

Recognising your Competencies

Issue 16

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Editorial



I welcome you to this last edition of our Newsletter for the year 2014!

The Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) has been faced with many challenges this year. Nevertheless, this did not deter the hardworking and dedicated staff members from forging forward and taking the Authority to a higher level.

We have recorded successes in the implementation of our Communication Strategy (2013-2015). Our stakeholders and the populace are more informed about the role of the SQA. This is particularly evidenced by the emails that have come in daily to request the Authority's advice on the credibility and accreditation status of overseas education and training providers and the many applications for evaluation and certification of qualifications from organisations and individuals. Indeed, in the area of evaluation and certification of qualifications we have surpassed our target set for the year.

Another of our major achievements has been in the area of programme validation. There has been remarkable increase in the number of applications from tertiary education and training institutions for validation of programmes. This is proof that institutions have become increasingly conscious of the need to ensure that the education and training that they offer to learners meet the quality assurance requirements dictated by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The implementation of our action plan for the pilot implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) also met with successes.

In this last edition of the SQA Newsletter for 2014 we showcase the achievements of the Authority during the last trimester of the year.

The edition also gives an aperçu of other activities within the SQA Secretariat.

Fiona Ernesta
Chief Executive Officer
Seychelles Qualifications Authority

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International Conference of states to examine and adopt the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States

As conferences go, this must have been one of the most badly organized conferences that has taken place under the auspices of an international organization like UNESCO. Arriving in Addis Ababa on the 10th of December, after a frustrating week in which the programme and air tickets had arrived at the last minute, the CEOs of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) were met by personnel at the airport who could not even inform them as to which hotel they were to stay. After an hour of calls we finally had confirmed information on hotel accommodation. We arrived at the conference the next day, after having navigated the very dusty short route, could not manage to locate our seats, could not find out if per diems were to be given out as no housekeeping information was provided, could not access power for our laptops...and, well, you get the idea...

Still this should not in any way detract from the importance of the meeting. The object of the Conference which took place on the 11th and 12th of December 2014 was to finalize and adopt the revised Arusha Convention which had been in existence since 1981. The Arusha Convention made for the mutual recognition of degrees, diplomas and studies once African states had ratified the document. The meeting, which was very badly attended, was the culmination of a long process of revision of the Convention document.

The intention was that the re-

vised document would reflect the evolution of higher education across Africa as well as globally. It would be geared to support academic mobility, enabling immigrants to find work once their credentials had been recognized, and, importantly in this day and age, it would be designed to support and elevate quality. Upon ratification, countries will therefore need to develop or upgrade their own accreditation system for the Convention to be properly implemented. The revised convention can be seen as the harbinger for the formation of a Higher Education area in Africa. It parallels the new generation of recognition conventions, mainly continent-based, which is to be in place within the next few years. Ultimately such conventions should lead to a global convention on the recognition of studies. In a sense therefore it can be seen as both a cause and result of the internationalization of higher education.

Seychelles played its role with credit in the gathering through representation on the Credentials Committee which was formed to examine and report to the conference on the credentials of delegations from countries and observers before signing the revised convention. We had been one of the few countries (apart from South Africa and Morocco) to actually forward comments on the revised documents, but unfortunately UNESCO never received the comments. Most unfortunate also was the fact that the administrative work necessary for Seychelles to actually sign the document during the gathering

had not been done and the end result was that as representatives we could not sign the document at the meeting and submit for ratification upon return. Still, we were gratified that comments we had made, for example to the drafting committee in terms of the recognition of the importance of the National Qualifications Framework across the continent, were incorporated in the final document.



International Conference of states to examine and adopt the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States

Quite apart from the very rich debate on sections of the document, we noticed that there was a tendency for many countries or regions on the continent to want to domesticate the document to reflect their own circumstances. The perennial debate on the inclusion of professional qualifications within the framework of the convention continued apace with many arguing that the convention should relate only to academic qualifications.

Presentations made by experts outside the region who had also worked on such conventions, for example in Asia and Europe, promoted the advantages of such conventions, noted the many difficulties in implementation (linked to protectionist attitudes and resource issues in setting up adequate structures) and also underlined the difficulties in getting government to actually ratify the conventions. In Asia Pacific it was noted that only Australia and China had ratified the regional convention, and that it would most possibly take a decade for the other countries to ratify. In Europe, on the other hand, the Lisbon Convention has been ratified by most states. For Seychelles we were particularly pleased that there was clear recognition that the implementation of such conventions was clearly facilitated by the existence of a National Qualifications Authority and a National Qualifications Framework.

