framework which features skills profiles and learning outcomes defined in terms of foreseen jobs, and which is partner-driven and easily accessible to all. In **Ghana**, the proposed Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework (TVETQF; Government of Ghana, 2012) allows for recognition of prior learning and of learning outcomes from workplaces, the informal sector and traditional apprenticeships. The TVETQF also allows transferability and progression to the highest levels. Likewise in **The Gambia**, the development of key skills is crucial to the eradication of poverty. The *Gambia Skills Qualifications Framework* (GSQF; NTA Gambia 2006) led by the National Training Authority is responsible for developing skills standards in the sectors that are most important to the economy.

The **Mauritius** Qualifications Authority, which is the regulatory body for the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector, introduced the concept of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) “to recognize and validate competencies for purposes of certification obtained outside the formal education and training systems” (Government of Mauritius, 2001). The system aims to bring people back into the training system to upgrade and/or sustain the skills they have already acquired through previous work and/or life experience.

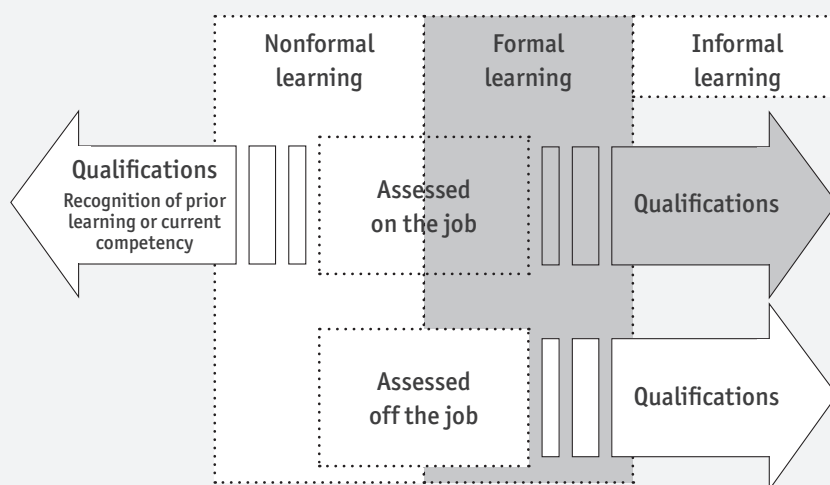
In the **Philippines**, the Department of Education is still in the process of developing a national qualifications framework. However, the Philippine TVET Qualifications Framework (PTQF) is already up and running, and provides a vertical progression pathway by which learners can acquire higher level qualifications by undergoing an appropriate assessment. Any individual who possesses the required competencies for a particular level can apply for assessment and be certified at that level. Once the individual has acquired further experience and a higher level of competence through formal, informal or non-formal learning, he/she can apply for assessment at a higher level.

In French-speaking **Belgium**, all vocational and professional training diplomas are developed in partnership with professional bodies and contain the following: (1) a vocational reference framework detailing the title of the diploma, the field of activity and a description of the activities undertaken; and (2) a certification reference framework detailing the competencies the candidate should obtain and what can be required of candidates during examinations.

The **New Zealand** qualifications system integrates formal, non-formal and informal learning. Figure 4.1 shows the pathways by which learning in the workplace can occur and be assessed.

Figure 4.1 

PATHWAYS FOR WORKPLACE-RELATED LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT



Source: Vaughan and Cameron, 2009

In **Mexico**, the National Competence Standard System (NCSS), created by the National Council for Standardization and Certification of Labour Competence (CONOCER), is the strategic umbrella under which recognition and accreditation practices are organised, regulated and implemented. The recognition practices within NCSS are agreed by employers, workers, educators and government. The Mexican model places greater emphasis on standards of competence than on qualifications. Standards are defined according to the needs specified by the productive sectors, thus ensuring that trainees learn relevant skills and facilitating the transfer from training to work. This approach to qualifications was successful because it created institutions for monitoring skills recognition and was established with the support and involvement of employers' associations and major trade unions (see Box 4.2).

Box 4.2

NATIONAL COMPETENCE STANDARD SYSTEMS AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS: THE EXAMPLE OF MEXICO

Mexico's Labour Competence Standardization and Certification System was initially launched in 1995 by CONOCER within the framework of the Technical Education and Training Modernization Project (*Proyecto de Modernización de la Educación Técnica y la Capacitación*; PMETYC; SEP-STPS-CONOCER, 2000) and with the support and involvement of employers' associations and major trade unions, as well as the World Bank.

In 2008, the transformational reform initiative "*Un nuevo CONOCER para Mexico*" (A New CONOCER for Mexico) was launched with the objective of promoting, coordinating and regulating the NCSS and turning it into a critical instrument for improving Mexico's competitiveness, educational development and social progress.

The reform of CONOCER and of the NCSS includes three major components:

1. empowerment of sector competence committees for the definition of the Mexican human capital agenda for competitiveness;

2. construction of new mechanisms to ensure knowledge transfer for all workers and employers in Mexico, to improve education, and to link education and training closer to the world of work; and
3. redesign of the assessment and certification structure.



A new visionary agreement has been reached between government, employers, workers and the educational sector to promote the connection between the qualifications offered by educational institutions and the competences required by the labour market, and to support the acquisition of labour market competences by teachers and students in upper medium and technological education.

IADB's financial support to CONOCER accounts for approximately 15 % of the institution's total budget. The funding has supported competence standards development in twelve sectors of the Mexican economy, including automobiles, construction, tourism, IT, logistics, mining, oil and gas production, telecommunications, power and electricity, and food processing.

Involvement of stakeholders

The tripartite board of CONOCER, consisting of main line ministries in education, labour and the economy, representatives of three major employers' confederations, and the general secretaries of the three major trade union confederations in the country, assures productive social dialogue in working towards new structures for qualification frameworks in Mexico.

Towards a systematic framework that supports the use of learning outcomes, standard setting, curricula and assessment (National Qualifications Framework)

4.3

In many countries, the National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) are seen as important instruments to systematise standards of learning outcomes, qualifications and certification. It is important to point out that NQFs emphasise the *results* of learning rather than focusing on *inputs* such as duration of study. Learning outcomes are usually specified in three categories: knowledge, skills and competences (European Communities, 2008). NQF developments have led to greater awareness of the relevance of learning outcomes and a more transparent system of validation that enables people to access further opportunities to develop new, broader and more complex competences. NQFs are structured both horizontally (in order to cover all qualifications awarded in a system) and vertically (by levels of qualification).

In Europe, the Council Resolution of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning (CoEU, 2002) invited the Commission, in close cooperation with the Council and EU Member States, to develop a framework for the recognition of qualifications for education and training, building on the achievements of the Bologna process⁴ and promoting similar action in the area of vocational training.

In 2008, the European Parliament and the Council issued a recommendation (European Parliament and CoEU, 2009) on the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF). This was to be a common European reference framework which would link countries' qualifications

⁴ Launched in 1999 by the Ministers of Education and university leaders of 29 countries, the Bologna Process created the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), which ensures more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. It has since expanded to include 46 countries.

systems together and serve as a translation device to make qualifications more comprehensible across different countries and systems.⁵ The year 2010 was set as the recommended target date for countries to relate their national qualifications systems to the EQF. Since 2012, all European countries have been obliged to ensure that individual qualification certificates bear a reference to the appropriate EQF level.

The EQF has brought different countries' national qualifications systems and frameworks together around a common European reference of eight levels. The levels span the full scale of qualifications, from basic (Level 1, for example school leaving certificate) to advanced (Level 8, for example doctorate). As an instrument for the promotion of lifelong learning, the EQF encompasses all levels of qualifications acquired in general, vocational and academic education and training, both initial and continuing.

