



Session 3

RPL in Lifelong Learning Policies

3rd ACQF Forum, Nairobi
1-4/October 2024

Topics



What is RPL and why it matters in Africa

Short overview of RPL in African countries

RPL for Lifelong Learning, across sub-systems of education and training

Linkages RPL-NQF-CATS-Microcredentials

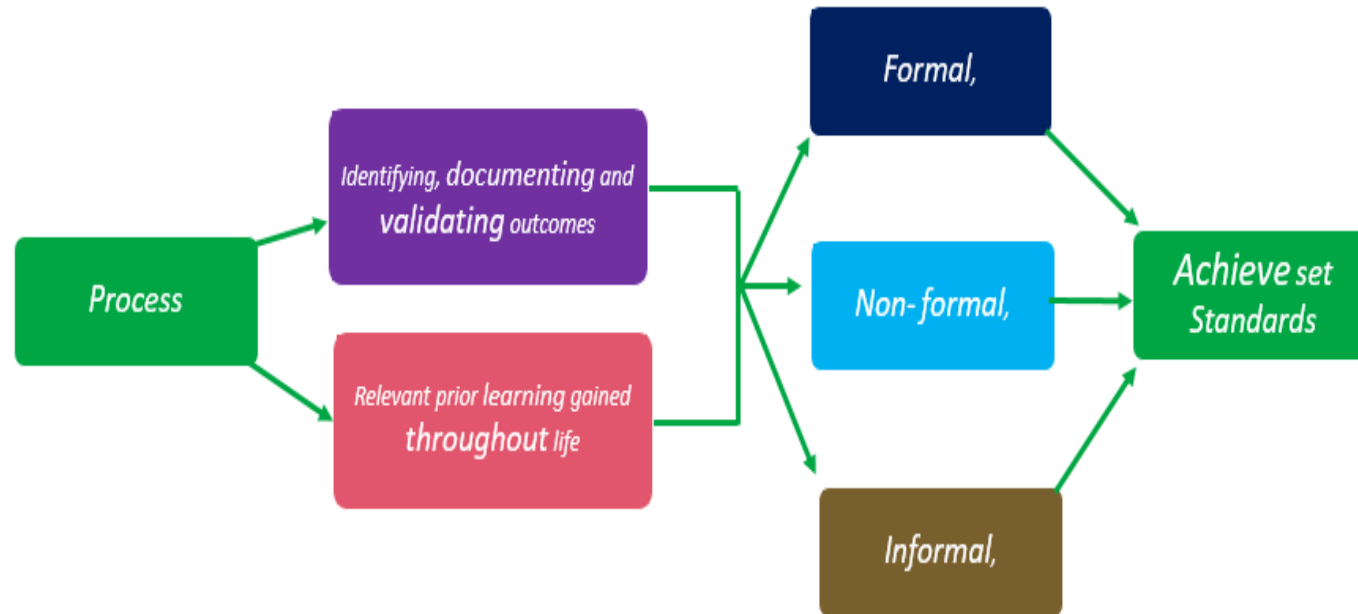
01

What is RPL and why it matters in Africa (SM)

- Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is a process of identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying formal, non-formal and **informal learning outcomes** against **standards** used in formal education and training.
 - Thus, RPL provides an opportunity for people to acquire qualifications or credits towards a qualification or exemptions (from all or part of the curriculum, or even exemption from an academic prerequisite for entering a formal study programme) without going through a formal education or training programme.
-

What is Recognition of prior learning (RPL)?

RPL is a process by which all the learning outcomes of an individual applicant are assessed against predefined standards, and a document is awarded to successful applicants.



Why RPL matters in Kenya and Africa

RPL is a vital tool for promoting inclusion, lifelong learning & enhancing workforce development in Africa and globally

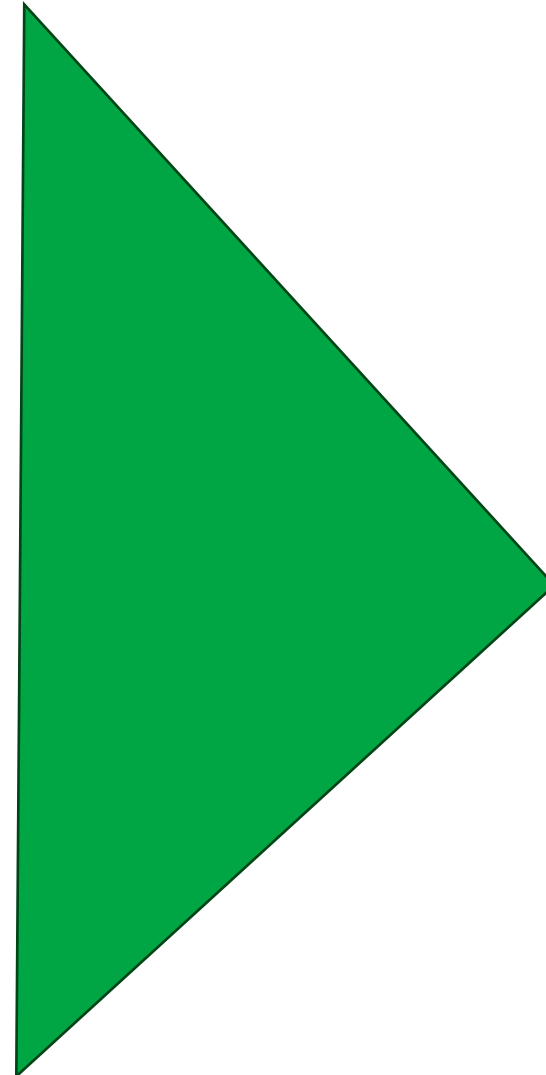
- 1. Enhances Access:** RPL provides opportunities for those without formal qualifications to access further education and training;
- 2. Skill Validation :** It helps validate & recognize plenty of skills in the labor market but without corresponding formal certifications;
- 3. Mechanism for Innovation:** learning context is industry/ work-based, hence current occupational standards in the labour market, Flexible assessment.
- 4. Supports Lifelong Learning:** RPL encourages continuous learning and development, aligning with Kenya's goals for economic growth and development;
- 5. Enhances Employability:** By recognizing diverse learning pathways leading to a qualification and ;
- 6. Societal Recognition:** RPL empowers individuals, enhances their confidence and self-worth leading to greater participation in society and the workforce.

02

Overview of RPL in African countries (SM)

Overview of RPL in African countries

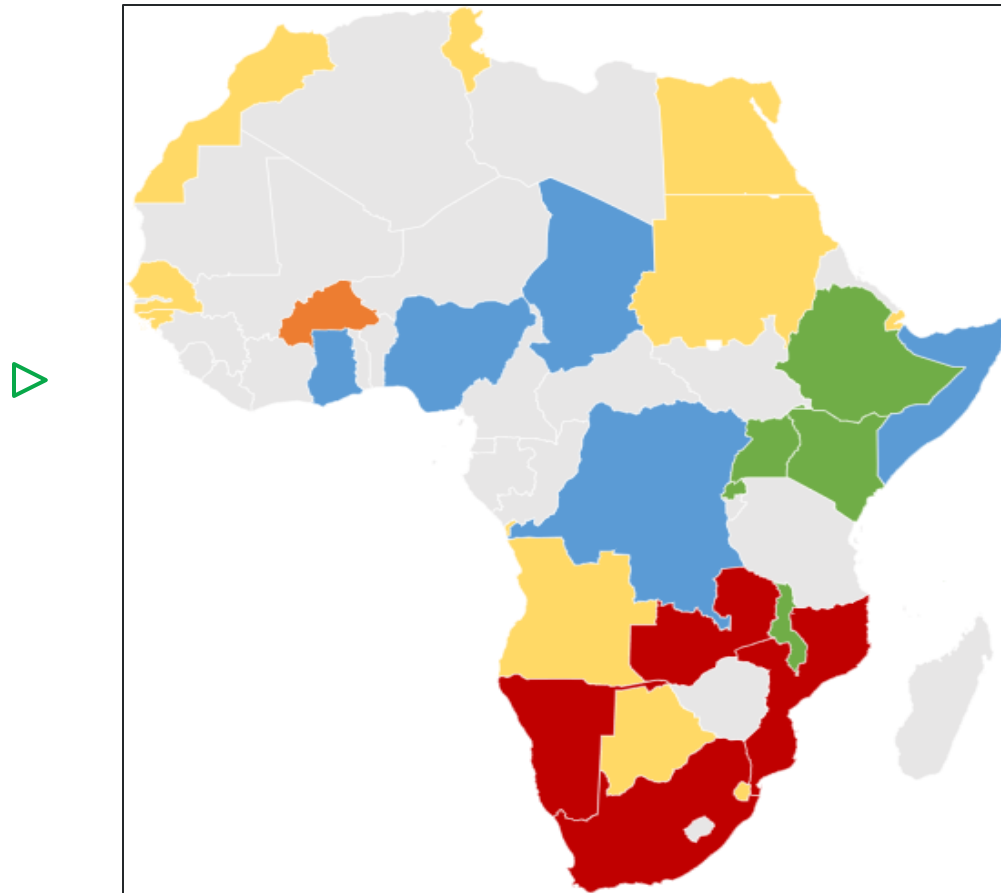
- **Main source - ACQF-II survey of RPL policies and practices:** analytical report and Infographic published on website
- Data collection: Sept 2023 to January 2024
- As other policies related with qualifications and NQF, RPL too is evolving. More countries approve RPL Policy and Guidelines, while other start and reinforce implementation.
- The overall panorama of RPL changes and we need to continue updating the database and analysis for mutual trust, harmonisation, mutual support.



