

# **SADC TVET Symposium**

# **Building effective national TVET policy framework in the SADC member states**

# **Note 3: Articulation**

#### 1.0 Background

The Southern African Development Community (SADC), in cooperation with ACQF-II project implemented by the European Training Foundation (ETF), and with the ILO and UNESCO is convening a technical vocational education and training (TVET) symposium with the SADC Member States on 8-9 May 2023 contributing to strengthen TVET policies and systems. The decision was approved at the annual Joint Meeting of ESTI Ministers of SADC (14-17/June 2022).

The symposium will deepen the findings and conclusions of the 'Situational analysis of TVET in SADC' study and propose pertinent measures towards strengthening TVET in the Member States.

## 2.0 Preamble

Education, training and skills development are important for socio-economic development. The definition of TVET used is adapted from the "UNESCO Recommendation concerning TVET" (2015): 'TVET, as part of lifelong learning, can take place at secondary, post-secondary, tertiary levels and working life, and includes work-based learning and continuing training and professional development which may or may not lead to qualifications. It also encompasses the wide range of skills development opportunities that an individual benefits from during his/her working life, to acquiring learning to learn skills, the development of literacy and numeracy skills, transversal skills and citizenship skills'.

The following four themes have been identified as contributing to the development of the TVET systems and will underpin the discussion at the symposium;

- Policy framework;
- Labour market responsiveness;
- Articulation; and
- Innovation in TVET and responsiveness to green and digital transition.

## 3.0 Adopted methodology

This concept note on articulation is based on a rapid scoping and evidence literature review and is intended to stimulate discussions at the symposium.

#### 4.0 SADC TVET situational analysis

- TVET monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems in SADC member states are at different stages of development, with varying levels of capacity to manage the M&E functions. Participation of the industry in the M&E process should be more widespread with the publication of frequent performance monitoring reports are produced in some countries like South Africa, Mauritius, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana with the reports being shared with all the relevant stakeholders.
- TVET research in Sub-Saharan Africa is not systematic and not of high enough quality to provide systematic labour market feedback to ensure that policy-making is evidenced based and that the sector responds to market demand for skilled workers.
- Most SADC member states have a National Qualification Framework, but they are still facing issues with the articulation pathways, whereby it is challenging for a TVET graduate to effortlessly and systematically join a Higher Education Institution (HEI). There are working platforms that have been established in some member states where TVET and Higher Education Authorities (HEA) are addressing challenges related to articulation arrangements and pathways.
- Despite having national gender inclusive education policies and the implementation of specific affirmative strategies in certain member states, the enrolment rates of girls and special needs individuals are generally low.
- Member states have formulated policies to improve the performance of national TVET systems.
   Reforms have been taking place, but have not been mainstreamed and sustained due mainly to a lack of financial and capital investment.
- The situational analysis found that most Member states' systems are supply-driven. Such systems are inadequately responsive to labour market demand, resulting in persistent skills mismatches. Most countries have bifurcated labour markers wherein high employment, especially youth unemployment exists alongside high demand for semi- and high-skilled labour. The major problem is that TVET systems have not explored non-traditional learning modalities, alternative credentialing and new technologies that can expand access, increase relevance and speed upskilling and re-skilling.
- TVET systems have timidly embraced the use of digital-pedagogical technologies. Many reasons underpin this low uptake, including resistance of trainers and learners to change, limited digital skills of trainers, lack of financial resources to invest in digital learning technologies, challenges in accessing and using existing learning platforms, inadequate digital skills development capabilities as well as the realities of TVET requiring physical contact between trainers and learners.
- TVET generally has a poor public image amongst youths and parents. The perception that TVET is a segment of education that is designed for drop-outs and the academically poor is engrained in the psyche of both prospective learner and parents. Innovative and marketing advocacy work needs to be generalized in the member states.