Most western European countries have decided to develop National Qualifications Frameworks which correspond to the EQF. For example, **Norway** is working on developing an NQF which is directly related to two European processes: the EQF process and the Bologna process. All Norwegian public exams and degrees were included in the NQF by 31 December 2012. **Germany** has established a joint Federal Government/Federal States Coordination Group (*Bund-Länder-Koordinierungsgruppe*; B-L-KG), which was tasked with managing the process of drawing up a proposal for a German Qualifications Framework (*Deutscher Qualifikationsrahmen*; DQR).

The development of NQFs has also spread to Eastern European countries. In the **Czech Republic**, Sector Councils (SC) were established to support the development of both an NQF and a National Occupations System (NSP). In **Hungary**, the development of an NQF which corresponds to the EQF system (*Országos képesítési keretrendszer*; OKKR) is under way, although the practice of acquiring recognised qualifications through non-formal or informal learning is still limited. In **Latvia**, the NQF facilitates more flexible learning pathways for individuals across general, vocational and higher education. Eight levels of the NQF are defined using descriptors of knowledge, skills and competence. The Latvian NQF covers all levels of qualifications and promotes the validation of learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning. It supports mobility and encourages lifelong learning.

In **Lithuania**, a draft model of an NQF was developed in 2005–2008 on the basis of systems of vocational education and training (VET) and higher education levels approved both in Lithuania itself and in the EQF. In **Poland**, an NQF is being developed under the aegis of the project “Elaboration of terms of reference for the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Register for lifelong learning” (*“Opracowanie założeń merytorycznych i instytucjonalnych wdrażania Krajowych Ram Kwalifikacji oraz Krajowego Rejestru Kwalifikacji dla uczenia się przez całe życie”*). The government recognises that a flexible, adaptable NQF model is crucial for the further growth of the education and labour market in Poland as well as in the European context. In **Slovakia**, the draft for an NQF (Government of Slovakia, 2011) and its connection to the EQF for lifelong learning was submitted to the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic in March 2011. This document gives a proposal for the structure, number of levels and level descriptors of the Slovakian NQF, as well as an interface for connection to the EQF.

Globally, feedback from UNESCO Member States as well as research outcomes show that the design and progress of NQFs vary from country to country, and that even where countries do have a framework, they face a discrepancy between policy and practice.

In Africa, UIL's recent Study on RVA (Walter et al., 2014) in some countries shows that NQFs play a facilitating role in making recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning both visible

⁵ The official website of the European Union has a page on the European Qualifications Framework; see http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/internal_market/living_and_working_in_the_internal_market/c11104_en.htm [accessed 12 March 2015].

and valued. The common elements of NQFs through which this is achieved include an outcomes-based approach, levels and level descriptors, and a means of calculating credit values for learning such as notional hours or credit hours. By removing institutional considerations from the definition of levels, NQFs give a higher profile and equal value to learning which takes place outside formal education and training institutions. In **Botswana**, for example, the government is collaborating with other stakeholders to establish the Botswana National Credit and Qualifications Framework (BNCQF), which endorses the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and is premised on shared understandings (Botswana Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2010). Stakeholders are involved in all aspects of implementing quality assurance for non-formal and informal learning.

UIL's recent study on *Key Issues and Policy Considerations in Promoting Lifelong Learning in Selected African Countries* (Walters et al., 2014) also shows that **Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda** and **Tanzania** have in recent years begun to develop some kind of National Qualifications Framework. In most cases, however, the nascent NQFs are limited to certain sectors within education and training. From the perspective of lifelong learning, it would be desirable to develop a more inclusive NQF which would provide linkages between formal, non-formal and informal learning; between general and vocational education and training; and between workplace learning and formal educational institutions.

In Asia, it is encouraging to note that some countries are in the process of developing an NQF. For example, **Kyrgyzstan** started to develop an NQF in 2006 with support from the European Training Foundation; the pilot sector selected was tourism. A proposal to develop an NQF was included in the National Education Development Strategy for 2010–2020 (Government of Kyrgyzstan, 2012). **Pakistan** is also in the process of establishing an NQF for non-formal and community-based education. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) in the **Philippines** is preparing the Philippine National Qualifications Framework (PNQF), which has been approved in principle by the National Coordinating Council for Education (NCCE). Its adoption in the country's educational system is now a priority of the current administration.

However, many other countries still lack a comprehensive NQF. In **Uzbekistan**, although National Qualifications were adopted on the basis of the *Law on Education* (Government of Uzbekistan, 1997a) and *National Programme for Personnel Training* (NPPT; Government of Uzbekistan, 1997b), these qualifications only concern in-service training of professional and teaching staff. In **Japan** and **Myanmar** there is no NQF in place to systematise different learning venues, qualifications and certification, although it is indicated that the Japanese Cabinet Office is deliberating a model of "career ranks" as a tool to link learning outcomes and vocational qualifications.

Finally, it needs to be pointed out that, strictly speaking, the establishment of an NQF is one thing, but relating the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning to qualifications is another. Strategies for the integration of non-formal and informal learning into an NQF remain a crucial issue and involve laborious efforts. For example, in **Austria**, the concept of the NQF places high importance on integrating non-formal and informal learning, but strategies for such integration have yet to be developed. By referencing its NQF to the EQF, **Denmark** is allowing users to obtain a comprehensive view of all publicly recognised qualifications along with their learning outcomes and pathways. This facilitates mutual recognition between Danish and foreign qualifications. In **Germany**, too, the process of aligning qualifications across the education and training system involves working on criteria by which non-formal and informal learning can be connected to the NQF. Two working groups have been set up to work on this issue.

5. The stakeholders of the recognition programmes and their roles

With the current emphasis on learning outcomes, the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in recognition processes are crucial. Recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning cannot be successful unless all stakeholders acknowledge their respective roles.

5.1 Learners, in particular those from marginalised backgrounds

In the organisational context, it is up to individuals to be aware of the importance of self-investment in learning, to be able to recognise and describe learning outcomes, and to build up a learning biography or portfolio (Duvekot et al., 2007). This process should be supported by information, advice and guidance.

In **Japan**, for example, a system of high school equivalency examinations exists to help people who have learned mostly through informal or non-formal learning. This system allows people who have not graduated from high school the opportunity to learn at a higher education institution such as a university. In **Myanmar**, any individuals, whether young or old, can learn about their field of interest formally, non-formally or informally. A number of opportunities for learning have been created by both the private and public sectors. For example, under the human resource development programme, various courses are being offered in the higher education sector.

In the **Philippines**, learners on the Non-formal Education/Informal Education (NFE/InfEd) programme are mostly illiterate school leavers from elementary and secondary schools. They come from marginalised and disadvantaged communities such as impoverished areas, penal and rehabilitation institutions, remote and hard-to-reach areas, areas of armed conflict, communities of indigenous peoples (IP), etc. Such people represent 45 % of the Philippine population or 40 million people (Philippine Census; NSO, 2008). Some Alternative Learning System (ALS) clients are school-aged (6–15 years old) but most are older. They are generally willing to participate in the programmes and consider ALS a “second chance” at education.

Users who request RVA to re-enter the basic education system in **Chile** are people who have not participated in regular studies. They have studied outside the school system or in educational establishments that are not recognised by the state. This service is also requested by people from neighbouring countries, or people who cannot provide evidence of their certification because they left their home countries without the relevant documents. A support system enables these people to take an examination to certify their learning. Educational establishments provide them with an agenda detailing the content to be examined and administer the tests. There are separate exams and programmes for children, youth and adults.

In **Slovenia**, the leading beneficiaries of the Phare Mocca programme (MSZS, 2000) are the unemployed, particularly those who left school early, as well as elderly unemployed persons or the long-term unemployed.

Namibia has introduced a national VET Levy (NTA, 2014) which aims to motivate employers to fund the training and development of their employees, either directly or indirectly. RPL will form part of this initiative, and people learning informally and non-formally will also benefit. Although learning may be informal or non-formal, assessment will be rigorous, structured, and perhaps formal.