- Important to keep a relatively continuous flow of updated information on the status and developments of RPL policies in all countries
- Streamlined process of data collection and analysis
- All countries to participate
- **Reduce number countries with “no data”!**

1. Stage of development

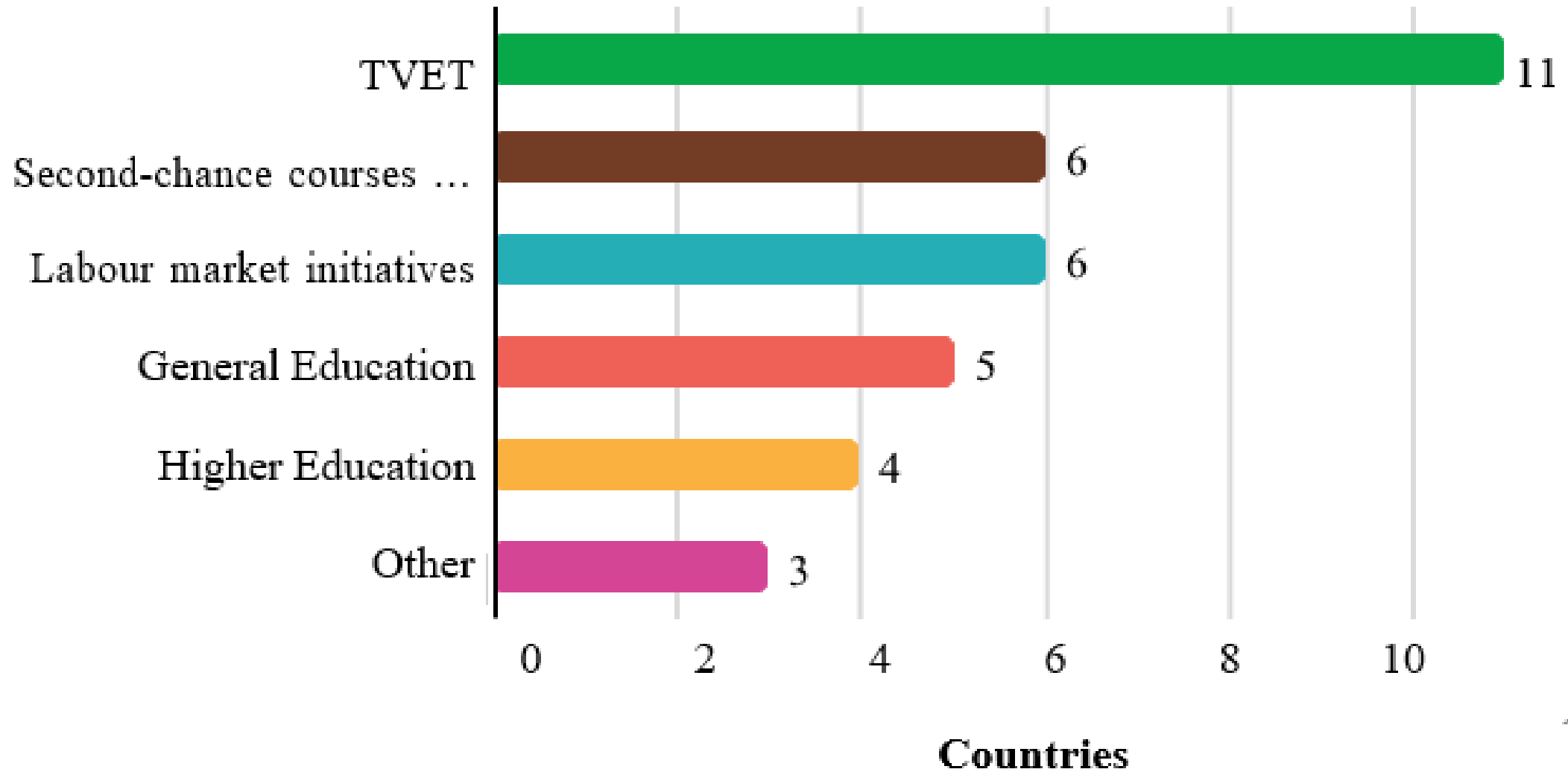
From ACQF Survey of RPL (2024):
28 countries



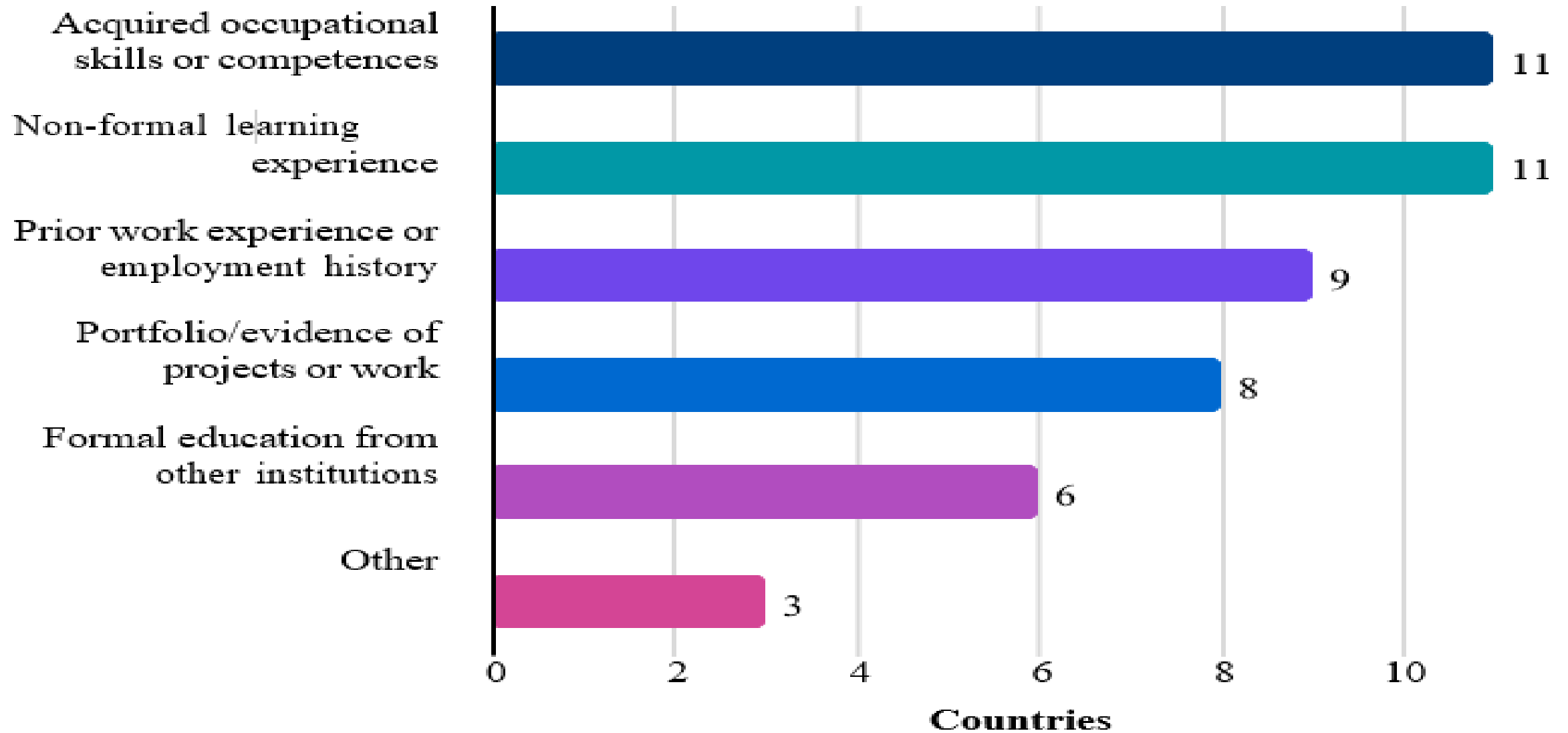
- RPL policies in place (in either a specific learning and training sector or nationally- **11 Countries;**
- Lack developed RPL systems - **16 countries;**
- RPL in development /consultation phase- **10 countries;**
- Development approach-stakeholder consultations and a review of best practices.



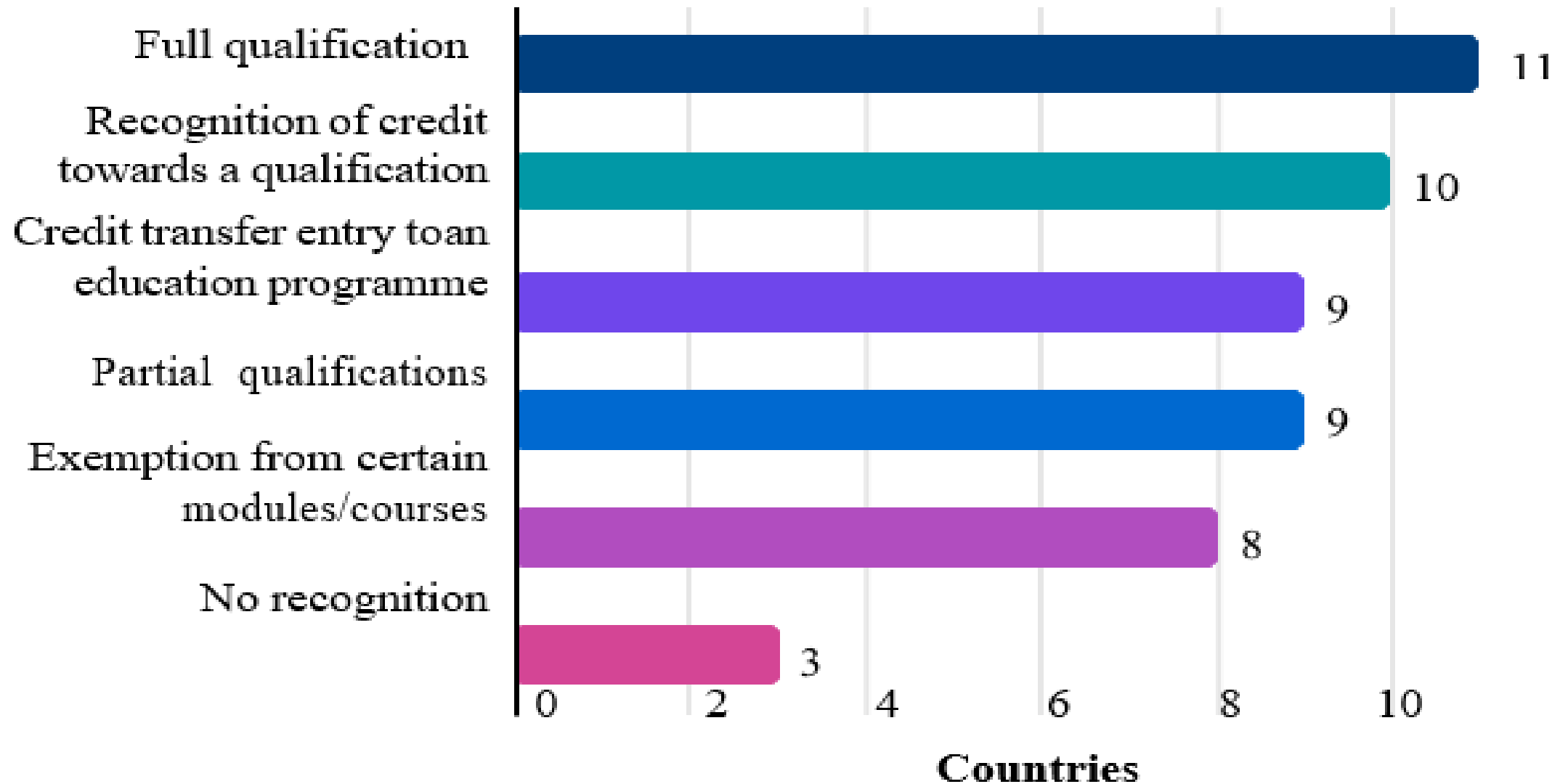
2. Uptake by the Education & Training Sectors