## 5.0 Articulation: a working definition

Articulation<sup>1</sup> is the process of forming possibilities of connection between qualifications and/or partqualifications to allow for vertical, lateral and diagonal movement of learners through the formal education and training system, not neglecting its linkages with the world of work. It is on this basis that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> This definition is from the SAQA and can be accessed from https://www.saqa.org.za/faq/articulation?language content entity=en

qualifications are developed and designed with such articulation options<sup>2</sup>. Articulation should provide for learners, on successful completion of accredited prerequisites, to move between components of the education and training delivery system (e.g. the efficient progress of learners from TVET to HE, TVET to the world of work, HE to the world of work, amongst others. There are various forms of articulation, namely systemic<sup>3</sup>, specific<sup>4</sup> and individual<sup>5</sup>. Comprehensive National Qualification Frameworks provide a basis for articulation.

#### Other definitions<sup>6</sup>

The progression of students from one course to another, or from one education and training sector to another. Articulation arrangements facilitate the movement from a completed qualification to another with admission and/or credit in a defined qualification pathway.



Source:

ONCVER (Australia), VOCEDplus: Glossary of VET, (accessed 12/2022)

Active linking between vocational and academic streams.



Source:



Refers to a process that allows students to make the smooth transition from one course, program, or education level to the next without experiencing duplication of learning.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Blom (2013) Articulation in the South African Education and Training System. National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Research Conference, 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> March 2013, Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> Systemic articulation is based on legislation and the steering mechanisms available to the state, such as planning and funding in the education and training system. It is a "joined up system" including qualifications, professional designations, policies and various other official elements that support learning and work pathways. (SAQA, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Specific articulation is based on the formal and informal agreements within the system for education and training – between institutions – as guided by policies, accreditation principles, and mechanisms like Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) or Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) (SAQA, 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Individual articulation refers to learners being supported in their learning and work pathways through flexible admission, curriculum, learning and teaching, and learner support systems such as the quality of qualifications and learning, career development services, and other mechanisms (SAQA, 2017)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> UNEVOC, UNESCO. https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/show=term/term=Articulation#start



Source

TESDA, TVET glossary of terms (online), (accessed 12/2022)

#### 6.0 Sub-themes & pointers for discussion

- 1. National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)
- 2. Articulation pathways
- 3. Recognition of Prior Learning
- 4. Micro-credentials for education, skilling, lifelong learning and employment

#### 6.1 National Quality Frameworks (NQFs)

A NQF is an instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies of individuals along a continuum of agreed levels. It is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications/part-qualifications, which are defined by learning outcomes, i.e. clear statements of what the learner must know or be able to do whether learned in a classroom, on-the-job, or even informally. The Qualifications Framework usually includes both vocational and academic qualification, and indicates the comparability of different qualifications and how one can progress from one level to another, within and across occupations or industrial sectors. It also allows for articulation, that is movement cross vocational and academic fields.

## 6.1.1 Case from South Africa: National Qualification Framework

South Africa<sup>7</sup> needed to create a national education and training system that provides quality learning, in response to the ever-changing influences of the external environment and the development of the nation that is committed to life-long learning. The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is response to these demands.

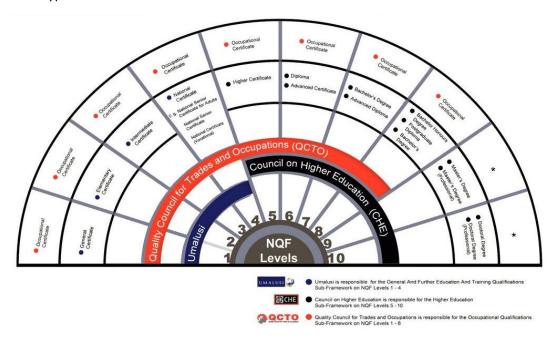
The NQF is a framework setting-up the set of principles and guidelines by which records of learner achievement are registered to enable national recognition of acquired skills and knowledge. The framework supports life-long learning. One of the objectives of the NQF, as outlined in Section 5 of the NQF Act, is to 'facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education and training career paths'. The South African NQF is a singled integrated system comprising three coordinated qualifications sub-frameworks, overseen by 3 quality councils for:

- General and Further Education and Training
  - o NQF levels 1 to 4
  - Overseen by Umalusi)
- Higher Education
  - o NQF levels 5 to 10
  - Overseen by the Council on Higher Education); and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> https://www.saqa.org.za/faq/what-national-qualifications-framework-nqf?language content entity=en

- Trades and Occupations
  - NQF levels 1 to 8
  - Overseen by the Quality Council on Trades and Occupations (QCTO)

The figure below illustrates the NQF in South African and its 3 sub-frameworks, quality councils and qualification types.