In the **Seychelles**, a candidate wishing to participate in an RPL process will be required to produce a portfolio containing relevant documents such as work and employment references, certificates, records of short courses, letters of appreciation for participating in relevant work and projects, individual or group photos at work, and other relevant items of evidence. The content of the portfolio is assessed against learning outcomes and standards for a particular qualification. A process is then undertaken to award credits for those learning outcomes which are supported by satisfactory evidence. Because the Seychelles is a small country, evidence for possible credit awards can also be obtained by visiting the candidate at work on site as needed.

In **Denmark**, documentation of competences for low-skilled workers is free. A skills portfolio⁶ was developed in 2010 and now serves as a documentation tool for anyone wishing to maintain an overview of the things they have learned and the skills they possess, particularly if they are involved in an adult or continuing education programme and request an individual competency evaluation from their educational institution.

Government and governmental agencies 5.2

As far as the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes is concerned, the macro-level policies of governments and the meso-level policies of governmental agencies detail their responsibilities for creating favourable conditions for lifelong learning through laws and regulations (Duvekot et al., 2007).

In **South Africa**, the government is responsible for creating the legislative and policy environment and providing funding. In **Canada**, the government plays no direct role in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, since the provinces are autonomous. In 2001 the **Danish** Ministry of Education created a working group with representatives from social partners, educational providers, unions and associations to discuss potential new initiatives to boost this field.

In future, the **Republic of Korea** plans to use its recognition system to bring coherence to the many scattered non-formal education programmes, with a view to turning society into a field of learning. There are already trends towards an increase in public libraries, and existing facilities have been renovated and expanded by automating routine services.

In the **Netherlands**, the government is in charge of: (1) preparation of tests with personal learning funds, also usable for the Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL); (2) preparation of a new tax law system under which using APL methods will be tax-deductible; and (3) preparation of a new programme for subsidising the up-skilling of the labour force via the validation of non-formal learning.

The model in **Chile** involves equal participation by central government, enterprises and workers, with shared funding. Public institutions are responsible for supervision.

⁶ See footnote 3 in chapter 3.

In Francophone **Belgium**, the aim of assessment is to establish credibility among all stakeholders in the process. In order for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning to be effective, one of the first challenges is to build confidence in the evaluation process among training organisations and educational institutions, employers, professional organisations, and social partners.

In **Portugal**, the national system of Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competency (*Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências*; RVCC) ensures the coordination of the New Opportunities Centres network. Efforts are made to maintain and/or increase the quality levels required of the Centres by issuing procedure regulations, documents and training on methods and tools, and by monitoring the Centres' activities. The Centres' staff are autonomous, but the National Agency for Qualifications (*Agencia Nacional para a Qualificação*, ANQ) regulates the development of mechanisms for recognition, illustrating the importance of stakeholder involvement.

To ensure the appropriate operation of the National Competence Standard System (*Sistema Nacional de Competencias*, SNC) in **Mexico**, CONOCER takes care of some key functions such as registration and assistance of lead bodies (sectorial committees), registration of new standards of competence developed by these committees, accreditation of awarding bodies (certification and evaluation entities), issuing of labour competence certificates, and technical assistance and advice to train personnel.

The recognition system in the **Czech Republic** has a clear application procedure with regard to qualifications. The condition for taking an examination is to apply for it using the form published by the Ministry of Education in a manner allowing remote access, and to pay a specified fee. Applicants must send the application form to any person included in the National Register of Qualifications and authorised to award the qualification concerned. Assessment standards are derived from qualification standards and are approved, amended, or repealed by the Ministry of Education. The Training Institute, in cooperation with the Board, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the relevant authorising body, prepares the draft assessment standard or its amendment and submits it to the Ministry for approval. In doing so, the Institute cooperates with professional chambers, special interest and occupational associations, organisations of employers, professional societies, associations of legal entities carrying out activities in schools included in the Register of Schools and School Facilities, and representatives of higher education institutions. The approval, amendment and repeal of assessment standards are published in the Institute's Journal. The Institute also publishes assessment standards by including them in the National Register of Qualifications.

Accredited programmes in **Slovakia** are intended for anyone who wants to gain further professional knowledge and competences in order to enhance his/her employability and/or personal development. The Information System of Further Education (ISFE) was created to support further education. It is an integrated information system on accredited courses and educational providers which gives information to citizens about the courses on offer and their labour market relevance, as well as practical information on time and venue. The ISFE is a necessary supplement to the informal education system, providing information to all who need it. It introduces a process for quality auditing of programmes and institutions of informal education. It also contains a register of all accredited programmes and qualifications. Through this system, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports provides institutions with the information they need and controls the register of all accredited programmes.

Education and training institutions and learning opportunity providers 5.3

The education and training system must be in a position to match learning programmes to real learning needs, to offer learning made-to-measure, to recognise and validate learning outcomes, and to facilitate lifelong learning strategies based on the linkages of RVA and NQFs.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, the centres that provide non-formal education usually use existing programmes of adult education. These centres provide not only theoretical knowledge, but also life skills and poverty reduction skills. Adults and youth who need additional or secondary education can also obtain it at the evening classes that are supported by the Ministry of Education and Science. These schools play a bridging role between different levels of education. In **Uzbekistan**, centres for non-formal education (licensed by the State Testing Centre, DTM) provide recognised non-formal education programmes to support youth, adults and unemployed people.

In the **Netherlands**, social partners are involved in a discussion about the formulation of an individual right to an Certificate of Experience (*Ervaringscertificaat*; EVC) on a sectorial level. All schools of secondary vocational education are obliged to produce a business plan on the validation of non-formal learning in the coming years. Intake assessment (concerning APL) is becoming common practice in higher education.

Facilitators/teachers of non-formal education and referees/assessors 5.4

The quality of recognition depends on the capability of guides, assessors and evaluators to set up and maintain sufficiently inclusive recognition practices. It also requires all stakeholders to have trust in the outcomes.

In **Portugal**, the RVA process involves qualified professionals from New Opportunities Centre staff, such as Entrance and Guidance Counsellors, RVC Counsellors and Trainers. Validation and certification of training involve RVC Counsellors and Trainers as well as accredited External Referees.

In **Ghana**, facilitators for adult and non-formal learning are nominated by their communities and trained for a period of 12 days. During the training, which follows a “cascade” approach, they are equipped with the necessary skills to use a “checklist”: a form of continuous assessment to trace the learning development (achievement) of each learner (participant) over the 21-month period of about 504 learning hours. At the end of the period, samples of participants are assessed and documented and each participant is given a certificate of participation.

In **Canada**, evaluators are acknowledged to be the most important part in the recognition system.

In **Thailand**, NFE facilitators/teachers use the programmes to support NFE learners by providing them with easy access to educational services through the utilisation of information technology networks.

5.5 Trade unions, social partners and non-governmental organisations

Trade unions and other workers' associations view the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes as offering their members the possibility to achieve a particular level of qualification and thus to claim the associated benefits. Civil society, according to Ruud Duvekot et al. (2007), also plays a crucial role in recognition of learning because is responsible for activating citizenship, promoting transparency of learning outcomes and linking these outcomes with other perspectives such as qualifications and careers.

In **South Africa**, RPL is implemented in a variety of contexts, ranging from Further Education and Training (FET), General Education and Training (GET) and higher education to Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and workplace-based training. Employers and trade unions play an important role as active participants in the structures of the NQF and sector education and training authorities. Direct input is made regarding legislation, policies and practices for RVA. Employers have also recently provided some funding for the RVA process, particularly with regard to RPL for their own workers.

In **Portugal**, social partners such as employers and trade unions are very important for the implementation of the RVA system. As members of the Sectoral Councils for Qualification (CSQ), they are deeply involved in updating and developing the National Catalogue of Qualifications (CNQ).

Workers' organisations in **Chile** view the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes as an opportunity to become involved in defining new employment profiles.