Other presentations that we found useful in our context related to the work of the ENIC/NAR-IC networks (European Network of Information Centres in the European Region/ National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union), the main task of such structures being information sharing and the dissemination of good practices with regards to qualifications and their recognition. Such structures has built on the Bologna process which was designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications across Europe and which has led to the creation of a European higher education area. The presentation on Qualifications Frameworks and their use for recognition purposes was quite useful as it served to reinforce our own experiences. We found the presentation by a Norwegian on the process for qualification recognition for persons having insufficient /non verifiable documentation instructive though costly in terms of resources. At the end of the day, the process smacked very much of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

We left Ethiopia on the 13th of December. As if to ensure that we had a journey that would not to be easily forgotten, the whole check-in system at the airport had broken down by the time we arrived at the back of a check-in queue which extended outside the airport. Consequently the

check-in counters were being manually worked and by the time we eventually reached the counter after an exhausting three hours in line, it was practically boarding time. We had spare Ethiopian money to spend in the duty free which we were now stuck with. In spite of this, we are not sure that we will be returning to Ethiopia in a hurry.

Jean-Michel Domingue
Chief Executive Officer
Tertiary Education
Commission



Education is not preparation for life, education is life itself.

John Dewey

Validation Process of Programmes of Tertiary Education and Training Institutions

Programme Validation approves for a certain period of time, a specific education and training programme, offered by a training provider which leads to the award of a specific qualification or part qualification to be registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

The SQA has had its hands full with the validation process of programmes during these past four months, from September to the close of the year 2014. There were thirty-four (34) applications for validation and two of these were first time applications.

In our last edition, we reported that eighteen (18) programmes of tertiary education and training providers have reached the standard for the Authority to award the status of full validation.

We end the year 2014 with a total of nineteen (19) programmes (inclusive of two short credit bearing courses) that have been awarded the status of full validation and three (3) programmes that have been recommended for the award of full validation status

Change is the end result of all true learning.
Leo Buscaglia

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – Update of the Piloting Phase

During the last quarter of 2014, the activities of the RPL Pilot as laid down in the RPL Pilot Action Plan have progressed further.

With guidance from the RPL Coordinators appointed by the SQA, the majority of the candidates for RPL from work organisations managed to compile their portfolios which they submitted to the SQA on the 29th of September and early October. The SQA received a total of seventeen (17) portfolios.

Upon completion of the pre-screening phase, the next step was to assess the portfolios for possible credit transfer against existing standards and qualifications. This activity was undertaken in a two-day workshop held on the 16th and 17th October 2014 at the MOE Hall, Mont Fleuri. The SQA's local consultant for RPL was the facilitator for

the workshop and RPL coordinators, assessors and moderators from the School of Business Studies (SBSA), Seychelles Agricultural and Horticultural Centre (SAHTC), Seychelles Institute of Technology (SIT), Maritime Training Centre (MTC), and the National Institute of Health and Social Studies (NIHSS) who are all involved in the RPL Pilot participated in the activity.

As of October, the other activities scheduled up to January 2015 under the RPL Pilot Action Plan moved to the five Post Secondary institutions involved in the RPL Pilot. The activities to be undertaken include providing feedback on the outcomes of the portfolio analysis to the RPL candidates, setting dates and conditions to conduct assessments of the competencies identified, ensuring that assessments are appropriately conducted and cases of appeal entertained accordingly, compiling results of all assessments and also submitting a report to the SQA.

It is hoped that the candidates on the RPL Pilot reap maximum benefit from the RPL processes. Feedback as well as other pertinent information gathered from the Pilot will be critical in the finalisation of the RPL Policy and the RPL Guidelines.



Certification and Evaluation of Qualifications

Certification of Qualifications

In the period of September to December 2014, a total of 94 qualifications were certified true copy. This represents a significant reduction from the previous quarter where a total of 749 qualifications were certified. However, this is expected and understandable as at this time of the year there is low demand for certification of qualifications for the purpose of further training. Qualifications certified as true copy for the period September to December 2014 are given at Figures 1(a) and (b).