Source: South African Qualifications Authority

#### 6.1.2 Pointers for discussion

- 1. How functional is the NQF in your country and what have been its major achievements and benefits?
- 2. What salient challenges is your NQF facing, and how is your country reviewing and improving the NQF?
- 3. How does the NQF in your country support articulation / institutionalized articulation pathways?

## 6.2 Articulation pathways

The centrality of "lifelong learning" in EU education and training policies is a strong foundation and support of "no-dead-ends" education and training.

In countries such as Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Finland, Portugal, and other EU countries with operational NQFs referenced to European Qualifications Framework /(EQF) the link between vocational education and training and higher-level education is stronger, ensuring flexible pathways.

Some of these countries have established robust foundations for the qualifications of "double
certification" (at level 4 of the EQF), providing learners with a) a professional credential for
employment, and b) the school leaving diploma of general upper-secondary education providing
access to higher education (at level 6 of the EQF). This is the case of Portugal and Finland.

• Double certification qualifications exist in at least one African NQF: Cape Verde (at level 4 of the 8-levels NQF).

This institutionalised progression / permeability between secondary vocational education and training, and higher education is ensured through different arrangements, including flexible agreements between education institutions.

These countries have built a solid foundation of high-quality initial TVET to allow progression through articulation. High-quality initial TVET attract able students who naturally aspire to further learning and expect to have avenues allowing them to fulfil their aspiration. This in parallel also addresses the parity of esteem issue surrounding TVET, thus increasing its status, attracting more students and simultaneously fulfilling labour market needs. It also gives confidence to institutions of HE that graduates of initial TVET are prepared and ready for more demanding coursework. The NQFs in such countries support permeability and progression.

## 6.2.1 Case from South Africa: The National Policy for articulation8

In 2017 the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) gazetted the Articulation Policy for the PSET system in South Africa. The policy creates an enabling environment to ensure that: articulation occurs within and between the three NQF Sub-Frameworks; institutions work together to develop learning and work pathways; and support is provided for learners as they follow their individual learning and work pathways. The Articulation Policy sets out the legislative and regulatory framework for articulation for all institutions of learning in the country, and for South Africa's regional and international links. Simultaneously it supports the implementation of the NQF Act.

Source: SAQA (2017). Articulation Between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): National Articulation Baseline Study

#### 6.2.2 Case from Germany: Apprenticeship and articulation in Germany

Germany is a country learning on the job is a traditional component of the education system. The apprenticeship programme (dual system, with two learning venues: 70% work-based and 30% school-based) is the main pillar of VET. About one in two secondary school graduates choose a vocational path and most of them go for an apprenticeship mode.

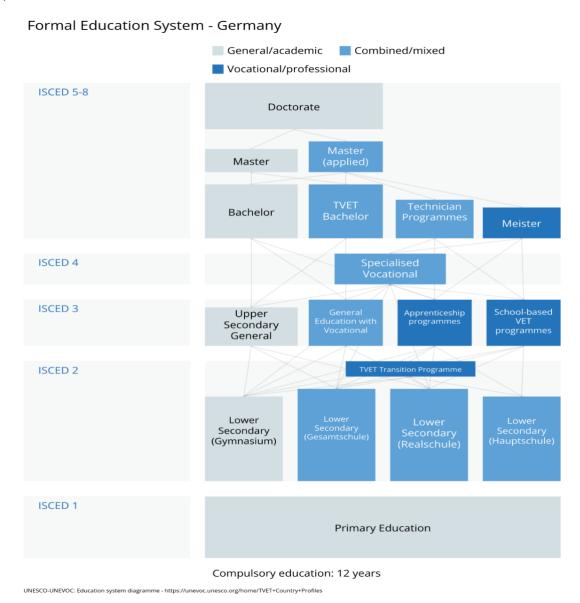
Progression is possible through various regulated VET programmes provided at post-secondary and increasingly at tertiary level. VET is based on cooperation between state, companies and social partners, who set together national standards and training regulations (for both work- and school-based learning), leading to highly recognized vocational qualifications, allowing for a subsequent smooth transition to the labour market. Grounding of initial TVET in the requirements of the economy also ensures that subsequent learning pathways are founded on connection with the labour market, underpinning the career prospects of those who follow those pathways. These make initial TVET attractive to students.

