VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITY (VETA)
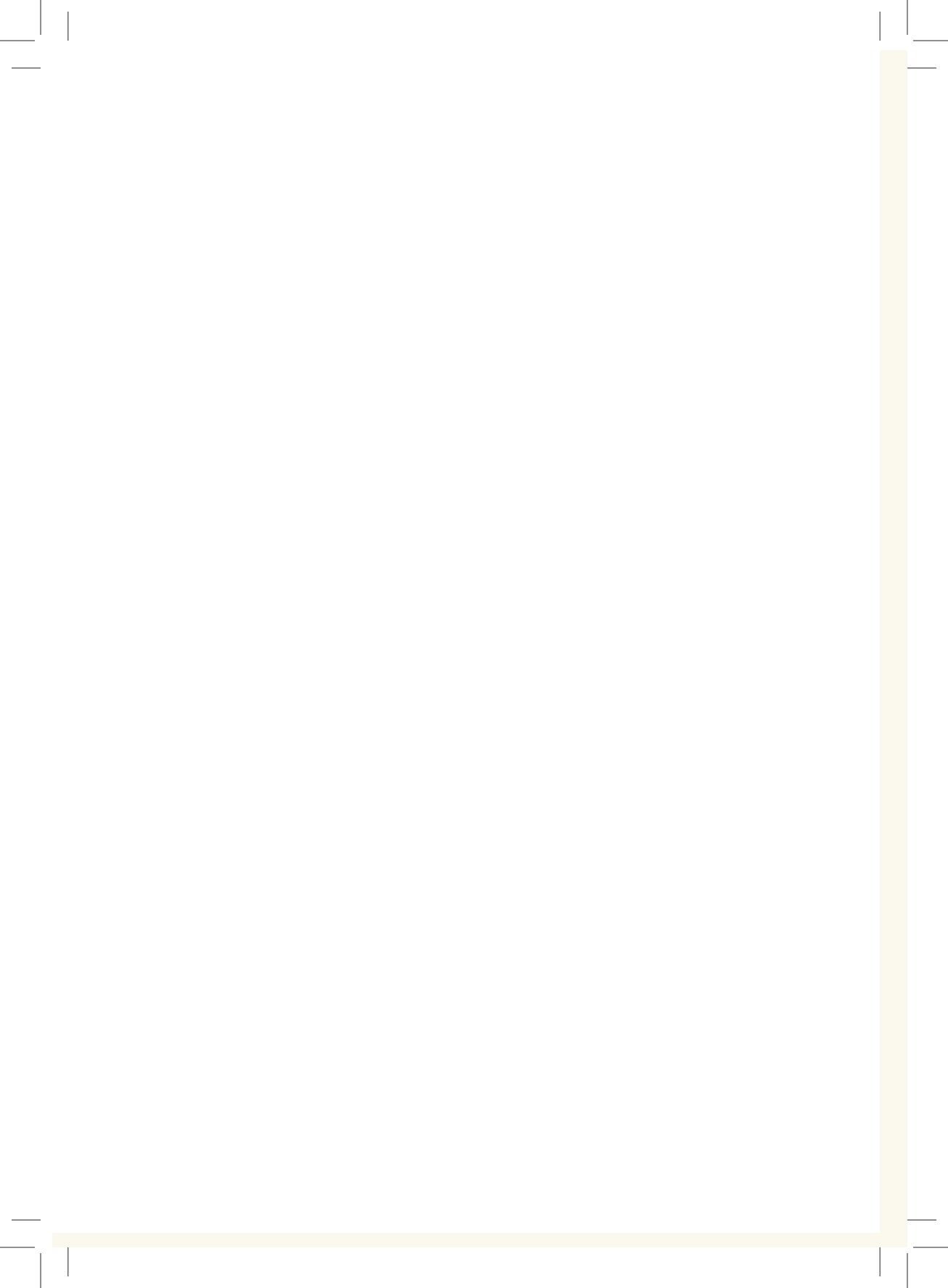
GUIDELINES FOR RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT (RPLA) IN TANZANIA