Qualifications	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
IGCSE	3	7	5	2	17
O Level	0	2	0	2	4
A Level	4	3	4	0	11
Certificate	11	8	10	6	35
Adv Certificate	0	1	2	0	3
Diploma	1	4	1	1	7
Delf B1	1	4	2	0	7
PGCE	0	0	1	0	1
BSc/BA	3	0	2	3	8
MSc/MA	0	0	1	0	1

Figure 1(a): Qualifications certified as true copy by types - September to December 2014

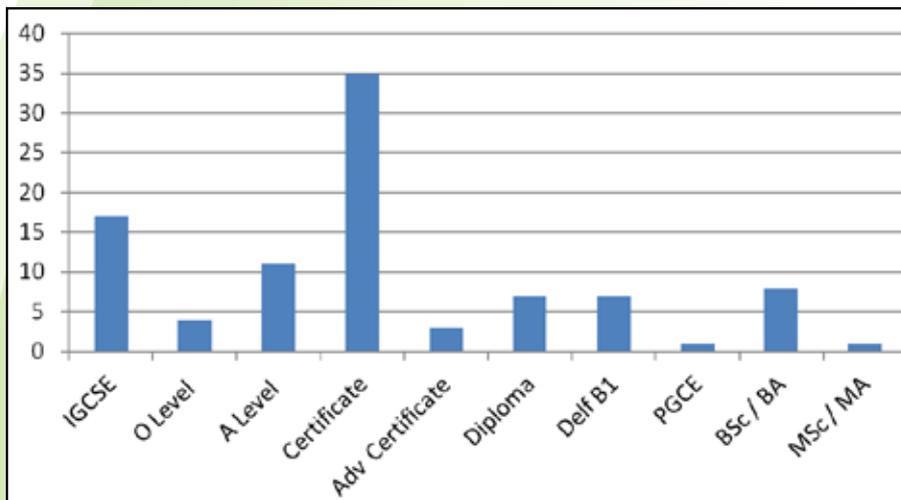


Figure 1(b)

Evaluation of Qualifications

A total of 72 qualifications were evaluated for the period September to December of this year, an increase of 25 qualifications over the period May to August. Qualifications awarded in the United Kingdom were the most popular followed by those obtained in India and locally. Figures 2 (a) and (b) that follow show the distribution of qualifications evaluated by country of origin.

Country of Origin	No. of Qualifications Evaluated
UK	35
Seychelles	8
India	8
Sri Lanka	6
South Africa	2
Cuba	2
Ireland	2
Philippines	1
Mauritius	1
Australia	1
Turkey	1
France	1
Germany	1
Russia	1
Czech Republic	1
Rhode Island USA	1
Total	72

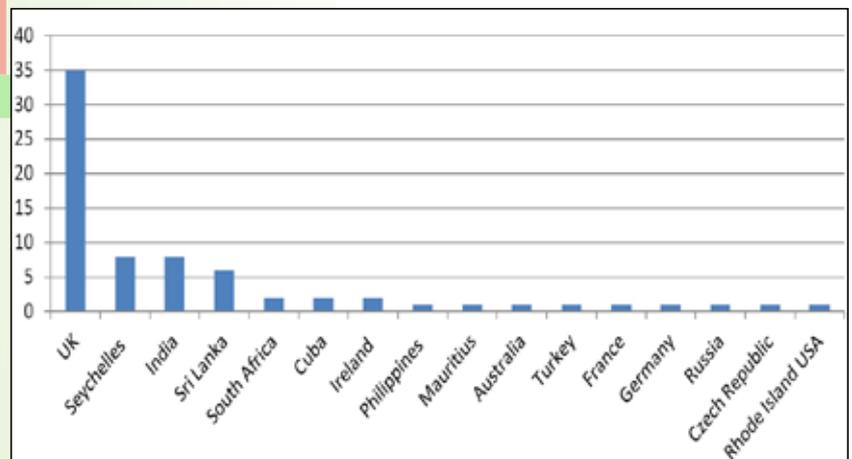


Figure 2 (b)

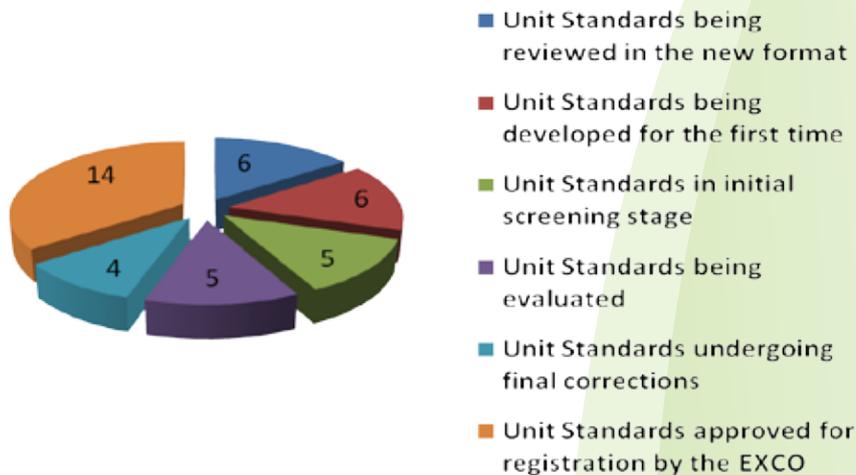
Figure 2 (a): Qualifications Evaluated and country of origin - September to December 2014