There is a variety of VET programmes at upper secondary level: in full time schools or within the framework of the dual system (apprenticeship), which is the core of VET in Germany. Some programmes

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> SAQA (2017) Articulation Between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): National Articulation Baseline Study Report. Available at <a href="https://www.saqa.org.za/sites/default/files/2019-">https://www.saqa.org.za/sites/default/files/2019-</a>

<sup>11/</sup>National%20Articulation%20Baseline%20Study%20Report.pdf

offer a preparatory training; others lead to a vocational qualification allowing access to relevant occupations. A VET qualification can also be acquired along with a bachelor's degree during dual studies programmes (i.e., at a university of applied sciences). The figure below depicts the various possible articulation pathways and routes for progression where VET is an integral part of the education system and not disjointed. Given its intrinsic design, this system also, intrinsically, promotes lifelong learning in VET.



(Source: Dynamic TVET Country Profiles (unesco.org))

## 6.2.3 Pointers for discussion

- 1. How is articulation defined in your country?
- 2. What types of articulation arrangements are established in your country (e.g.: systemic, specific, and / or individual)? Any there any other modalities of articulation in place?

- 3. Are learners, stakeholders and education and training institutions well informed on these arrangements? What advocacy and dissemination approaches are used?
- 4. What levels of NQF and sub-sectors of education and training are mostly concerned by articulation arrangements?
- 5. Are TVET programmes and qualifications conceived and prepared for effective articulation with HE?
- 6. To what extent are the articulation arrangements functioning and meeting their objectives?
- 7. What have been the benefits of articulation in your country, if any? Could you share some good practice / examples?
- 8. What are the main problems, and barriers affecting articulation and its benefits for learners?
- 9. How can the articulation practice / mechanisms be improved in your country in a consistent and sustained manner?
- 10. How can SADC and the SADCQF help? Would you support a reflection towards a set of common features and approach on articulation in the SADC?

#### 6.3 Recognition of prior learning

People learn anytime, everywhere. Outcomes of prior learning in all contexts of life often remain invisible, while they can be validated, recognised, certified to give people access to new perspectives and opportunities in education and training, decent employment, entrepreneurship, social inclusion, career progression. Across the world, countries and regional communities increasingly acknowledge the value of non-formal and informal learning and many are establishing systems to make visible people's skills and knowledge gained in all learning contexts.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) implies the formal validation and certification of learning outcomes acquired in all learning contexts (formal, non-formal and informal). RPL is learner-centred, and individuals may combine RPL with training modules to complete a full qualification. It is also acknowledged that many countries have initiated steps to establishing a RPL mechanism but are facing challenges for effective implementation. The ILO has developed SADC RPL guidelines to assist better take up and implementation of RPL in all countries<sup>9</sup>.

## 6.3.1 Case from France: RPL-VAE<sup>10</sup> in France

Validation of non-formal and informal learning is strongly connected with the NQF, lifelong learning, training, and employment policies in France. Any qualification (all levels) registered in the NQF Register (RNCP / RS) must be compatible with the VAE pathway to be assessed and obtain the diploma / certificate.

The VAE system is based on the premise that competence is worth a qualification. VAE is integrated in the labour and education code and procedures are defined by legislation. VAE allows the award of whole or parts of qualifications with a vocational and professional orientation and purpose at all levels, without the need to go through formal training. The qualification documents obtained through VAE are the same as those awarded via initial or continuous formal education, training or apprenticeship. Recent policy initiatives and reforms continue to emphasise the need to give high priority to employability and equip candidates with competences better aligned with the needs of the labour market. To facilitate lifelong learning, the notion of 'units/ blocks of competences' (blocs de compétences) was introduced in 2014,

<sup>9</sup> https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed emp/---ifp skills/documents/publication/wcms 625895.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Validation des Acquis de l'Experience

organising competences in qualification standards based on socially and professionally meaningful activities and tasks. The competence blocks represent a modular and progressive access to certification, as part of a training course or a RPL process, or a combination of these access modalities. They also support adaptation and transition to new jobs.