In the **Philippines**, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which conduct recognition/certification of learning outcomes provide livelihood projects, microfinance and leadership training.

In **Armenia**, according to the "Concept Paper of Non Formal Education of RA" (Government of Armenia, 2006), non-formal and informal education programmes are foreseen for vulnerable groups and individuals. Mechanisms for further support of such groups have yet to be regulated. Participation is voluntary, and participants decide themselves which part of the process they would like to participate in. NGOs are making use of recognition programmes, sometimes based on analysis of the European experience.

5.6 Private sectors

As the arena where individuals may obtain learning outcomes, private sector organisations need to build up competence management systems, facilitate employees' self-investment in learning, articulate the competences they require, and design lifelong learning strategies as part of their Human Resource Management.

In the **Netherlands**, the intermediary sector is working on a European Social Fund (ESF) project aiming to build up an infrastructure for non-traditional learners and their lobby organisations to help them enter employment. Labour agencies are also involved.

The general public 5.7

Recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning are promoted by the general public through various means.

In **Thailand**, the general public supports NFE learners by providing them with easy access to educational service through the utilisation of information technology networks, educational television and radio broadcasting stations, community radio, educational science centres, public libraries, sub-district NFE centres, community leaning centres and other educational resources.

In **Norway**, the validation system is based on shared principles across all sectors, including the principle that the validation process should be voluntary and beneficial to the individual. The opportunities, rights and benefits conferred by the validation process are promoted by various stakeholders both locally and nationally. Vox, the Norwegian agency for lifelong learning (affiliated to the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research), annually publishes statistics on validation practice in *The Vox Mirror*. A large number of people take the opportunity to have their skills validated in connection with upper secondary education. Vox estimates that a total of 55 % of all adults completing their upper secondary education (including VET) in 2008 had undergone validation of their prior learning, and 86 % of these were granted exemption from at least one module. Validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning often results in shorter educational timespans and thus brings adults faster through the educational process and into working life with formal qualifications. For adults with significant work experience, validation can even result in full recognition via a vocational education and trade certificate.

In **Poland**, the largest group of people who benefit from the exams confirming skills and knowledge are adults (over 18 years of age). People who are learning informally often take part in courses financed by European funds, such as the ESF. Moreover, they are supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as some courses, especially those for the unemployed, are provided by this ministry.

Recognition of informal continuing learning is increasing in **Germany**. Participation by adult workers in informal continuing education and training was recorded for the first time in 1994. It rose from 52 % in 1994 to 72 % in 1997 and stood at 74 % in 2014 (BMBF, 2014).

The role of stakeholders, if well-managed, is also of central importance to recognition. This theme arises throughout the literature on recognition and is highlighted by the various country cases. Stakeholders can enter the recognition process anywhere from the initial devising of the system to the running of programmes and the assessment of individuals. For a country to have a strong recognition system, stakeholders must be included in all processes and their role well defined.

6. Opportunities and challenges in developing a national RVA system

The review in the previous chapters has clearly shown that, although RVA of non-formal and informal learning is a relatively new endeavour in many UNESCO Member States, policies and practices have nevertheless been diverse. It is evident that Member States face both opportunities and challenges in developing an effective national RVA system.

6.1 Opportunities

More and more countries embrace the concept of lifelong learning and value non-formal and informal learning

The feedback from Member States indicates that it is imperative for these countries to become a knowledge-based learning society. Learning opportunities designed to promote logical and critical thinking and lifelong learning should be created for all citizens, so that people will be able to cope with changing conditions. Science and technology should be strengthened so that society can benefit from local innovation, creativity and the accumulation of intellectual capital, both to increase international competitiveness and to appropriately supplement local wisdom and national traditions, culture and religion. These all create great opportunities to value non-formal and informal learning.

In **Germany**, the main opportunity presented by the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is for a more equitable distribution of educational opportunities, as well as the ability to respond to bottlenecks in the labour market. In **Denmark**, very good opportunities exist for translating non-formal and informal learning into formal educational qualifications based on assessment and recognition frameworks. This is particularly the case in initial vocational education and training and in all formal adult learning programmes.

Competence-based assessment has become more and more popular

Competence-based assessment is based on the clear specification of a set of outcomes, both general and specific, that allow learners and interested third parties to make reasonably objective judgements about what a student can be expected to know and be able to do. Learner progress is certified on the basis of demonstrated achievement of these outcomes. Assessment is not based on time spent in formal educational settings. A competence-based system is generally considered superior to traditional forms because it is so transparent, and because it delivers what is described. Performance criteria are clearly defined, such that the assessor can describe a candidate as having unambiguously achieved (or not yet achieved) them.

More and more higher education institutions have accepted the idea and practice of equivalency and accreditation

In **Germany**, adults with work experience can gain general school certificates, which constitute an entrance qualification to higher education, at a later stage via what is termed the second educational pathway. The legal foundations for this are the regulations of the individual federal states (*Länder*). The second educational pathway is classified as non-formal learning, since it entails “continuation or resumption of organised learning after completion of an initial training phase of varying duration” (BMBF, 2008, p. 8). In the **Philippines**, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is implementing the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP). Through this programme, individuals who have acquired work experience and expertise through non-formal and informal training are awarded appropriate academic degrees by CHED-accredited higher education institutions. In addition, TESDA and CHED are jointly promoting what is termed the Ladderized Education Program (LEP). Under this model, TVET qualifications are embedded in the curriculum of the degree programme, allowing individuals free entry and exit. Once a learner finishes a TVET qualification, he/she may opt to get out of the school system and start work. After earning enough funds to sustain his/her education, he/she may enter school again and finish the degree programme.

More and more industries and businesses are involved in standard setting and assessment

In **Germany**, the Employer’s Reference, with its foundation in law, is an important tool for strengthening mobility in working life and must be issued by the company at the employee’s request. In addition to describing their activities, companies generally list the competences expected of their current and future employees, such as ability to work under pressure, commitment and willingness to take responsibility, learning competences, teamwork, communication and conflict resolution skills (BMBF, 2008, p. 56). In the **United States**, industry organisations have played active roles in supporting the development of national competence-based industry standard curriculum assessment credentials. For example, the US Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration (ETA), the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and other associations have developed the Advanced Manufacturing Competency model, representing the development of professional knowledge, skills and abilities for successful performance (Ganzglass et al., 2011, p. 22). In Ghana, industries are participating in the development of competency-based training programmes, and plans are under way to strengthen industry participation in education in a number of ways, such as through the Industry Training Advisory Board (ITAB) and its sub-committees, validation panels, external verifiers, etc. In **Chile**, due to the involvement of industries and business, the implementation of mechanisms for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning through the development of standards and the certification of labour competences is well under way.

6.2 Challenges

Many countries still lack national policies to recognise the contribution and equal status of non-formal and informal learning in comparison with formal learning

The feedback from **Myanmar** shows that although non-formal primary education (an alternative certified form of learning) has been delivered since 2001–2002, a policy to recognise its equivalency to formal primary education still needs to be formulated. In **Kyrgyzstan**, the problem of recognition of non-formal skills and knowledge is that most adult learning providers are unable to provide supporting documents which conform to the state design. People who have acquired skills and knowledge non-formally are therefore obliged to go through formal education if they want to have them recognised. In the **Philippines**, despite sophisticated recognition practices, many education officials still maintain the traditional view that school-based learning is superior to other forms of learning. In the **Republic of Korea**, society places excessive value on the academic qualifications framework. This hinders the development of linkages between the vocational and academic, formal and non-formal systems. There is therefore a need for social consensus about the values of informal and non-formal learning.