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITY (VETA)

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

AUTHORED BY VETA WITH TECHNICAL SUPPORT FROM ILO

Contents

Acronyms and abbreviations

CSO   - Civil society organisations

ILO   - International Labour Organization

ILS   - International labour standards

LLL   - Lifelong learning

LMI   - Labour market information

LMIS   - Labour market information system

M&E   - Monitoring and evaluation

NGO   - Non-government organisation

NQF   - National Qualifications Framework

NSDP   - National Skills Development Policy

NTVQF   - National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework

NVQF   - National Vocational Qualifications Framework

PWD   - Persons with disabilities

RPL   - Recognition of prior learning

SADC   - Southern African Development Community

TVET   - Technical and Vocational Education and Training

UNESCO - United Nations Education Scientific Cultural and Organisation

VET   - Vocational Education and Training

VETA   - Vocational Education and Training Authority

WPL   - Workplace Learning

Preface

The Vocational Education and Training Act, 1994 part II section 4 (1) stipulates the objectives and functions of the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA). The promotion of on the job training in industry for both apprenticeship training and for skills updating and upgrading and promote access to vocational education and training for disadvantaged groups. The Competence Based Assessment Guidelines which were approved by the VET Board in March, 2011 considers informal and formal apprenticeship as alternative modes of training delivery hence providing for mechanisms for assessing competencies attained therefrom.

Recognition of Prior Learning Assessment (RPLA) is an integral part of Competence Based Assessment. The concept of recognizing and accrediting what people already know and can do is having a significant impact on many of the education and training programmes currently being developed. If applied properly, the concept is very useful for integrating the marginalized populations both, the self employed who seek qualifications to access wage employment or the employed who aspire for promotion and better pay or further career development.

The guidelines for RPLA have been developed to act as a tool that will facilitate the exercise by providing proper guidance to all parties that will be involved in the process. These include, among others, RPL facilitators, assessors and moderators/validators. The guidelines are as well important to other stakeholders who in one way or another, interact with apprentices/ employees. They include individual employers and their related umbrella associations, trade unions, regulatory bodies other than VETA, VET providers, the government, NGO and higher learning institutions.

It is our belief that, involvement of all key stakeholders will not only strengthen the VET system but also forge linkages and hence get approval and recognition of its services especially the graduates who will undergo the RPL processes successfully.

Eng. Zebadiah S. Moshi
Director General

Acknowledgement

The development of Recognition of Prior Learning Assessment is a joint effort of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Vocational education and Training Authority -Tanzania (VETA). The guideline document is one of the outputs resulting from the pilot project on '*Skills upgrading of Informal Apprenticeship*'. We wish to pay our gratitude to both the ILO project staff and VETA head office, the pilot study Zonal offices and Training centre staff who worked tirelessly, particularly in the conducting of field interviews and assessment of the apprentices.

We also extend special thanks to apprentices' and work place owners (garages, workshops, Hotels and Master-draftspersons) in Lindi, Mtwara, Morogoro and Mwanza who participated in the assessment exercise; their devotion is highly appreciated. Their willingness to spare their valuable time and space was encouragement and motivation to the project team

Last but not least we wish to take this opportunity to extend our appreciations to Dr. Ashwani Aggarwal, Senior skills and Employment specialist for SADC region from ILO Pretoria, who worked tirelessly and constantly to ensure the completion of this work, his relentless energy and constant focus on the work made this possible.

Geoffrey G. Sabuni
Director for Assessment and Certification

Glossary of terms

Full qualification - These are existing VETA qualifications that a learner earns after successfully completing a training programme. For example, Motor Vehicle Mechanic qualification is awarded after completing three years of training.