Source: Cedefop, 2019, National qualifications framework developments in Europe

#### 6.3.2 Case from South Africa: RPL as part of admission policy at University of Western Cape

The University of the Western Cape<sup>11</sup> (UWC) has pioneered policy development and implementation of RPL within South Africa's higher education landscape. RPL is an integral part of the Admissions Policy at UWC and supports mature students seeking alternative access into higher education degree/qualification programmes at UWC.

The domain of RPL is closely aligned to the main elements of the South African national policy discourse since 1994, with a specific focus of achieving transformation, accreditation, lifelong learning and complying with the National qualifications framework (NQF) of South Africa. The willingness to upgrading ones skills and knowledge on the higher education and training level is a huge decision. Often this journey is exciting and daunting at the same time. One needs to be prepared financially, committed and self-motivated. Key factors in succeeding are hard work, focus, a thirst for knowledge, determination and responsibility.

The implementation of RPL across the higher education sector and is based on the principles of equity, access, inclusivity and redress of past unfair discrimination with regard to educational opportunities.

The figure below shows the advert and the RPL services offered by UWC for 2023 enrolment by RPL through the Portfolio Development Online Programme.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Additional information at https://www.uwc.ac.za/admission-and-financial-aid/recognition-of-prior-learning

# **UWC Recognition of Prior Learning Unit**



"Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the formal acknowledgement of the knowledge, skills, expertise and capabilities that people possess as a result of the prior learning that may have occurred through formal, informal or non-formal means – through self-study, work or other life experiences."

#### The RPL Unit offers the following services

- · RPL for Undergraduate Access: RPL Portfolio Development Programme
- RPL for Postgraduate Access
- · RPL for Credits (both undergraduate and postgraduate)
- RPL Policy Development
- · IAARPL Research and Scholarship
- RPL Practitioner, Policy and Implementation Training

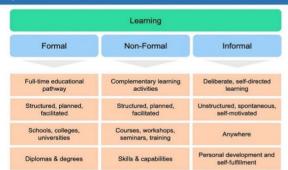




**REGISTRATION 2023**: RPL for Undergraduate Access: Portfolio Development Programme opens on 9th January and closes on 15th March 2023. For more information, or to understand if you meet the requirements, please consult with our RPL advisors by emailing <a href="mailto:release-golden-release



Identify your knowledge forms, where how and what have you acquired?





#### RPL for Undergraduate Access:

The Portfolio Development Programme (PDP) and the Tests for Assessment and Placement (TAP) Programme have been merged into one offering as the Portfolio Development Online Programme (PDOP) offered in a hybrid mode. This is the only programme pathway for undergraduate access via RPL.

# To apply for the RPL programme, one needs to:

- 1. Be 23 years old or older
- 2. With or without a Matric, if the candidate does have a Matric it must be without a bachelors pass/endorsement
  3. Be aware that this is a competitive and
- Be aware that this is a competitive and inclusive process; having an NQF level 4,5 TVET or college level certificate that is relevant to their application is advantageous
- Have relevant working experience, skills and knowledge related to one's application
- Meet the subject requirements as stipulated within the Faculty prospectus/ handbook
- Apply for themselves. A spouse, relative or friend cannot consult on the applicants behalf

For RPL advising, RPL student support, undergraduate access through the Portfolio Development Programme, postgraduate or module credit queries

#### Please contact: rplenquiries@uwc.ac.za

RPL Advisor/Administrator: Mr. Robin Parenzee <u>rparenzee@uwc.ac.za</u>
RPL Programme Coordinator: Mr. Beltus Sirathaza <u>bsirathaza@uwc.ac.za</u>
For RPL Research or Conference queries contact <u>rplresearch@uwc.ac.za</u>
RPL Unit HoD: Dr. Rekha Rambharose <u>rrambharosr@uwc.ac.za</u>
Please ensure that you have browsed the RPL webpage for relevant information that will guide your queries

https://www.uwc.ac.za/admission-andfinancial-aid/recognition-of-prior-learning

#### 6.3.3 Pointers for discussion

- 1. Is the RPL system in development or fully implemented in your country? In which sectors is it developing faster? What qualifications can be obtained via RPL?
- 2. What are the main target groups / main applicants for RPL in your country?
- 3. What benefits can be reported from RPL implementation in your country?
- 4. What are the key problems and barriers to RPL?
- 5. To what extent is RPL supporting lifelong learning? Could you share some good practice / examples?
- 6. To what extent is RPL an enabler of articulation (pathways, mechanisms)? Could you share some good practice / examples?
- 7. How can the SADC and SADCQF help moving further with meaningful RPL?