In Africa, coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategies covering the full life course are still not the norm, and implementing lifelong learning through formal, non-formal and informal learning remains a challenge. In **The Gambia**, for example, the first challenge is the development of a clear recognition policy backed by legislation aimed at assimilating non-formal education graduates into the formal system. UIL's recent study on *Key Issues and Policy Considerations in Promoting Lifelong Learning in Selected African Countries* (Walters et al., 2014) found that, in comparison with formal learning, non-formal learning is of lower priority in the five countries studied (**Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda and Tanzania**). Although informal learning has a long tradition in Africa and boasts some outstanding features, the five countries' education policy documents make hardly any mention of facilitating informal learning or creating literate environments. As a result, the potential of informal learning is not being sufficiently tapped.

In the Arab region, the feedback from **Jordan** indicates that encouraging governmental and non-governmental organisations to take up responsibilities in non-formal education is a challenge. Limited financial resources have to be allocated and increased.

The education and training system is out of date; capacity and flexibility of provision are limited

In the **Seychelles**, RPL has created a “definite excitement in the country” (Steenekamp & Singh, 2012). However, the challenge they face is “how to equip education and training institutions to initiate RPL and offer opportunities to potential candidates on a continuous basis” (ibid., p. 41).

In **Afghanistan**, the existing curricula are outdated and do not respond to the needs of learners and employers. There is a lack of trained and qualified teachers/instructors, especially in the TVET sector. The quality of provision is very poor. Registration of training providers is not well-coordinated; there is no standard system or set of criteria for registration and accreditation. In **Kyrgyzstan**, the existing programmes for non-formal education need to be renovated and revised, as they do not take into account recent social and

technological changes. In **Pakistan**, the real challenge is getting the least affluent and most marginalised members of the population into non-formal schools.

In Latin America, an OECD study (Cabrera, 2010) discovered the challenges facing **Chile** in promoting non-formal and informal learning (Box 6.1). Most of them relate to the fact that the existing education and training system is out-of-date.

CHALLENGES TO THE PROMOTION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING IN CHILE

Box 6.1

- **Vertical break up:** Lack of vertical articulation within different education levels; specific areas of difficulty.
- **Horizontal break up:** There is no connection between the experience of non-formal and informal learning and the education system. The education system does not recognise the certificates awarded by the National System of Certification of Labour Competences; there are no mechanisms in place for the recognition of experiential learning.
- **The training on offer lacks relevance:** Training opportunities do not respond to the needs of the productive world or the knowledge society. The school vocational curriculum lacks relevance and it is difficult to match formative levels to occupational profiles. Current legislation does not make it compulsory for tertiary and vocational schools to conform to fixed standards.
- **Little transparency in the training system and little international comparability:** Access to information is asymmetric, making it difficult to design a training pathway. There is insufficient information available about the training on offer and what it can lead to. Titles and degrees awarded by universities, professional institutes and technical training centres are insufficiently transparent, making international comparability very difficult.

Source: Cabrera, 2010

In the **Netherlands**, a more customer-centred orientation of educational institutions towards organisations/businesses is needed in order to help anchor RVA in Human Resource Development. In **France**, the challenge is to make education and training more relevant to the world of work, and to rework the currently separated branches of initial and continuing education and training as a continuum, thus ensuring the implementation of lifelong learning beyond mere rhetoric. It will also be necessary to create closer and more genuine links between schools, companies and services. In addition, the growing number of candidates wishing to have their experience validated will necessitate greater flexibility and adaptability of educational resources so as to make them more responsive to candidates' needs. Candidates who have obtained only one part of their diplomas will be chosen to take supplementary training. Educational modules will need to be assessed on the basis of competency domains which make sense from the point of view of getting a job.

Difficulties in developing an NQF based on learning outcomes and in linking recognition to the NQF and skills standards

In **Uganda**, while many providers of adult education programmes promote skills learning, there is still high demand for greater recognition of prior learning. However, because there is no national qualifications

framework, it is difficult to identify competence requirements, measure progression, and persuade education providers to recognise all forms of learning.

In the **Republic of Korea**, the Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS) and Lifelong Learning Account System (LLAS) are developed without much connection to the Korean Qualifications Framework (KQF) and the Korean Skills Standards (KSS). This is because the KQF and KSS have yet to be fully established. In **Thailand**, the Office for Non-Formal and Informal Education (ONIE) is trying to develop several new techniques for assessment and evaluation to give NFE learners the opportunity to gain recognised educational qualifications at the appropriate level (primary, lower or upper secondary) through credit transfer based on the skills and experience they have obtained through informal learning, vocational training or workplace performance. Making these methods rigorous enough to benefit NFE learners continues to pose a challenge to ONIE.

The feedback from **Norway** shows that quality assurance at institutional level is very important, since the quality and outcomes of validation processes are vital for securing users' trust. In **Slovakia**, the NQF features only those qualifications that can be gained within the formal system of primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Limited information, guidance and counselling for learners and potential learners

In **New Zealand**, some challenges are posed by a lack of awareness and understanding of the *RPL* process. Since the process of collecting and collating evidence is cumbersome and time-consuming, potential applicants often prefer to take courses rather than tackling the gathering of evidence. The process can be off-putting for those who have had limited interaction with formal education and who therefore lack confidence.

Guidance and counselling need to be based on a well-established information management system. The feedback from **Poland** indicates that one of the main challenges will be creating a National Qualifications Register to include all qualifications that can be acquired under the National Qualifications System. Vocational qualifications, which constitute an element of the new core curriculum that was implemented in September 2012, represent only a tiny fraction of these.

In **Denmark** it was felt that there needs to be a transition from system level to user level in order to build capacity and awareness. It is sometimes difficult to convince particular training providers that recognition of prior learning is a good idea. The fact that learners and employers are not well informed about their right to validation of their non-formal and informal learning may pose a problem.

Lack of adequate trust and coordination among all stakeholders, particularly universities and enterprises

Namibia reports that publicly funded institutions are duplicating efforts in educational provision, and that this state of affairs is unsustainable. Commentators expressed the view that synergy between the different sub-educational sectors is important in order to develop an integrated and comprehensive system for promoting lifelong learning. In **South Africa**, good examples of RPL projects exist in the occupational, higher education and further education and training sectors. However, the three sub-sectors still function in silos, and there are legislative barriers to overcome in order to enable the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning through RPL assessments. At a recent international RPL conference held in South Africa, participants agreed that sub-sector cooperation was important to move the RPL agenda forward.

In the **Philippines**, NGOs and community-based organisations implementing community education programmes have also developed assessment tools focusing on leadership, community organising and

competencies in specific areas of concern (such as the environment and enterprise development). However, these are not certified by the government. Advocacy is required in order to change this.

In **France**, there has been some resistance to using RVA (also known as validation of acquired experience, or VAE in French) in higher learning because it is felt that theoretical knowledge will be compromised. Efforts need to be made to avoid confining VAE (which the authorities want to make the cornerstone of lifelong learning) to the lower levels of the education and training system.

Feedback from **Hungary** shows that demand for qualifications that can be acquired outside of formal education is low. It seems doubtful that a recognition system would be sufficient to change this, since technical solutions of this kind cannot cause essential changes in learning culture. In **Norway**, too, many education and training providers have not yet prioritised assessment and recognition schemes. This may be partly due to financial barriers, but cultural and capacity factors relating to staff qualifications and competences also play a role. It is also a challenge for providers to develop and implement an integrated approach to recognition which ensures that all prior learning is taken into account.

Another challenge is to improve the transfer opportunities from non-formal and informal learning. In **Germany** there are still reservations about transfer opportunities, especially in higher education. A drop in standards, and hence in quality, is feared. Training providers in the continuing education and training sector should be given the means to classify knowledge acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning. The feedback from Latvia also indicates that some employers mistrust the validation system and may not accept qualification documents issued in connection with it.

In **Chile**, the challenge is to implement a transparent system of examination and certification in order to ensure that certificates issued truly reflect mastery of the educational curricula concerned. Support in the form of timely materials for examination is vital.