Module of employable skills/ Modular qualifications (MES) qualification - MES is a part VETA qualification, but that reflects an occupational profile in the labour market. It is a combination of VETA modules and units from a qualification. For example, Engine Mechnic is a MES qualification which comprises of few VETA modules from Motor Vehicle Mechanic qualifications. Testing and awarding certificates for part qualifications (MES) were found essential as workers in the labour market, especially in informal economy, have narrow specialisations compared to full qualifications, which prescribe a wide range of competences. However, a worker can appear for RPL in more than one MES qualification and thus acquire full qualification as well.

Assessment tools - Assessment tools are instruments that will be used by assessors to assess the skills and knowledge of candidates against a set of criteria or standards. These would facilitate consistency and quality assurance of the assessment process.

Facilitator - A facilitator is a qualified and registered RPL expert who will be the first point of contact for a candidate, providing information about RPL to the candidate, making an initial assessment about suitability for a particular qualification, and guiding the person in completing the application and collecting evidences for the portfolio.

Assessor - An assessor is a qualified and registered RPL expert for an occupation (vocational teacher or workplace supervisor) who will evaluate the application form and portfolio submitted by a candidate, discuss and guide the person in overcoming shortcomings and in preparing for the final assessment. Assessor will also conduct the final assessment of the skills and knowledge of a candidate.

Moderator - A moderator is a qualified and registered RPL expert (vocational teacher or workplace supervisor) who will moderate assessment tools, methods and results.

Guidelines for RPL

1 Introduction

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is basically a process to assess and certify the skills and knowledge of a person-regardless of how, when and where the learning has occurred-against prescribed standards for a modular (MES) or full VETA qualification. In this case, VETA will issue nationally recognised modular or full qualification. Learning may have occurred through formal, informal or non-formal training or through life or work experience. RPL can be done for candidates in the formal economy or learning environment as well as those in the informal economy.

1.1 Benefits of RPL

RPL offers several benefits to individuals (workers), employers, government, training agencies and to society as a whole.

For an individual: A nationally recognised and credible qualification brings many benefits for an individual, including:

- Access to formal education and training programmes, and promoting lifelong learning.
- Opportunity to get better jobs, move to formal economy, or qualify to function as a professional.
- Eligibility or access to apply for government tenders and financial services for businesses, thus improving business potential.
- Improved self-esteem and respect in business circles and society.
- Improvement in skills and knowledge as many individuals may require upgrading of their skills and knowledge in order to meet the standards.

For employers: Having qualified and certified workers is generally a requirement for an organisation to acquire quality assurance certifications, such as, ISO. Workers with upgraded skills and knowledge would be more productive and innovative. Besides, it improves the morale of workers and promotes a positive learning culture.

For society: RPL promote **equity and social inclusion** as it provides a second chance to disadvantaged persons to acquire formal qualifications. It promotes a **flexible and alternate learning mechanism** promoting lifelong learning.

1.2 Challenges for RPL

Stakeholders and candidates, as mentioned above, have high expectations from RPL, however, its implementation faces a number of impediments, including:

- Lack of coordination between learning institutions and authorities, which is one of the causes for restricting access of RPL certified candidates to formal education and training programmes.
- Inadequate RPL support systems for developing standards, assessment tools and methods, training and development of RPL experts, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Lack of trained RPL experts - facilitators, assessors, moderators and developers.
- Inadequate institutional capacity to implement RPL.
- RPL requires the development of innovative methods for assessing skills and knowledge of a person, including a portfolio of evidences, which is different than the traditional methods in formal education and training system. The efficacy of these approaches in different conditions, particularly in the informal economy is not well established. Besides, assessors in formal training systems are also not very familiar with such approaches.
- Current practices for RPL, such as portfolio of evidences could be time consuming and expensive, which could be a constraint for workers in the informal economy, particularly bearing the cost of RPL.
- Rigidity in formal qualifications and competency standards, which require a candidate to be an expert in a broad range of skill areas, but the workers, particularly in the informal economy may specialise in a narrower range of skills areas.
- Ineffective involvement of employers and workers in the design and implementation.
- Ensuring the credibility of the RPL certification and parity with formal qualifications.