#### 6.4 Micro-credentials for education, skilling, lifelong learning and employment

The number and diversity of micro-credential offerings have expanded substantially in recent years, accelerated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. A large part of all employees will need reskilling by 2025 and the urgency of getting people back to work gives new momentum to "micro-credentials". Micro-credentials hold promises and challenges, and the common understanding on the role and potentialities of micro-credentials in the era of digital learning and economy is central to the debate.

Micro-credentialling is a learning philosophy that is catching acceptance as the demand for rapid, cost-effective and flexible solutions for re-skilling and up-skilling increases. Such demand is coming form both employers and learners. COVID-19 has focused policy attention on micro-credentials, and there are calls for recognising knowledge, skills and experience beyond what is counted in formal education. Employers are using their reach to provide new options for learners while governments are starting to incorporate micro-credentials into policy, funding and qualifications frameworks (HolonQ February 2021). In the wake of widespread online learning and the relatively nascent interest in micro-credential, it could also be contemplated that a regional approach to micro-credential development could be adopted be developed and offered in SADC member states, that can potentially enhance the role of TVET in providing more flexible and potentially modular forms of learning.

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

- Referring to learning over a limited time period and/or in a specific area
- May form part of or adding 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

Working definition: Micro-credentials are a new and innovative way to recognize and demonstrate proficiency in skills and competencies and have great potential to play an important role in addressing skills gaps in the labour market. They can have value in themselves or potentially accumulate into a larger credential. A micro-credential:

can be acquired following a short learning experience,

- is a record of focused learning achievement verifying what the learner knows, understands or can do;
- includes assessment based on clearly defined standards and is awarded by a trusted provider;
- has stand-alone value and may also contribute to or complement other micro-credentials or macro-credentials, including through recognition of prior learning;
- could be a product of a massive online open course (MOOC);
- meets the standards required by relevant quality assurance;
- is employer-relevant; and
- needs an ecosystem to be established.

#### 6.4.1 Case from Cedefop: The CrowdLearn study on micro-credentials

With growing consensus on the need for more responsive training and learning systems, alternative credentials have come under the spotlight. Alternative credentials (including digital badges, microcredentials, nanocredentials, minor awards, etc.) are either acknowledged in their own right or seen as necessary to make existing qualifications and credentials systems more labour market responsive.

In its CrowdLearn study, CEDEFOP focused on work on online platforms, one of the most fast-evolving segments. Information was collected from crowdworkers and platform companies) on whether skills assessments and awarded micro-certificates offered by MOOCs or platforms were used and more importantly, how such micro-credentials assisted individuals in finding work. Most major online platforms typically offer crowdworkers an opportunity to gain a multitude of micro-certificates and badges by completing platform-specific skill tests, ranging from English language courses to graphic design.

The initial findings provided some early insights into the future of the (digital) microcredential landscape. They revealed that remote online work/platform work was governed by relatively impersonal relationships between the client and the worker and that microcredentials positively influenced job prospects for about 1 in 3 crowdworkers. For most online platform workers, however, such bite-sized credentials were complementary to other (more important feedback?) signals, like client feedback.

(Source: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/microcredentials-are-they-here-stay)

#### 6.4.2 Pointers for discussion

- 1. What is the definition of micro-credentials in your country? Are there proxies of micro-credentials in the education and training eco-system?
- 2. In which sectors of the economy is there growing demand for micro-credentials (or proxies)?
- 3. In which sub-sectors of education and training is there growing offer and diversity of micro-credentials? (Higher education, TVET, non-formal training, training in private companies, others)
- 4. How are employers, enterprises engaged / interested in the development of micro-credentials?
- 5. Are micro-credentials somehow considered / included in the NQF, or in a special register? What are the plans in this respect?
- 6. How can micro-credentials contribute to articulation? Are there examples, good practice to be shared?
- 7. How can SADC / SADCQF help? Would your support a reflection at regional level for a common approach to micro-credentials?