Update on Unit Standards Development

Standards setting remain an important pillar alongside quality assurance in implementing the NQF. There has been steady progress in the area of Unit standards development as we entered the third trimester of 2014. Despite the challenges in terms of availability of developers and changes in educational programmes, the SQA has managed to coordinate the development and review of unit standards for programmes of tertiary education and training providers.

By the end of the third trimester of 2014, Unit Standards for a total of forty (40) qualifications are at different stages of development or approval process as summarized below:

- Unit Standards for six (6) qualifications are being reviewed in the new format
- Unit Standards for six (6) qualifications are being developed for the first time
- Unit standards for five (5) qualifications are in the initial screening and correcting stage
- Unit Standards for five (5) qualifications are being evaluated
- Unit Standards for three (4) qualifications are undergoing final corrections
- Unit standards for thirteen (14) qualifications have been approved for registration on the NQF by the Executive Committee (EXCO)



Implementation of SQA's Communication Strategy

In line with the activities laid down in its Communication Strategy, the SQA continued to engage actively with the general public in order to provide information on its services. In this trimester, the SQA has produced adverts in the Creole and English languages to air on the national television. This will ensure that the general public are better informed on the documents required for purpose of Evaluation and Certification of qualifications and the stages in the two processes.

The sensitization activities also involved presenting information on the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) to the partners of the SQA. In this light, the SQA conducted a presentation with the staff of the Centre for Curriculum and Assessment Testing Services (CCATS) of the Ministry of Education and staff of the Schools Division.

The meeting was held on Friday 3rd October 2014 at the Auditorium of the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education (SITE). The mandate and functions of the SQA in relation to the implementation of the NQF were some of the key points discussed during the presentation. The participants expressed their appreciation for the enlightening information and the enhancement of their work through the valuable knowledge gained.

Are you thinking of having your qualification evaluated or certified as true copy by the SQA?

You will need to submit the following documents to the SQA:

- The original qualification (s)
- Transcripts of the years of study for the qualification (s)
- Proof of ID (Identity card or passport)
- A sworn translation from a legal body (attached to the qualification) if the qualification is in a language other than English, French or Creole
- Payment for the service you require

At the SQA an Officer will verify all the documents. If the awarding institution is recognised in the country of origin, you will fill in an Application for the service (s) that you require. 'Certified as true copy' means that SQA will stamp and place its seal on a copy of your original qualification.

If you want your qualification to be evaluated, SQA will process your application, after which you will receive a 'Certificate of Evaluation'. This will have the stamp and seal of the SQA.

Other Activities

Staff Movement

In September 2014 the Private Secretary to the CEO resigned from the organisation. The SQA wishes her the best in her future endeavours.

Birthdays

Ms Joan Amade Principal Quality Assurance Officer celebrated her birthday in October

End of year gathering



After a year of hard work SQA staff enjoy a well deserved lunch.

Happy Birthday !!!

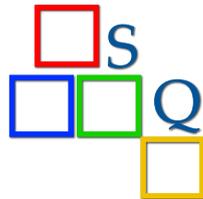
Ms Joan Amade



Bon Appetit !!!

What is a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and what are its benefits?

- An NQF is a key instrument for reform of an education, training and qualifications system;
- An NQF is an abstract construction, made explicit through levels and descriptors;
- NQFs are increasingly seen as instruments for addressing national objectives;
- An NQF is an important communication and transparency tool;
- NQFs clarify the relations between different types of qualifications - such as certificates and diplomas - and levels both horizontally and vertically;
- An NQF is a vehicle to implement Lifelong Learning (LLL) policies;
- NQFs address barriers to access to and progression in learning;
- An NQF makes national qualification systems easier to understand for learners, employers and providers;
- NQFs build public trust in qualifications;
- An NQF provides standards for qualification types;
- NQFs support the recognition of knowledge and skills in order to gain credits.



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