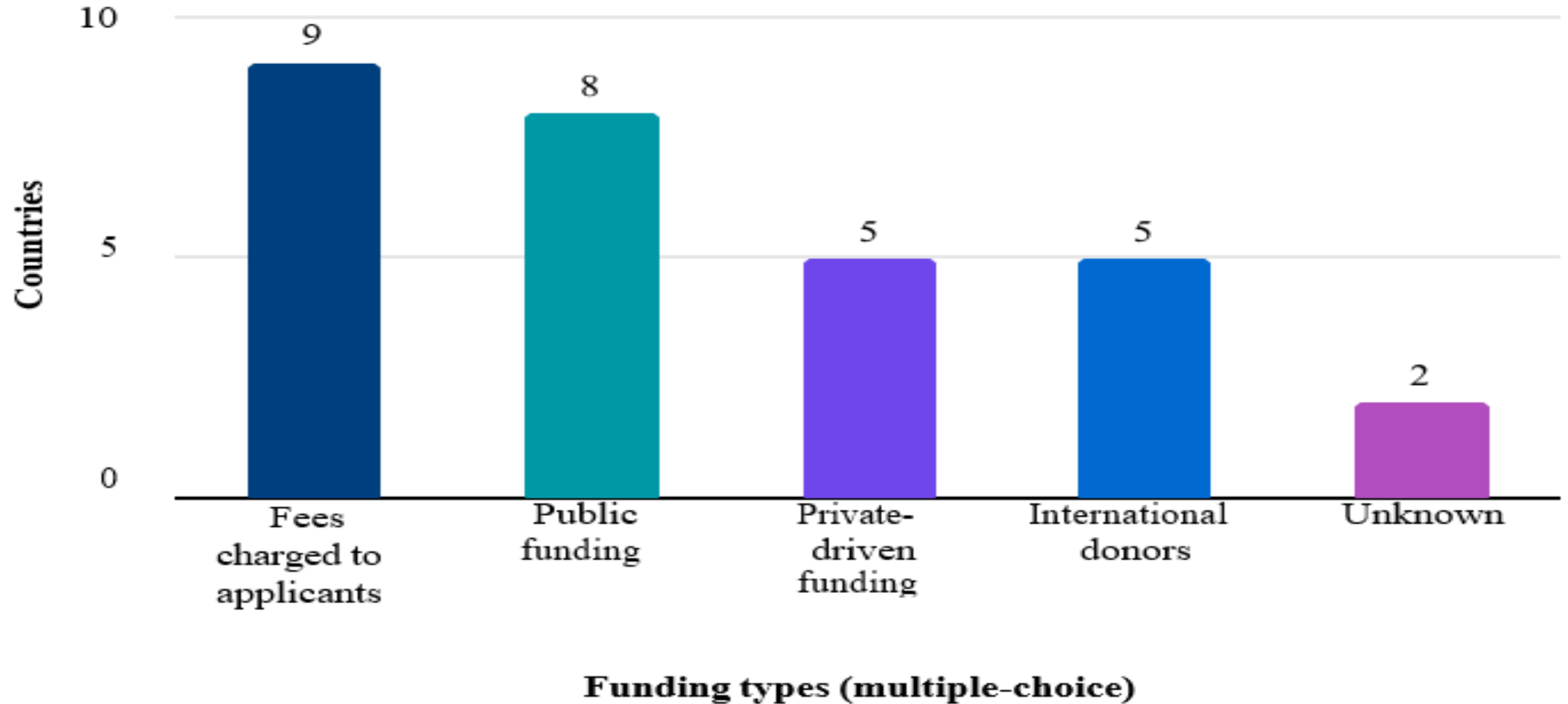
3. Nature of Prior learning/ Experience

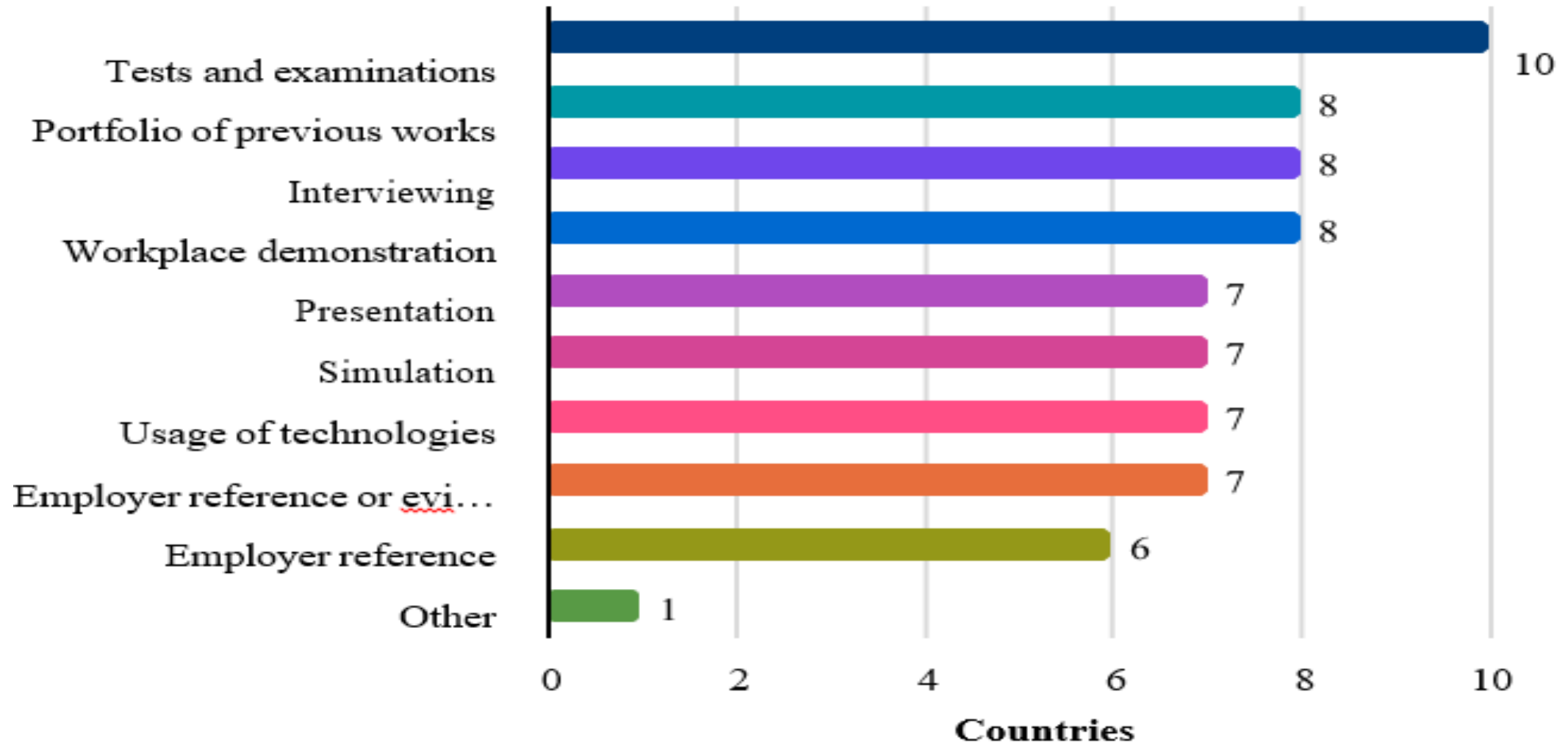


4. Outcomes of the RPL processes



5. Financing Arrangements





7. Main Beneficiaries of RPL;

- ✓ low-qualified people-15
- ✓ workers in specific sectors or professions-10;
- ✓ adult learners-10;

8. less likely to be beneficiaries,

- are early school leavers-8,
- young people -7
- unemployed or economically inactive people-6.

9. RPL Awareness

- Relevant policy officers;
 - Education & training providers;
 - Employers;
 - Potential beneficiaries;
 - General public
-

Challenges

- Funding instability, stakeholder engagement, trust in certification from RPL processes, and inter-departmental cooperation.

Lessons Learned

- Early stakeholder involvement and labor market engagement are crucial for RPL relevance and viability
- Clear standards, reliable evaluation systems, and effective communication among stakeholders are essential.
- A simple and clear RPL assessment process can promote wider adoption and recognition.
- Quality assurance mechanisms to ensure credibility.
- Subsidies for beneficiaries play a vital role in enhancing accessibility.

Recommendations

- There is need to update the ACQF RPL database - since many developments have taken place since the last survey in 2024.