In **Mexico**, the challenge is to consolidate a credible system that contributes to economic growth and social progress by developing new means of collaboration between the economic and educational sectors, integrating employers, workers and educators in a human capital agenda towards prosperity and progress. Reliable mechanisms must be employed for measuring the system's impact on competitiveness, productivity, and economic and social progress. Sectorial committees, competence standards, evaluation and certification units and certificates must all undergo further development in order to maintain the enthusiasm of employers and workers.

In **Trinidad and Tobago** the major challenges faced by educational institutions are getting employers to recognise learning as credible. Because RPL is new to the Caribbean, and because of the traditionalist approach used in education for many years, there is severe resistance to the principle of recognition of non-formal learning. Many tertiary institutions oppose the initiative, which creates difficulties in terms of the integration of graduates into the formal education system.

The need to strengthen the capability of key personnel in the RVA system through research

Given the increased number of stakeholders in the implementation of RVA, the training of personnel involved in system design, standard development, registration, evaluation, guidance etc. constitutes a major challenge. In **Bhutan**, there is a lack of technical expertise to develop a national qualifications framework. Most of the non-formal education programmes are new, and very few enjoy adequate recognition.

In the **Philippines**, educators, instructional managers and facilitators still use pencil and paper tests in assessing learning. They have skills in developing learning strategies using different methodologies and technologies, but do not yet know how to assess learning gained via these methodologies. In **Pakistan**, the

training of administrators and facilitators of non-formal education is a gigantic task which requires the non-formal education managers themselves to be specially trained.

There is a lack of evidence-based data on the quality and effectiveness of RVA. The **Netherlands** indicates that research is needed into the added value of VPL and its economic, financial and social consequences. **South Africa** also calls for further research and the application of quality practices in the field of recognition and validation of the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, including needs analyses, cost-benefit analyses, tracking of progress, and models of best practice. In a recent conference hosted by the **Botswana** Training Authority (BOTA), various presenters referred to the need to strengthen research and implementation. They also highlighted the need to focus on the recognition and validation of learning in the workplace.

To address the issues of high cost of assessment and evaluation

In **South Africa**, at present there is no formal systemic funding for RPL. The national policy guideline on costing recommends that RPL services should not cost more than a full-time face-to-face programme. So far only a limited number of assessment centres focusing on RPL have been established based on local needs, despite the high priority given to RPL in national policy. In **Mauritius**, funding RPL has been a major issue. The pilot projects were funded by the National Empowerment Foundation (NEF), and fees are subsidised due to the low income of prospective RPL candidates.

In the **Philippines**, a system of portfolio-based assessment of non-formal and informal learning needs to be set up. However, given the subjective nature of individual competencies, it is difficult to measure and compare them accurately. Creating a system to carry out this function (perhaps similar to the nationwide Accreditation and Equivalency [A&E] testing) could therefore be complex. Guidelines must be established regarding the benchmarks and bottom lines for assessing competencies in particular fields, covering basic, TVET and higher education.

The cost issue is not limited to developing countries. In **Austria**, the cost of implementing a functioning system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning poses a considerable challenge. **Hungary** admits that implementing a system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is no cheap procedure. A considerable number of staff is necessary for the establishment and maintenance of professional standards. The recognition procedure itself can be relatively inexpensive (particularly if based on tests); however, its expansion is seriously hindered by the fact that setting and maintaining professional standards is labour- and time-consuming. The **Czech Republic** feels that setting up a system of recognition was cost-intensive. In **Latvia**, students wishing to have their knowledge and skills acquired outside formal education validated must pay a fee. This could create a financial burden for learners.

7. Key recommendations on priorities, strategies and solutions

At the outset, it is helpful to highlight the European Council's Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission, 2004). The principles are set out under four main headings: Individual entitlements; Obligations of stakeholders; Confidence and trust; and Credibility and legitimacy (Box 7.1). These principles provide a conceptual framework within which to review the feedback from the responding UNESCO Member States regarding recommendations for the way forward.

COMMON EUROPEAN PRINCIPLES FOR THE IDENTIFICATION AND VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Individual entitlements

The identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should, in principle, be a voluntary matter for the individual. There should be equal access and equal and fair treatment for all individuals. The privacy and rights of the individual are to be respected.

Obligations of stakeholders

Stakeholders should establish, in accordance with their rights, responsibilities and competences, systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These should include appropriate quality assurance mechanisms.

Stakeholders should provide guidance, counselling and information about these systems and approaches to individuals.

Confidence and trust

The processes, procedures and criteria for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning must be fair, transparent and underpinned by quality assurance mechanisms.

Credibility and legitimacy

Systems and approaches for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning should respect the legitimate interests and ensure the balanced participation of the relevant stakeholders.

The process of assessment should be impartial and mechanisms should be put in place to avoid any conflict of interest. The professional competence of those who carry out assessment should also be assured (European Commission, 2004).

Box 7.1

7.1 Advocacy for raising awareness of the importance of non-formal and informal learning and positioning RVA as integral part of national lifelong learning strategy

As indicated in **Japan's** Basic Act on Education (MEXT, 2006), the philosophy of lifelong learning is that it is necessary to realize a society where each and every individual may “continue to learn throughout their lives, on all occasions and in all places, and apply the outcomes of lifelong learning appropriately to refine themselves and lead a fulfilling life” (ibid., Article 3).

The feedback from **Kyrgyzstan** calls for strengthening the government's approach to education through training and additional learning. The government should clearly understand that formal education is only one way towards a healthy and economically independent society. Without governmental support it is always difficult to make changes. However, many centres and non-governmental organisations provide non-formal education.

Pakistan declares that the task is huge and that it will take an iron will and steel nerves to achieve the projected goals. It is therefore recommended that non-formal and informal learning be recognised and certified at national and international level.

The recently published **Austrian** Lifelong Learning Strategy (Republik Österreich, 2011) defines a number of targets and measures to be taken. The targets include: enhancing transparency in the whole educational system; providing certification for knowledge, skills and competences acquired outside traditional educational institutions via allocation in the NQF; strengthening learning-outcome orientation; establishing mutual recognition of qualifications across institutions and sectors as a foundation of the whole educational system; implementing the present validation strategy; and raising national and international mobility, especially for persons with few or no formal qualifications (ibid.).

Drawing on the experience of establishing different regulations for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in **Germany**, a series of conditions can be identified that must be met in order to realise the vision of an Open Learning Society. These include:

- a social as well as a legal foundation for experiential learning;
- recognition procedures with facilitated admissions;
- a system of documentation, recording and recognition with different and intermeshing procedures;
- adequate transparency and a culture of trust with respect to self-evaluation procedures;
- a willingness and ability to perform self-evaluation; and
- most of all, a willingness and ability to learn, which is a precondition for recognising all forms of learning (BMBF, 2008, p. 126).

The feedback from two Eastern European countries also highlights the importance of technical assistance. **Hungary** considers that in the current climate it may even be harmful to regard RVA as a necessary or sufficient condition for the wide-ranging dissemination of a culture of Lifelong Learning (LLL). Although lifelong learning undoubtedly means exploiting all opportunities for non-formal and informal learning (and in this sense signifies the recognition of these learning methods), international experience has not yet verified that recognition by certificates would be an indispensable condition of the extension of non-formal

and informal learning. The feedback from **Bosnia and Herzegovina** shows that the country still lacks an integrated system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. As a result, there is no evidence-based experience to draw on in translating informally acquired knowledge, skills and competences into formal education requirements.

Ghana recommends the development of clear policies backed by legislation geared towards re-integrating those who drop out of formal education.

Three Member States in Latin America have provided feedback in this area. **Venezuela** suggests that it is essential to make progress in building a legal framework that promotes Latin American recognition of non-formal learning. This will create opportunities for complementary knowledge to be used not only in the labour market, but also for the recognition of the region's cultural values. **Costa Rica** indicates a need for a national system for the certification of knowledge by experience, in order to formalise all the opportunities on offer at different institutions. **Peru** calls for developing policies that recognise all forms of learning, particularly cross-cultural and intergenerational learning experiences from community education, both formal and informal.

