



**Triennale on Education and Training in Africa  
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**Promoting critical knowledge, skills and  
qualifications for sustainable development in  
Africa: How to design and implement an effective  
response by education and training systems**

**Sub-theme 1  
Common core skills for lifelong  
learning and sustainable  
development in Africa**

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**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**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Working Document**

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## 1. ABSTRACT

1. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning is in line with UNESCO's vision already expressed in Learning to Be (Faure et al. 1972). These educational challenges foreseen by UNESCO many decades ago are not very different from the challenges to the learning system that we are confronted with; one might even state that the urgency of addressing them is rapidly becoming of greater importance. This development is based on the reality that formal education is not equipped well enough anymore to fulfill the growth in expectations and learning needs of individuals and communities in the rapidly changing global society. Furthermore, there is a growing demand by adults and young people for validation and formal awards for the knowledge, skills and competencies they have acquired in non-formal and informal learning environments, to better equip them to have decent work. Recognition, validation, and accreditation of prior learning through non-formal and informal learning pathways is viewed as an integral part of the broader theme of lifelong learning, and of the lifelong learning cycle. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning has relevance 'not only in regard to education and training policies but also to related challenges of poverty-reduction, job-creation, employment and social inclusion' (CEDEFOP: 2008). This paper will focus on four discreet but integrated aspects of the broader education and training system, within the broader context of sustainable development in Africa. It examines generic understandings of validation, recognition and accrediting non-formal and informal learning, the facilitating role that NQFs can and are playing in recognition, the analysis and conclusions from case studies from six African countries, and it concludes with suggestions about how validation and recognition policies and practices of non-formal and informal learning can be key building blocks towards lifelong learning and sustainable skills development in Africa.