Other sources on RPL in African countries

- New! RPL Handbook for Practitioners - Chapter 5 : 7 country cases
- ILO

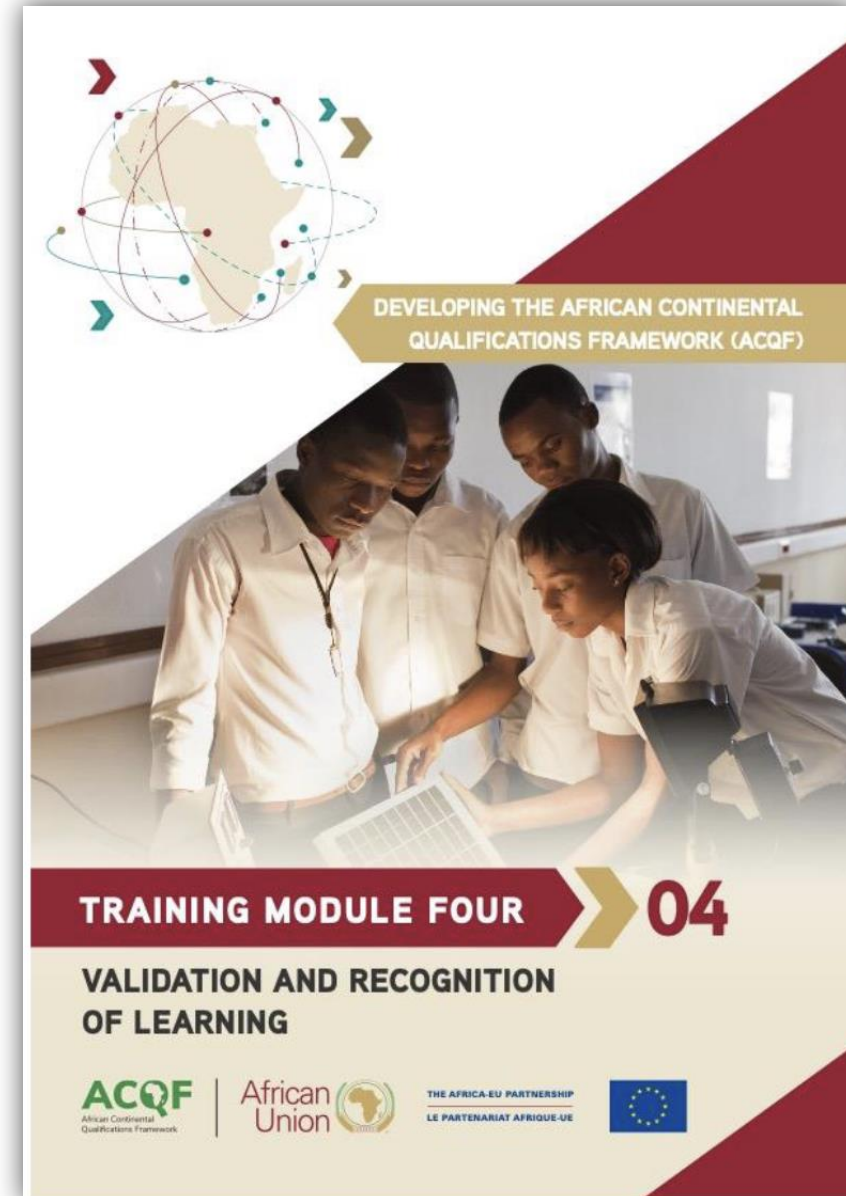
African regional RPL policies and guidelines

ACQF

- ACQF Policy document (2023)
- Guideline 4: Validation and Recognition of Learning
- Training Module 4: Validation of Learning
- Thematic Brief
- Website Resource: RPL gives us wings
- New! Handbook for RPL Practitioners

SADCQF: RPL Guidelines

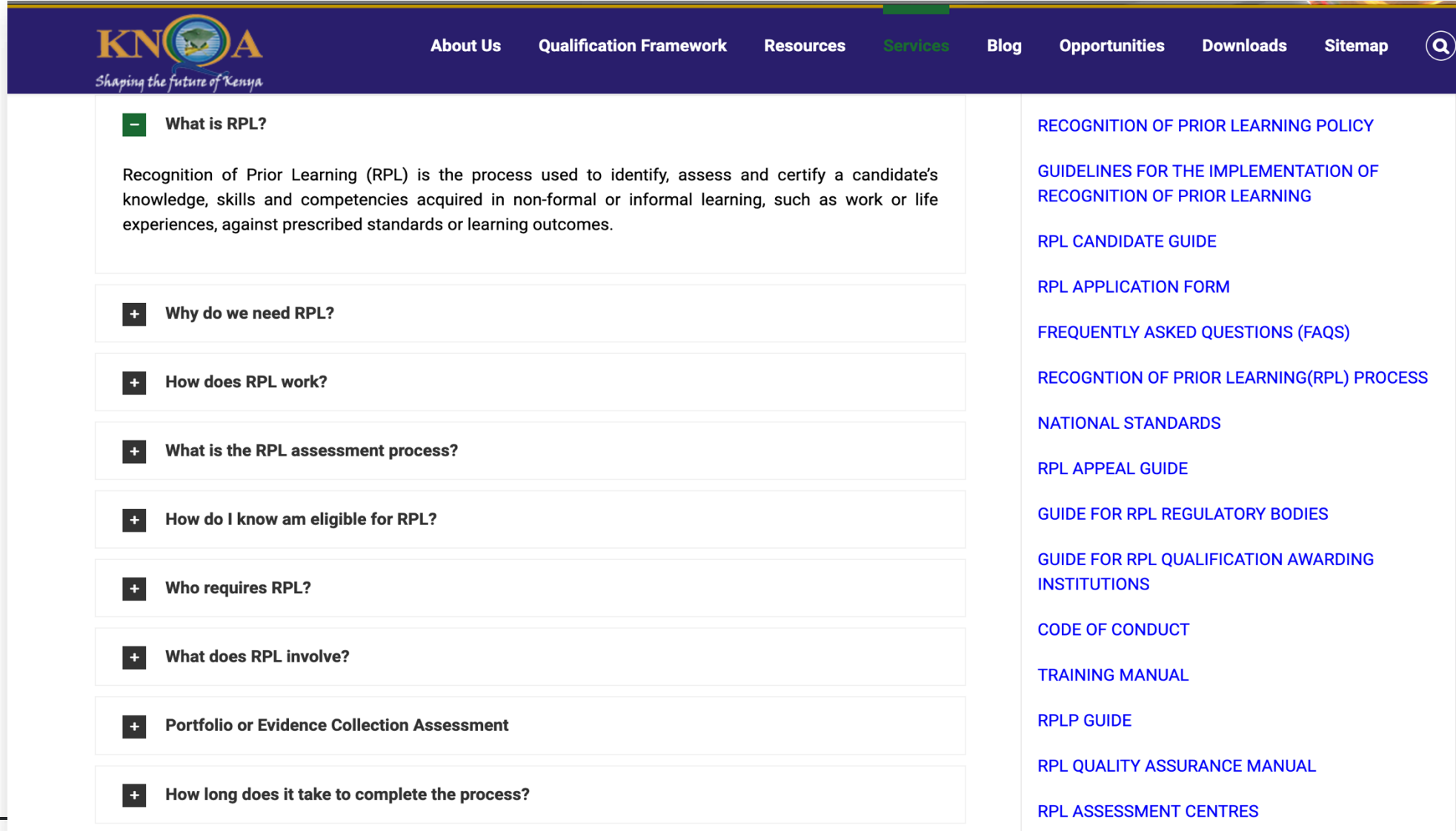
EAC: RPL Policy



Kenya:
Comprehensive
package of RPL policy
and implementation
tool



Comprehensive package of RPL policy and implementation tools



The screenshot displays the KNQA website's navigation menu and a list of RPL-related resources. The navigation menu includes: About Us, Qualification Framework, Resources, Services, Blog, Opportunities, Downloads, Sitemap, and a search icon. The main content area features a list of RPL-related topics, each with a plus sign icon, and a corresponding list of documents on the right side of the page.

KNQA
Shaping the future of Kenya

[About Us](#) [Qualification Framework](#) [Resources](#) [Services](#) [Blog](#) [Opportunities](#) [Downloads](#) [Sitemap](#) [Search](#)

- What is RPL?

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the process used to identify, assess and certify a candidate's knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in non-formal or informal learning, such as work or life experiences, against prescribed standards or learning outcomes.

+ Why do we need RPL?

+ How does RPL work?

+ What is the RPL assessment process?

+ How do I know am eligible for RPL?

+ Who requires RPL?

+ What does RPL involve?

+ Portfolio or Evidence Collection Assessment

+ How long does it take to complete the process?

[RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING POLICY](#)

[GUIDELINES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING](#)

[RPL CANDIDATE GUIDE](#)

[RPL APPLICATION FORM](#)

[FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS \(FAQS\)](#)

[RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING\(RPL\) PROCESS](#)

[NATIONAL STANDARDS](#)

[RPL APPEAL GUIDE](#)

[GUIDE FOR RPL REGULATORY BODIES](#)

[GUIDE FOR RPL QUALIFICATION AWARDDING INSTITUTIONS](#)

[CODE OF CONDUCT](#)

[TRAINING MANUAL](#)

[RPLP GUIDE](#)

[RPL QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL](#)

[RPL ASSESSMENT CENTRES](#)

SEYCHELLES QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

National Guidelines for the Implementation of
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

July 2017



Terça-feira, 17 de Agosto de 2021 I SÉRIE — Número 158



BOLETIM DA REPÚBLICA

PUBLICAÇÃO OFICIAL DA REPÚBLICA DE MOÇAMBIQUE

Decreto n.º 58/2021
de 17 de Agosto

Havendo necessidade de dotar o Subsistema de Educação Profissional de normas e procedimentos, aplicados ao processo de reconhecimento de competências adquiridas, através de aprendizagem ao longo da vida, em contextos de trabalho, formação não formal e informal, ao abrigo do disposto no n.º 2 do artigo 15, da Lei n.º 23/2014, de 23 de Setembro, Lei de Educação Profissional, alterada e republicada pela Lei n.º 6/2016, de 16 de Junho, o Conselho de Ministros decreta:

ARTIGO 1

É aprovado o Sistema de Reconhecimento de Competências Adquiridas, abreviadamente designado SRCA, em anexo, que é parte integrante do presente Decreto.

ARTIGO 2

Compete ao titular superintende a área do ensino técnico profissional aprovar o Regulamento do Sistema de Reconhecimento de Competências Adquiridas, no prazo de 60 dias, a partir da data da publicação do presente Decreto.

ARTIGO 3

O presente Decreto entra em vigor na data da sua publicação.