Give more priority to helping underprivileged people who lack educational opportunities

7.2

UIL's recent study on RVA in five African countries (Walters et al., 2014) shows that it is imperative that all of the countries concerned take steps to accelerate the process of assessing and recognising the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning for disadvantaged groups.

Thailand argues that national policy should prioritise the underprivileged, such as the disabled, the elderly, farmers, street children, inmates and slum dwellers. The key strategy is to provide non-formal and informal educational activities to people in all target groups and areas of the country. All sectors of society must collaborate to promote access to quality lifelong learning for all.

The feedback from the **Philippines** indicates a need to establish a system for the accreditation and recognition of the experiences and competences of day care workers and community educators.

In the Eastern European context, **Armenia's** recommendation is to promote the integration and development of vulnerable groups and individuals (especially the disabled, young people from rural or regional communities, and socially vulnerable young people) and to encourage their involvement in the non-formal education system, thus providing them with the opportunity to obtain knowledge, competences and skills corresponding to labour market demands.

7.3 Develop a comprehensive National Qualifications Framework

Chapter 4 shows clearly that countries' progress towards the establishment of national qualifications frameworks is uneven. Nevertheless, evidence from many Member States suggests that an NQF is necessary for developing an integrated RVA system.

Côte d'Ivoire intends to put in place a policy for non-formal education and to create a framework to establish equivalences between non formal and formal training.

The feedback from the **Philippines** suggests that the most essential move is to make the education system seamless and borderless via a system of assessment that accurately identifies the competencies an individual possesses and calibrates these competencies within the national qualifications framework.

In Europe, **Poland** also calls for the creation of a transparent and coherent national system of qualifications. In **Slovakia**, the key strategy issue towards recognising all learning is the completion of the NQF. The country needs to create a unified methodology for defining learning outcomes which can be applied when introducing new and upgrading existing state educational programmes. There is also a new electronic communication platform being developed for identifying gaps between the content of educational programmes and employers' needs.

7.4 Enhance the development of procedures, standards, assessment and evaluation instruments and techniques

In Africa, **Ghana**, **Botswana** and **South Africa** recognise the need for quality assurance processes to ensure the authenticity of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. These countries have already established quality assurance bodies: the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) in Ghana, the Botswana Training Authority (BOTA) in Botswana, and the quality councils in South Africa.

Norway calls for the development of agreed standards for validation. One example of agreed standards is a general agreement on national curricula. Another example is workplace-specific competence demands which state the competences necessary to perform specific tasks, such as operating certain machines or serving customers. An open process that can be recognised by all stakeholders is important in order to ensure confidence to the system. The process can consist of certain steps, for example: (1) Information and guidance; (2) Description/mapping of competences, including documentation from formal and informal learning and from work practice; (3) Assessment and validation; and (4) Recognition of competences and accreditation. Each step must be defined and described. In addition, in order to build an information record, it is the responsibility of the county authorities to register all adult candidates who have gone through a validation process at upper secondary level into a national, digital registration system.

The future plans of the **United States** provide a clear set of priorities in this regard:

- Accelerate the wide adoption of quality policies, programmes and practices that break down barriers between credit- and non-credit-bearing workforce education and training.

- Develop a national framework to address today's fragmented and incomplete data and metrics in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the scale and effectiveness of credentials and non-credit education and training.
- Create a national competency-based framework for US post-secondary education that includes certificate-level workforce education and training.
- Reduce institutional barriers between credit- and non-credit-bearing education.
- Link the data systems of federal and state governments and educational institutions in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of student learning outcomes.
- Drive the higher education system towards industry-responsive curricula, potentially improving employment and career outcomes for students.

Japan argues that the development of proper assessment of learning outcomes is an important policy issue. **Poland** asks for the introduction of procedures for the assessment and recognition of learning outcomes, independently of place, form and time of learning.

Facilitate communication and collaboration among all stakeholders 7.5

In order to work effectively, the RVA system requires close communication and coordination among all stakeholders.

The experience of **Mauritius** shows that it is important to have a focused communication strategy to inform people about RPL and its benefits, and to expose major stakeholder to international best practice. In **South Africa**, although legislation and policies for RVA are in place and there are areas of good practice, implementing RPL on a nationwide scale remains a challenge. A national co-ordinated strategy will be required to address this challenge, back up by the appropriate resources. The strategy should cover the following issues:

- address gaps in statutory framework through the development of appropriate policy;
- create viable funding mechanisms;
- drive a mechanism for enhancing and measuring progress in RPL by setting up a National RPL Association;
- develop a wider range of credible RPL assessment methods and instruments;
- encourage and facilitate the formation of partnerships for delivery;
- coordinate the addressing of specific challenges in higher education, further education and training, industry, and organised labour;
- coordinate a national RPL information and advocacy campaign;
- coordinate RPL-related research (needs analyses; cost-benefit analyses; tracking of progress; models of best practice) and integrate findings into RPL processes; and
- establish support nodes of advisory services across the country.

In Europe, **Denmark** advocates coordination between all relevant stakeholders in order to increase awareness of recognition schemes and their benefits among potential users, including citizens, businesses and

their employees, education and training providers, voluntary associations, and social partner organisations in the labour market. It is very important that the system is transparent and trustworthy, so that it gains the same perceived legitimacy as formal education. **Norway** recommends creating cross-sectoral confidence and trust in the validation systems by involving different sectors and stakeholders in the development of the system, such as government departments, political parties, social partners, educators, and others. **Poland** recommends including social partners to monitor the accuracy of the examination system and grant legitimacy to the learning outcome-based approach.

Peru calls for the creation of an inter-sectorial state commission featuring representatives of civil society organisations, businesses, universities and workers' unions in order to develop and implement policies that take into account cultural diversity and recognise the great transformations occurring in rural areas.

7.6 Transform the existing educational and training institutions and all other learning opportunity providers

In the **Seychelles**, RPL is new and has yet to make an impact on society. At this stage, it is vital that the Department of Education indicate its support for RPL by recognising in its pivotal policy document that RPL is a valid mode of access to lifelong learning opportunities. All training providers need to be sensitised regarding their roles and responsibilities in considering RPL as an alternative learning pathway. RPL should be integrated into their training agenda. Providers should be given the support, assistance and training to undertake RPL at their own level.

Poland also calls for education and training tailored to the needs of the labour market and society. **Germany** recommends that appropriate teaching methods be developed to promote informal learning and to create systematic links between the different forms of learning.

7.7 Provide information, guidance and counselling to learners and potential learners

UIL's recent study on *Key Issues and Policy Considerations in Promoting Lifelong Learning in Selected African Countries* (Walters et al., 2014) shows that, in the five countries concerned (**Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda** and **Tanzania**), one of the main barriers to access to learning is a lack of adequate information regarding relevant learning opportunities. Effective communication and counselling systems are important at all levels and for people of all ages.

In **Austria**, the provision of counselling and guidance is listed as one of the general requirements connected with planning and implementing mechanisms for the recognition and validation of prior learning (Prokopp, 2011).

The feedback from **Poland** indicates that creating an operating guidance and career orientation system is crucial to developing effective policy for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Without a well-developed information system to provide counselling, the whole programme may fail to be successfully implemented. An information-sharing network has been made possible by

introducing up-to-date information processing technology. **Latvia** also lists information alongside quality assurance and affordability as essential to implementing the validation process.

In **Slovakia**, a network of career guidance and counselling centres is being created to give individuals access to information regarding their personal and professional development and to facilitate their orientation. The network is an effective tool for reducing information inequality and increasing people's access to information concerning further education. It is also valuable in that it affords low-skilled individuals personal contact with a professional counsellor who is interested in their personal and professional growth.