1.3 Purpose of the guidelines

These guidelines are designed for planning and implementing RPL in an efficient and effective manner. These will promote quality assured RPL, and the application of RPL processes in a fair, transparent and consistent manner.

1.4 Financing of RPL

RPL will be financed from the VETA annual budget, however, nominal fees could be charged from the candidates so that they take the RPL seriously. Fee waiver can be considered by VETA for special marginalised groups in accordance with its existing national policy.

1.5 Eligibility condition for RPL

A candidate seeking RPL should have at least **three** years of training/ working experience in the relevant occupational area. Minimum age for the RPL is 17 years, but there is no upper age limit. The candidate should do a self-assessment about his/her eligibility from the competency check list for the occupation, discuss with a RPL facilitator about the requirements before applying for the RPL.

2 Quality Assurance for RPL

Quality assurance mechanism for RPL, to ensure credibility, transparency and consistency, will have following provisions.

2.1 Policy, legal and regulatory framework

Competency Based Assessment guidelines under the provisions of the Vocational Education and Training Act, 1994, provide the framework for the RPL by VETA. The draft TVET policy also recommends the establishment of RPL system.

2.2 Institutional Framework for RPL

Directorate of Assessment and Certification, VETA, is responsible for the development and implementation of RPL guidelines, tools and methods. A RPL section under the directorate will be set up

at the national level. A similar function will be replicated at zonal level under the coordination of VTC Coordinators. Each VETA centre registrar or training coordinator will oversee the actual implementation of RPLA with the help of heads of respective occupations section.

VETA will register assessors in different occupations drawn from training centres and Industry, as well as professionals.

2.3   Active engagement of employers and workers

Employers and workers from both formal and informal economies would be actively involved at all stages of RPL development and implementation, as well as in the advisory committee.

2.4   RPL guidelines

RPL guidelines providing information about the RPL, its benefits, the procedure, requirements, quality assurance mechanism, and the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders will guide the implementation of the RPL.

2.5   Development of standards and assessment tools and methods

VETA is responsible for developing occupation unit standards, assessment tools and methods for ensuring quality in the RPL assessment process. These standards and methods would meet the needs of both the formal and informal economy, and align with the national VET curricula to ensure that the certificate acquired through the RPL process is not considered inferior. The assessment tools and method will include guidelines for assessors to do the assessment and sample test items.

Guiding principles of assessment and evidences

The assessment tools and methods should be:
- Valid (assess the desired competences)
- Reliable and consistent (various assessors use the same assessment tools and methods and get the same results)
- Transparent (candidates, assessors and moderators are aware of assessment tools, methods and standards)

- Equitable and flexible (candidates needs are taken into account (time, place and method)
- Manageable and achievable (assessment should be possible within the time and resources available)
- Fair (allow for appeal)

And evidence gathering needs to comply with the rules of evidence which are:
- Valid (covers key competences of a qualification)
- Sufficient (allows for assessors to make decisions on the level of competency)
- Current (is contemporary)
- Authentic (candidates own work)

2.6 Portfolio of evidences

The evidences in a portfolio may consist of some or more of the following:
- formal statements (transcript) of results and certificates sample of work produced
- videos and/or photographs of work activities
- Skills logbooks
- specific details of work and/or participation in projects
- performance appraisal reports
- testimonials and references from current or previous employers
- job descriptions
- details of formal training, seminars, conferences and workshops attended which are relevant to the RPL application
- certificates of participation/achievements/awards/letters of recommendation
- written testimonials from managers, owner, employers or workers associations
- any other evidence that is valid, sufficient, authentic and current

2.7 Accreditation of RPL centres

VETA will accredit the institutions that can carry out RPL, however, initially a few selected VETA institutions will act as authorised RPL centres. VETA will notify a list of such centres.

2.8 Training of facilitators, assessors and moderators

VETA, in partnership with the industry would be responsible for the training of facilitators, assessors and moderators.