**ORIENTAÇÕES METODOLÓGICAS PARA A
IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DO SISTEMA DE RECONHECIMENTO
DE COMPETÊNCIAS ADQUIRIDAS (SRCA)**



Junho 2022



GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI

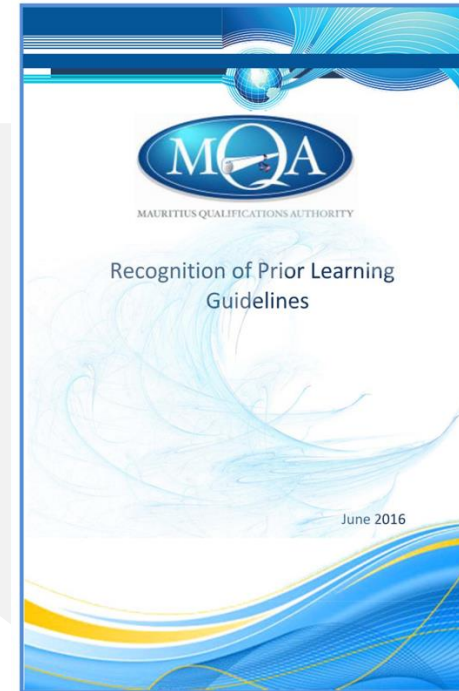
**RECOGNITION OF PRIOR
LEARNING GUIDELINES**



GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI

**RECOGNITION OF
PRIOR LEARNING (RPL)**

ASSESSORS GUIDE



POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION OF
PRIOR LEARNING IN ZAMBIA

JUNE 2016



**National Policy and Criteria for the
Implementation of
Recognition of Prior Learning
(Amended in March 2019)**

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITY (VETA)



**GUIDELINES FOR
RECOGNITION OF PRIOR
LEARNING ASSESSMENT
(RPLA) IN TANZANIA**

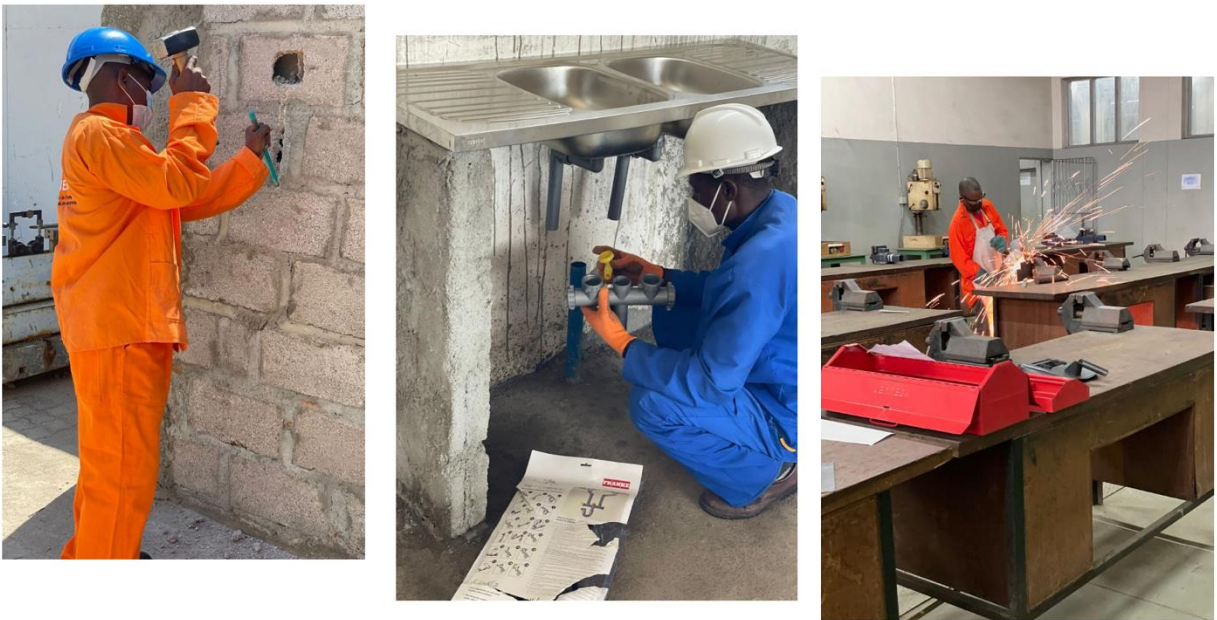


RPL is not only assessment! It is process...

RPL in Mozambique – NQF Professional

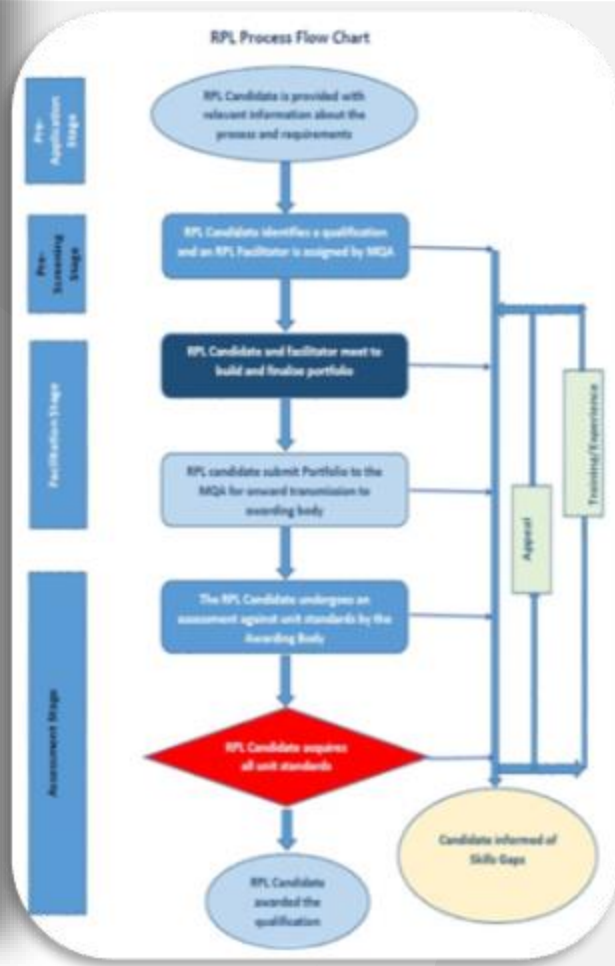


Assessment Tests in the Pilot Project:

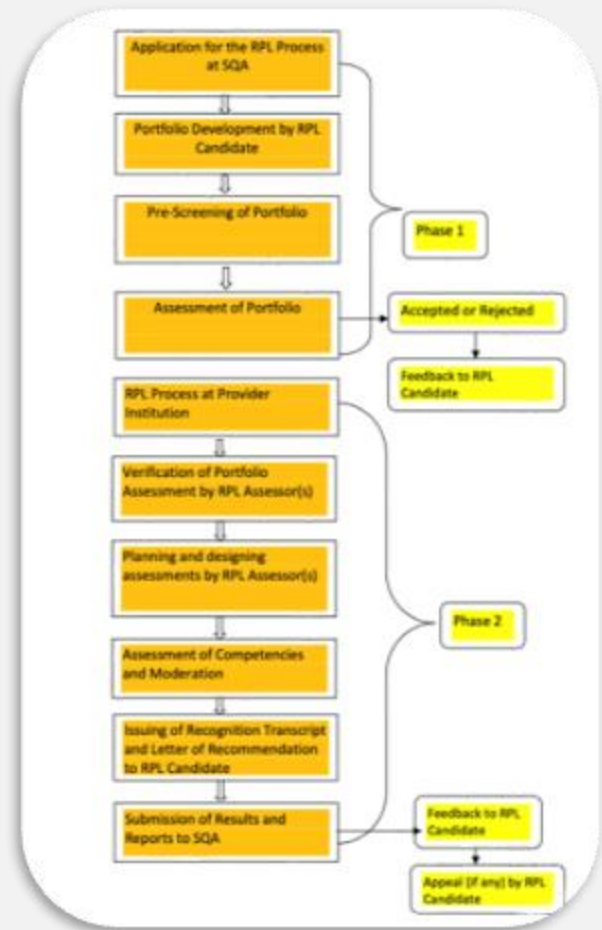


POR UMA EDUCAÇÃO PARA O TRABALHO E DESENVOLVIMENTO DO PAÍS

Mozambique



Mauritius



Seychelles

03

**RPL for LLL, across sub-
systems of education and
training (ECB)**

- Anchored in NQF ?
- Anchored in legislation education-training system?
- Operational arrangements – streamlined?
- Accepted, parity of esteem?
- Buy-in, take up of target groups?
- Innovation accepted?
- M&E – data on benefits and challenges?
- Cost and financing?

Articulation

TVET

HE

General
educationAdult
educationSkills
training

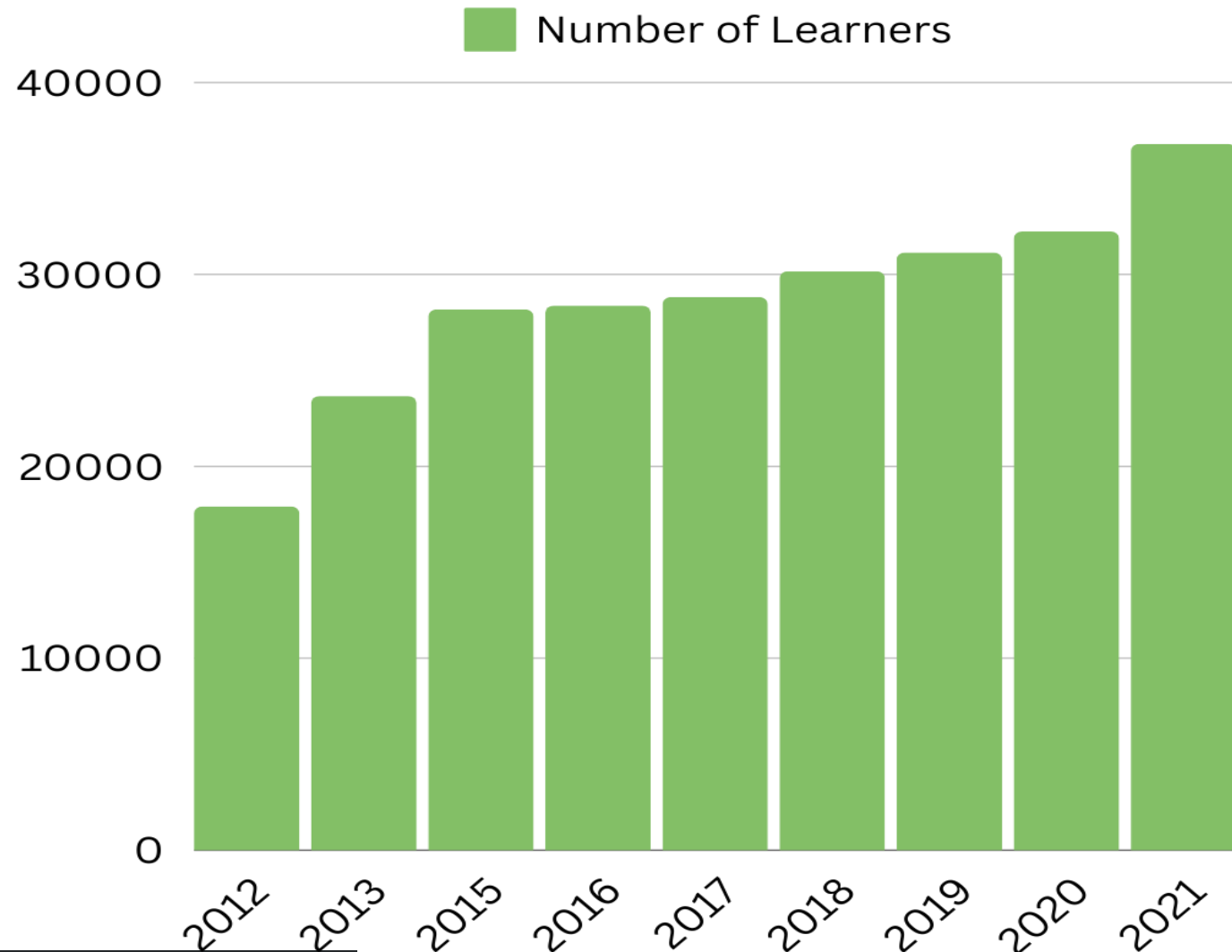
Mobility: vertical, horizontal,
diagonal