Facilitate technical assistance to Member States, share successful practices, and strengthen capacity building for key personnel

7.8

In **Afghanistan**, reforms will need to take into account the training of competent teachers/trainers and the establishment of quality management systems for the qualifications framework. The reform also needs to provide dedicated personnel to manage and organise the system. **Myanmar** and **Pakistan** call for specialised training for the teachers of non-formal and informal learning programmes. Non-formal and informal learning is a specialised system quite different from formal schooling. Capacity building among its managers and policy-makers should therefore be a top priority, keeping international best practice in view. International donor organisations, especially *UNESCO* through its specialised institutes, may take responsibility for this priority in consultation with national governments. In **Pakistan**, there is a dire need to build the capacity of non-formal education managers and policy-makers. The **Philippines** also suggest that more technical assistance should be provided to countries wishing to establish RPL schemes, NQFs and mutual recognition arrangements.

Mauritius recommends that, in the next phase towards the consolidation of recognition, building human resource capacity is of prime importance. Training of RPL facilitators and assessors, which can be considered the backbone of the system, is therefore a must if the Mauritius Qualifications Authority (MQA) is to extend RPL to all sectors of the Mauritian economy. The **Seychelles** claims that both the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) and education and training institutions need international support and assistance with special training where appropriate (especially in the area of training RPL assessors), so as to ensure that all key players are at the same level when RPL is introduced. The recommendations from **Namibia** are to create a solid system that is well-planned, structured and resourced. Clear procedures for assessment should be in place; competency standards and related assessment tools such as portfolios must be developed prior to the arrival of qualified assessors. Sustainable funding and buy-in by all stakeholders must be assured. Moreover, the system must be simple and easily understood. In **South Africa**, the South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA) has entered into a research partnership with the University of the Western Cape to carry out research into the effectiveness of RPL.

The experience in **Norway** shows that the professionalism of validation staff is very important. A system for training validation staff is therefore required at both national and local level. It is vital that validation staff themselves have confidence that the system of recognition and validation of non-formal and informal competences is of value both for individuals and for society. The validation staff must have specific competence in validation processes to ensure that the result of the validation is the same, independent of where it takes place. It is therefore important to describe the validation process and define the necessary competences clearly. County authorities are responsible for the quality and training of validation staff in upper

secondary education, which is carried out at the regional assessment centres. It is important to develop systems that secure the same possibilities of training for all staff/assessors.

7.9 Develop a cost-efficient and cost-effective financial support mechanism

The feedback from **Ghana** suggests that international donor partners should invest more funding into non-formal education and encourage countries to abide by the international adult literacy benchmarks, one of which states that 3 % of countries' education budget should be dedicated to non-formal education activities.

7.10 Facilitate regional and sub-regional collaboration

In the European Commission, the Cluster on the Recognition of Learning Outcomes – the largest of the eight education and training clusters – supports countries in developing national qualifications frameworks and systems for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Cluster uses peer-learning activities to exchange good practice and channel collective efforts. Priority is given to the development of operational guidelines to support countries in using the 2004 Council Conclusions on Common European Principles for the identification and validation of non-formal and informal learning (European Commission, 2004).

Clearly there is a need for strengthened international cooperation in the field of RVA. Several countries in Southeast Asia call for more opportunities to learn from countries in the sub-region, such as **Australia** and **New Zealand** who have long experiences in accrediting and assessing non-formal and informal learning. This could be advocated as an agenda in the regional meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO).

As cross-border migration is increasing across the world, recognition across national borders becomes necessary. For example, in the **United States** and **Canada**, there is a call for supporting Mexican migrant workers through the recognition of their competences in order to achieve better integration into the North American labour markets.

UIL's recent study on *Key Issues and Policy Considerations in Promoting Lifelong Learning in Selected African Countries* (Walters et al., 2014) shows that, in view of greater regional integration and increasing migration, articulation and equivalency across national borders need to be strengthened and closer relationships forged between different national qualifications frameworks. **Mauritius** recommends that the collaboration between stakeholders be further strengthened not only locally but regionally and internationally. By consolidating the network of countries that have implemented or wish to implement RPL, considerable information can be gathered to render the RPL system more effective.

Furthermore, the harmonisation of qualifications frameworks is an important emerging issue in regional integration, and mutual recognition of qualifications is rapidly becoming a necessity. For example,

in order to consolidate mutual recognition between countries, the **Mauritius** Qualifications Authority (MQA) has signed several Memoranda of Technical Cooperation with a number of countries, namely **Botswana, Namibia, Seychelles, Ghana** and **The Gambia**. Its main objective is to build human resource capacity and to enable the transfer of credits and qualified people across borders.

In addition, the feedback from some Eastern European countries such as **Hungary** shows that international exchanges with countries in other regions have facilitated policy-makers' and experts' understanding of RVA and related principles and procedures, leading to their inclusion in new national laws and policies.

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Appendix

Resources for producing the synthesis report

Country	Responded to UIL questionnaire	Participated in the meeting in UIL 2010	UIL-ADEA Study 2011	UNESCO-Cedefop-ETF Inventory	UNESCO Bangkok Equivalency programmes
AFRICA					
Botswana			X		
Burkina Faso		X			
Côte d'Ivoire	X				
Ghana	X	X	X		
Mauritius	X	X	X		
Namibia	X	X	X		
Niger	X				
Nigeria	X				
Senegal	X				
Seychelles	X		X		
South Africa			X		
The Gambia		X		X	
Uganda	X			X	
ARAB STATES					
Jordan	X	X			
Kuwait	X				
Lebanon	X				
Syrian Arab Republic	X	X			

Country	Responded to UIL questionnaire	Participated in the meeting in UIL 2010	UIL-ADEA Study 2011	UNESCO-Cedefop-ETF Inventory	UNESCO Bangkok Equivalency programmes
ASIA AND PACIFIC					
Afghanistan		X			X
Bangladesh				X	
Bhutan		X			X
India		X		X	X
Indonesia					X
Japan	X			X	
Kyrgyzstan	X				
Malaysia		X		X	X
Myanmar	X				X
New Zealand		X		X	
Pakistan	X			X	
Philippines	X				X
Republic of Korea		X		X	
Thailand	X				X
Uzbekistan	X				
EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA					
Armenia	X				
Austria	X				
Belgium	X				
Bosnia and Herzegovina	X				
Canada				X	
Czech Republic	X	X			
Denmark	X	X			

Country	Responded to UIL questionnaire	Participated in the meeting in UIL 2010	UIL-ADEA Study 2011	UNESCO-Cedefop-ETF Inventory	UNESCO Bangkok Equivalency programmes
Finland	X	X			
France	X	X			
Germany	X				
Hungary	X				
Italy	X				
Latvia	X				
Lithuania	X				
Norway	X	X			
Portugal	X	X			
Poland	X				
Slovakia	X				
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	X				
The Netherlands	X	X			
USA				X	
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN					
Brazil	X			X	
Chile	X			X	
Costa Rica	X				
Honduras	X				
Mexico	X	X		X	
Peru	X				
Trinidad and Tobago		X		X	
Venezuela	X				

The recent development of lifelong learning policies in many UNESCO Member States has shown that there is a growing demand for the knowledge, skills and competences acquired by adults and young people over the course of their lives to be evaluated and accredited within different contexts (work, education, family life, community and society). Alongside established systems for recognising formal learning, some Member States have developed mechanisms to recognise and validate non-formal and informal learning, and many more are in the process of doing so.

The *Belém Framework for Action*, adopted by 144 UNESCO Member States at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education in 2009, called for UNESCO to develop guidelines on “all learning outcomes, including those acquired through non-formal and informal learning, so that these may be recognised and validated”. Consequently, the *UNESCO Guidelines for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning* were developed and published by UIL in 2012 following a consultation process involving Member States. This report synthesizes and analyses the responses received from 42 Member States during that consultation process.