2.9 Grading of skills of candidates

The candidates would be considered successful if they secure at least 75% of marks in the final assessment. They would be graded into three categories:
Grade A : 91-100 percent
Grade B : 81- 90 percent
Grade C : 75-80 percent

2.10 Moderation of assessment

Moderators at VETA regional office will be responsible for moderation of assessment process and results. Moderators will also carefully analyse the overall pass percentages submitted by various moderators: to identify outliers i.e. those assessors giving either very high or low pass percentages, or any other patterns which require further investigation. Moderators, as a quality assurance process, may ask up to five percent of the candidates declared successful by an assessor, to undergo a rapid assessment by another assessor.

2.11 Support services to RPL candidates

(a) RPL information : VETA will promote awareness and ensure easy accessibility of the information about the RPL through website and marketing. It will also ensure that the candidates get adequate support from facilitators and assessors, in applying for RPL and in preparing for assessment at appropriate stages, so as to minimise rejections at the final assessment stage.

(b) Provision of skills upgrading: VETA will also organize or facilitate short term programmes for skills upgrading- institution or workplace based- for unsuccessful candidates, and bridging courses for those successful candidates aspiring to acquire further qualifications.

2.12 International cooperation

VETA will build partnerships with other countries, international development agencies, local stakeholders, and also participate in the SADC and the EAC fora to exchange knowledge sharing and benchmark with best practices on RPL.

2.13 Research, monitoring & evaluation

It will also have an effective M& E system to collect, monitor and evaluate the performance of RPL system, and to take corrective measures. A computerised management information system (MIS) will be developed to capture all information from all stages, and to assist in data analysis.

3   RPL process

The RPL procedure will comprise of five processes; namely, awareness generation, facilitation, screening of applications, final assessment, and certification and feedback. These are described below:

3.1   Awareness generation

Potential candidate gets information about the RPL, its benefits, the procedure, the likely costs, timelines, the support available, and the eligibility requirements. The information would be made available by VETA using different modes, including VETA websites, group information meetings conducted at workplaces, brochures, other publicity materials, and media.

3.2   Facilitation

Potential candidate meets an RPL facilitator at a VETA centre, who will make an initial assessment about the candidate's eligibility, provide the required information and guide the candidate in the complete RPL procedure, particularly on collection of evidences. Specifically, the candidate will get the following details from the facilitator:
(a) An application form
(b) Competency standards for the occupation (Modules of Employable Skills)

(c) Eligibility conditions for the occupation

(d) Nature of evidence required for the portfolio

The information can also be downloaded from the VETA website, however, it is advisable for a candidate to discuss the requirements with a RPL facilitator.

3.3   Screening of applications

A candidate submits the application form along with the prescribed fee, to the facilitator at a VETA centre. The facilitator will send the application form to an assessor for that occupation, who will screen the application and evidences to ascertain the suitability of the candidate for the applied occupation and modules. Assessor will call the candidate for an interview and clarifications. In case, assessor is satisfied with the portfolio, knowledge and experience of the candidate, s/he will advise the candidate about the nature of final assessment, grading system and other relevant details.

Otherwise, s/he will inform the candidate about the shortcomings and guide in overcoming those shortcomings which may require collecting additional evidences or upgrading the skills in some areas before applying.

3.4   Final Assessment

Candidates found suitable for final assessment will be informed of the time and place for the assessment. The assessor will use the prescribed assessment tools and method for the particular occupation in carrying out the assessment. During the pilot phase, a team of two assessors- one from a VETA institute and the other from industry- will jointly do the final assessment. Based on the experience of pilot phase, a decision will be taken to continue with the practice or change it.