RPL in HE in Europe: Learning activities that can be validated within RPL in HE (2023)

	Non-formal and/or informal learning activities that can be validated for accessing higher education					Non-formal and/or informal learning activities that can be validated for fulfilling higher education study requirements				
	Learning resulting from daily activities relating to work / professional activity	Learning resulting from daily activities relating to family or leisure	Non-formal education and training (E&T) courses provided by higher education institutions (HEIs)	Non-formal E&T courses provided by E&T institutions other than HEIs	In-company training	Learning resulting from daily activities relating to work / professional activity	Learning resulting from daily activities relating to family or leisure	Non-formal education and training (E&T) courses provided by higher education institutions (HEIs)	Non-formal E&T courses provided by E&T institutions other than HEIs	In-company training
Total nr of countries	17	10	16	16	18	24	13	27	27	27

European Commission: European Education and Culture Executive Agency, *Validation of non-formal and informal learning in higher education in Europe – Eurydice report*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2797/296107>

Achievements via RPL

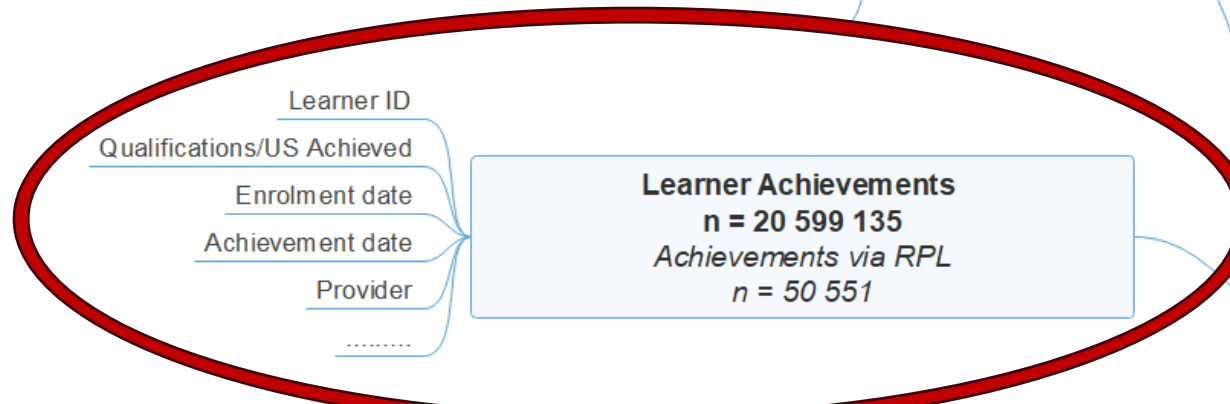
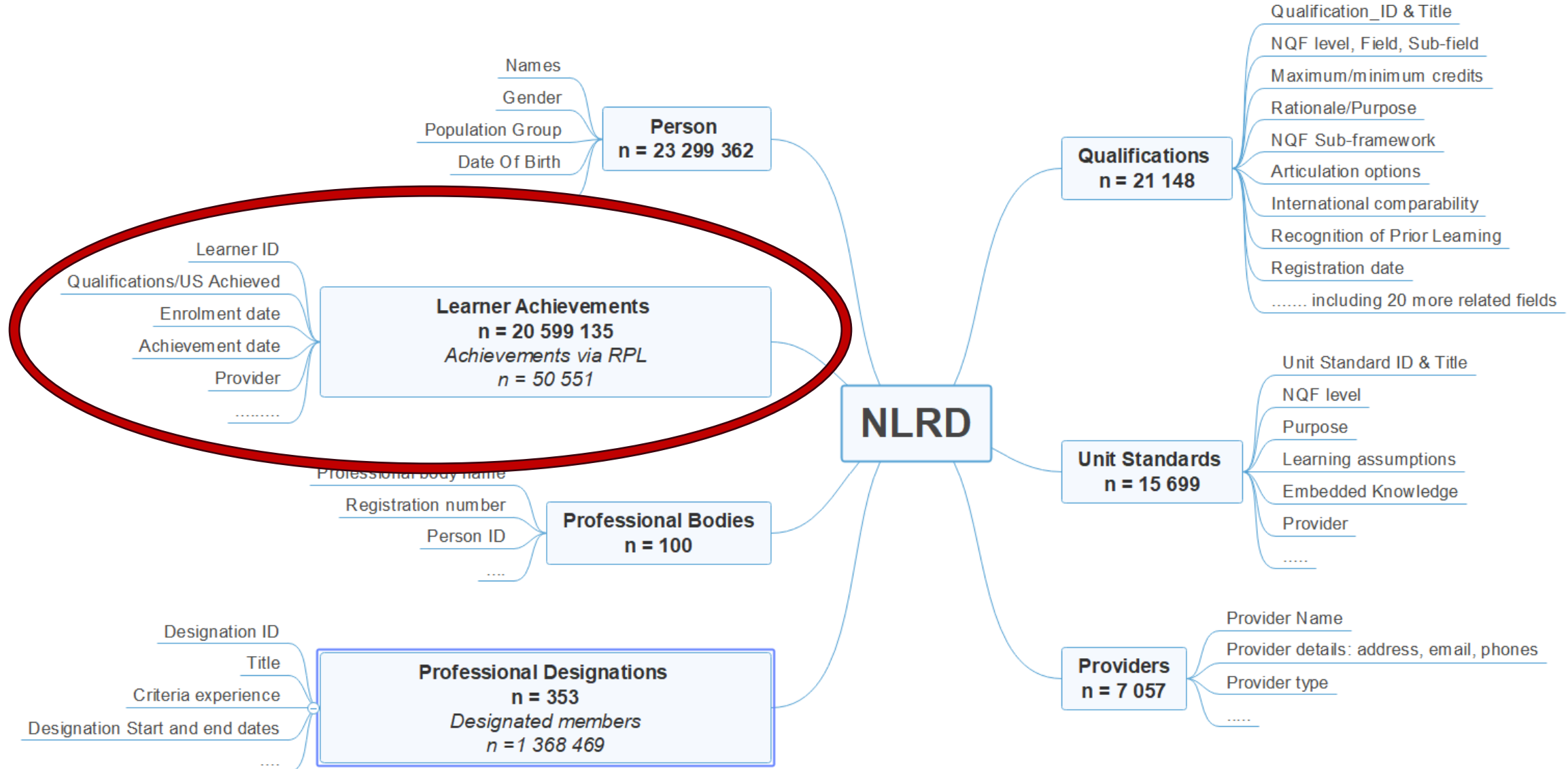


- **Steady, consistent increase in achievements via RPL annually.**
- **Number of qualifications that can be obtained via RPL is 241.**
- **97% of achievements via RPL are in the OQSF context, 3% in HEQSF.**

Disaggregated by:

- **NQF Field**
- **Gender**
- **Population Group**
- **Age-group**

Data on RPL in South Africa – RPL achievements in the context of National Learners’ Records Database (NLRD). Data as of 01/05/2024.



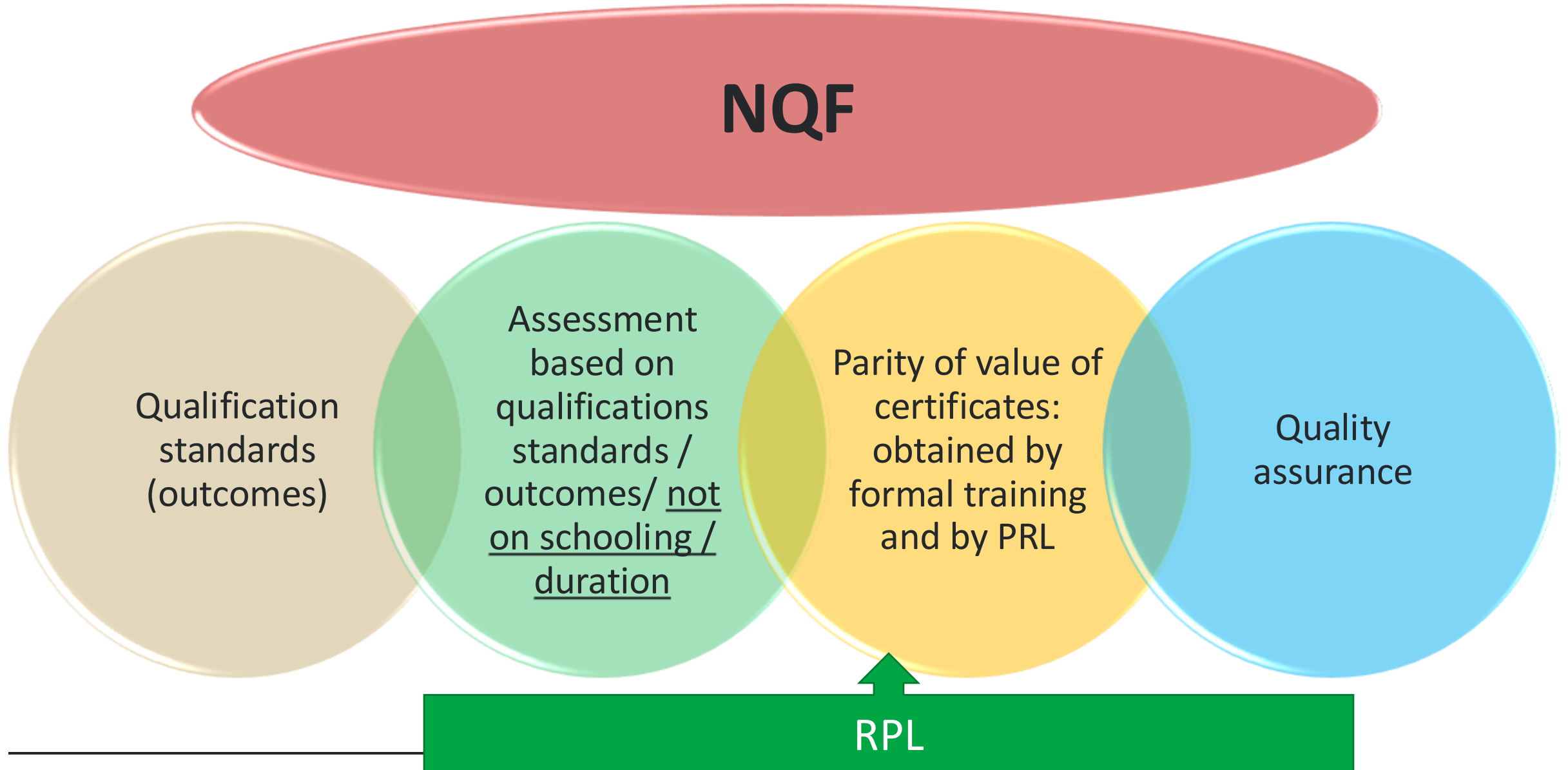
04

**Linkages NQF-RPL-CATS-
Microcredentials: case study
from Europe – Ireland (ECB)**

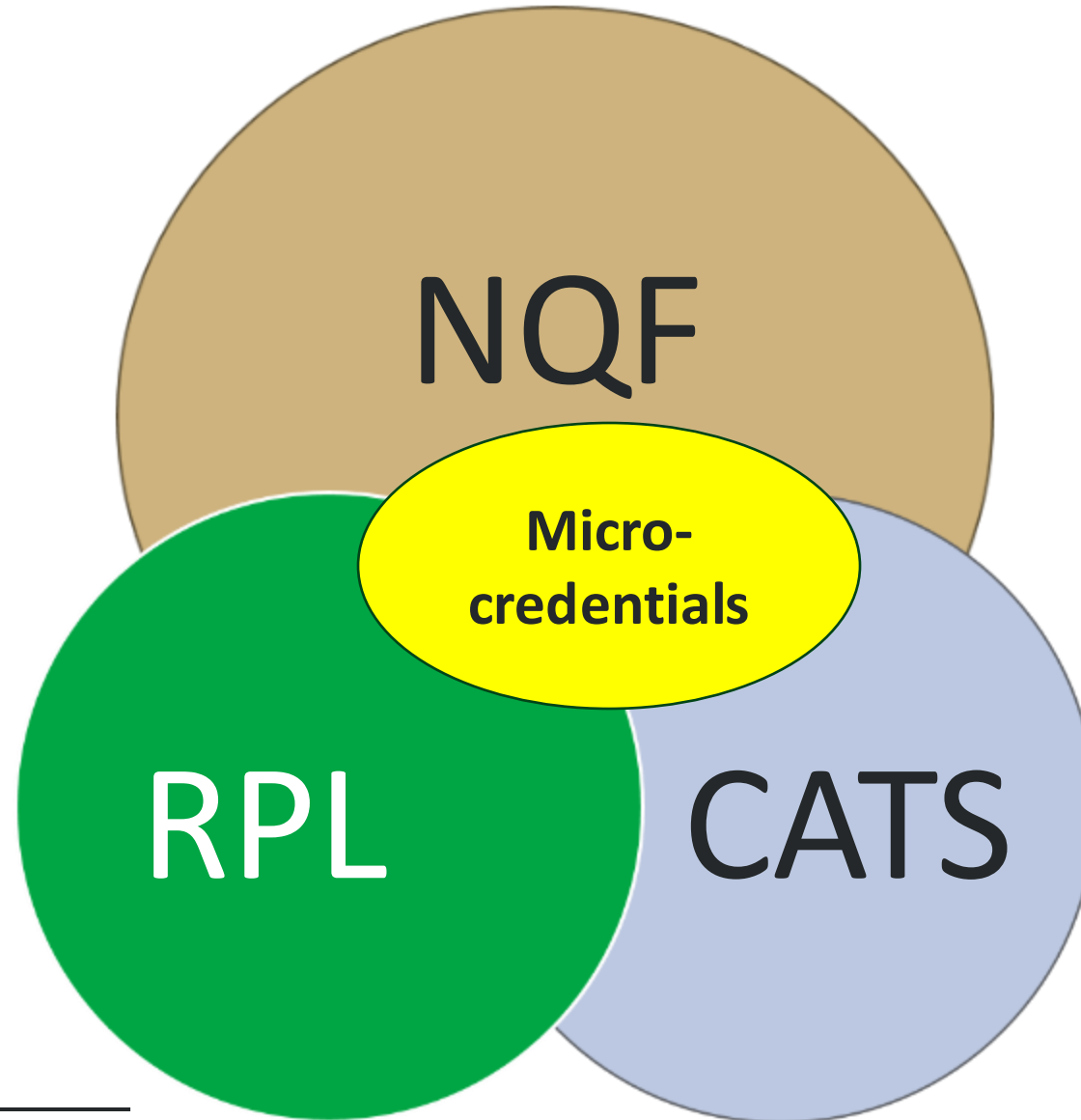
What connection RPL with NQF?



What connection with NQF?



NQF-RPL-CATS-Microcredentials

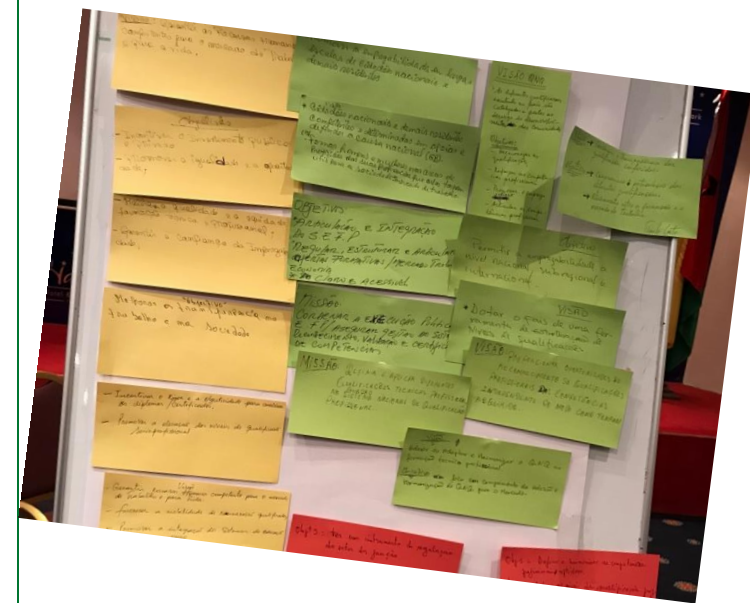


- National governments, and regional and international organisations have intensified debate and research with the aim to define the role and place of Micro-credentials in national education systems and qualifications frameworks, enhancing their benefits for lifelong learning and employability.
 - In 2022 UNESCO proposed a common definition of micro-credentials, based on a process of experts' consultation of global scope.
 - UNESCO (2022). Towards a common definition of micro-credentials.
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381668>
 - In June 2022 the European Union approved the Council Recommendation on a European Approach to Micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability. All definitions emphasise: assessment, quality assurance and focused learning achievement.
 - Council Recommendation of 16 June 2022 on a European approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability 2022/C 243/02 ST/9790/2022/INIT https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2022.243.01.0010.01.ENG
-

Micro-credentials: elements of a definition

- Existing definitions (from OECD, European Commission, UNESCO, Australian Government) point to key characteristics of micro-credentials:

- ✓ Referring to learning over a limited time and/or in a specific area
- ✓ May form part of or add to formal qualifications
- ✓ Potentially 'stackable' over time, adding to individual learning careers
- ✓ Given their limited size and focus, more flexible than traditional qualifications
- ✓ Based on assessed learning
- ✓ Frequently delivered in a digital form.



Micro-credentials: UNESCO proposed definition

A large subset of credentials can be referred to as micro-credentials: **focused on a specific set of learning outcomes in a narrow field of learning and achieved over a shorter period of time.**

Micro-credentials are offered by commercial entities, private providers and professional bodies, traditional education and training providers, community organisations and other organisations.

While many micro-credentials represent the outcomes of more traditional learning experiences, others **verify demonstration of achievements acquired elsewhere, such as in the workplace, through volunteering, or through personal interest learning.** Micro-credentials are often promoted as an efficient way to upskill workers across the lifespan.

The proposed definition (Oliver, 2021) states that a micro-credential:

- 1. Is a record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do;**
- 2. Includes assessment based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider;**
- 3. Has stand-alone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning; and**
- 4. Meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance.**

EU: Recommendation on European approach to micro-credentials for LLL and employability: definition

- "Micro-credential' means the record of the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a small volume of learning. These learning outcomes will have been assessed against transparent and clearly defined criteria. Learning experiences leading to micro-credentials are designed to provide the learner with specific knowledge, skills and competences that respond to societal, personal, cultural or labour market needs. Micro-credentials are owned by the learner, can be shared and are portable. They may be stand-alone or combined into larger credentials. They are underpinned by quality assurance following agreed standards in the relevant sector or area of activity."

Adopted 16/06/2022: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022H0627%2802%29>

EU: Recommendation on European approach to micro-credentials for LLL and employability: 10 principles

“Use micro-credentials, where appropriate, as a tool to strengthen and complement existing learning opportunities, increase participation in lifelong learning”

1. Quality
2. Transparency
3. Relevance
4. Valid assessment
5. Learning pathways

6. Recognition
7. Portability
8. Learner-centred
9. Authentic
10. Information and guidance

Adopted 16/06/2022: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022H0627%2802%29>

Australia National Micro-Credential framework

The Australian Government (2021) adopted the [National Micro-Credentials Framework](#), which uses the following definition:

- A micro-credential is a certification of assessed learning or competency, with a minimum volume of learning of one hour and less than an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) award qualification, that is additional, alternate, complementary to or a component part of an AQF award qualification.

What can constitute a micro-credential?

- TVET skill sets or units of competency.
- Modularised, assessed components of existing higher education curriculum or subjects.
- Industry learning that is assessed (such as vendor certifications, professional learning).
- Other forms of assessed learning or competencies (e.g. Vocational Education/Higher Education /Industry courses not currently accredited by a regulatory authority, and those by other providers).

What does not constitute a micro-credential?

- Unassessed learning or courses, including work-integrated learning without an assessment.
- Badges which are obtained through participation only (i.e. without an assessment).
- Formal qualifications within the AQF and macro-credentials, including diplomas, certificates and master's degrees.

Case study from Europe: Ireland (RPL-Microcredentials)

- Source: Hawley Woodall, J. (2024). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2023 update: Case study: micro-credentials (Ireland). European Commission and Cedefop.
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/country-reports/european-inventory-validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-2023-update-micro-credentials-ireland>
- This case study examined a number of micro-credential initiatives and assessed the extent to which each one can either be accessed or obtained through RPL, or if the micro-credential itself can be used as evidence towards an RPL application. The findings are summarised in the Table.
- Ireland has high employment rate and low unemployment rate. But a large share of adults (> 40%, > 20y, 2022) does not have a qualification above level 5 of NFQ (school leaving). Together with the rapidly-changing nature of work, this means that many Irish workers need to upskill, reskill and make their skills more visible, in order to meet the demands of industry.
- Micro-credentials are an opportunity for these individuals: many cannot commit to taking substantial periods out of the workplace. They can be a more approachable way to return to education for workers who have had a long break from learning and / or negative experiences of formal education. They also meet the needs of employers who are unable release workers for long-term training or need to respond to rapidly-changing skills demands.
- The national strategy for Further Education and Training (FET) highlights the importance of, “modular, micro and ‘bite sized’ offerings to meet specific up-skilling needs” (Government of Ireland; SOLAS, n.d.). It identifies a role for ‘micro-credentialing and digital badging’ in providing flexible, accessible upskilling opportunities to employees and enterprises, and in promoting lifelong learning. The national strategy for Higher Education (HE) also states that the delivery of HE must be characterised by flexibility and innovation (Dep of Education, 2019).

Micro-credentials and RPL - Ireland

The Study identified and analysed:

- **Micro-credentials in:**

- **Formal sector**

1. Minor and Special Purpose Awards in the NFQ
2. Microqualifications in FET
3. MicroCred project in HE
4. Micro-credentials offered by the Food Industry Training Unit at UCC

- **Micro-credentials in:**

- **Non-formal and informal learning**

5. Non-formal learning in the private and third sector
6. Kildare and Wicklow ETB (KWETB) Global Hospitality Badge offers a digital badge initiative to recognise experiential learning for people working in hospitality. The Global Hospitality Badge is based on a City and Guilds competency framework of over 40 hospitality job roles, which are mapped to an industry-based set of standards.

Conclusions



Example	Can be accessed through RPL	Can be obtained through RPL	Can be used in RPL process to access/obtain formal qualifications
1. Minor or special purpose awards on the NFQ	Yes: QQI Principles and Operational Guidelines for RPL require providers to have policies and procedures for learner admission, progression and recognition enabling the fair recognition of prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.		N/A. These awards are on the NFQ (i.e. they are formal qualifications) and (many) can be combined to achieve full awards.
2. FET Micro-qualifications	Yes: in line with QQI Principles and Operational Guidelines for RPL.	Yes: in line with QQI Principles and Operational Guidelines for RPL. However, interviewees suggested that it is likely to be less time-consuming (for both learners and providers) to complete the training than to produce an RPL portfolio.	N/A. These awards are on the NFQ (i.e. they are formal qualifications). They can be stacked to achieve larger awards.
3. MicroCreds project	HEIs use RPL for access, including for micro-credential (and other short) courses.	RPL is used in HE to support credit towards an award, exemptions from programme modules, and advanced entry. However, interviewees suggested that RPL is rarely practical for the award of micro-credentials in the HE sector.	N/A. Some of these awards on the NFQ, whereas others are not.. It should be possible to use them towards a process of RPL in line with QQI Principles and Operational Guidelines. It may be possible to combine certain MicroCreds to achieve full awards.
4. FITU digital badges and micro-credentials	Yes: suitability for the courses is determined through RPL.	Yes: assessment can be based on learning from the course or experiential learning from the workplace.	Yes: see above with regard to RPL in both FET and HE. Badges can be accepted in place of the qualification requirements for entry to FITU's Level 9 (Masters) courses.

ACQF Conclusions (2)

Example	Can be accessed through RPL	Can be obtained through RPL	Can be used in RPL process to access/obtain formal qualifications
5. Non-formal learning, e.g. offered by employers, private training providers, sector bodies	N/A.		<p>Yes: in line with QQI Principles and Operational Guidelines for RPL.</p> <p>However, providers indicated that most RPL evidence tends to derive from experiential (informal) learning, rather than non-formal learning.</p>
6. Global Hospitality Badge	Yes: a learner's initial application is assessed against the relevant criteria (e.g. making sure the individual's experience is recent, i.e. from the last six months).	Yes: the badges are obtained through an evidence portfolio or a line manager's assessment of the individual's competences.	Yes: see above with regard to RPL in both FET and HE.

Summing-up: RPL and microcredentials

- **Micro-credentials:** benefits for all – stepping stone back into education and training, facilitate career progression, address skills shortages.
 - **Digital micro-credentials:** easier to map against standards used in RPL process
 - **Micro-credentials aligned with NFQ:** more “currency” and acceptance by employers. In line with QQI’s Principles and Operational Guidelines for RPL, it should be possible to access or obtain these qualifications through RPL. **Time RPL > time training?**
 - **Where micro-credentials are not included in the NFQ, providers can decide whether these will be open to RPL.** The examples considered for this case study have shown that these small units of learning are well-suited to the recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning. They are designed to meet specific needs within industry or to support career progression, therefore workers can match their skills developed on-the-job with a badge or qualification that recognises these.
-

Potentialities of micro-credentials and credential ecology

Micro-credentials are one of the **big movements** in education and training.

They should be at **service of Big Ideas**, rather than being considered the Big Idea...

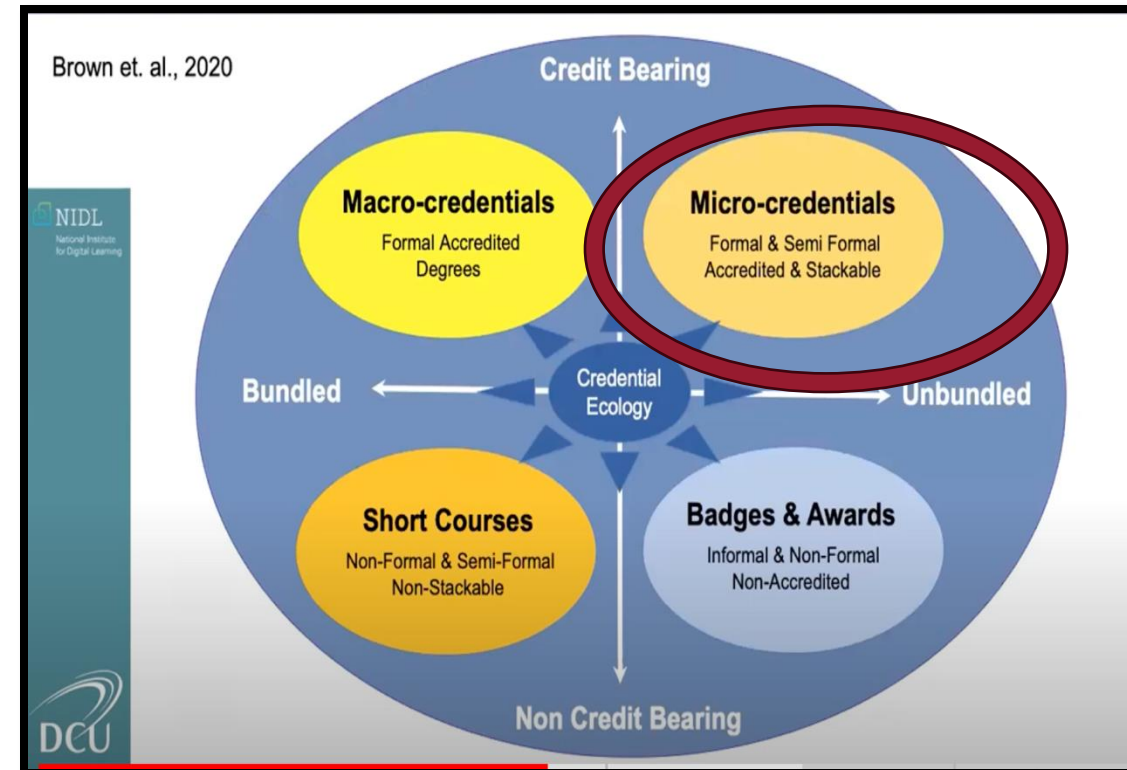
Micro-credentials can help **certify the outcomes of small, tailored learning experiences**.

They make possible the **targeted, flexible acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences** to meet new and emerging needs in society and the labour market and make it possible for individuals to fill the skill gaps they need to succeed in a fast-changing environment, while not replacing traditional qualifications.

They can, where appropriate, complement existing qualifications, providing added value while not undermining the core principle of full degree programmes in initial education and training.

Micro-credentials could be designed and issued by a variety of providers in different **learning settings** (formal, non-formal and informal learning settings)

Credential ecology: quadrants



[Access the video](#)

Mike Brown, MC Observatory

Thank you!
Asante sana!
Obrigada!
Merci!

Eduarda & Stanley