3.5   Certification and feedback

Assessors will compile the assessment results and forward to the VETA centre, which will seek approval of the VETA regional office and communicate the result to the candidates. Moderators in the regional offices will monitor and moderate the results and the assessment process to ensure equity and quality. VETA will
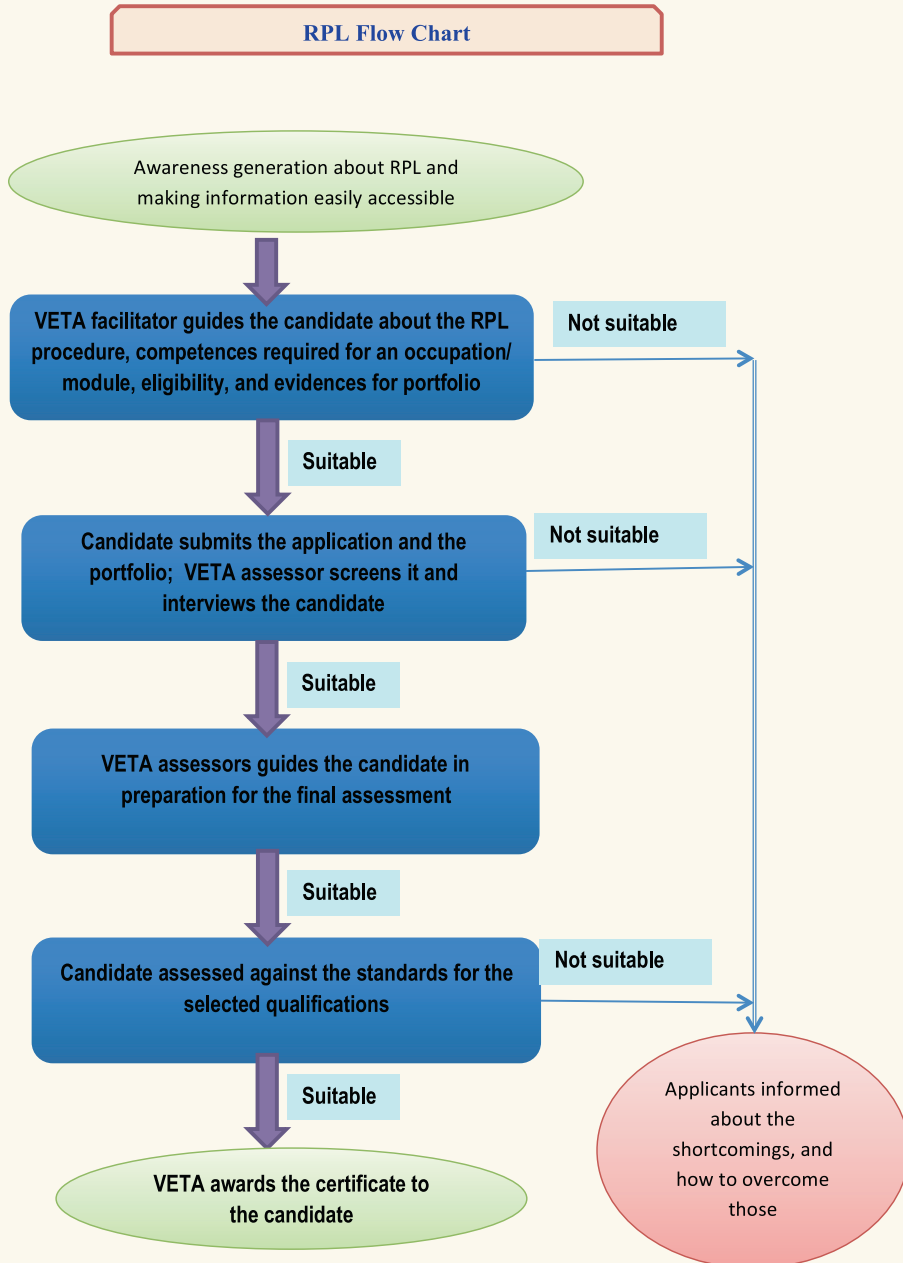
issue certificates to the successful candidates, as well as provide feedback on the performance to the unsuccessful candidates. Certification of successful candidates will be on modules that one has proved to be competent in.

3.6 RPL appeal procedures

Candidates not satisfied with the result of the RPL, may lodge an appeal for a review within thirty (30) days of the release of results. Appeal forms can be obtained from a RPL facilitator at the nearest RPL Centre or download from the VETA website. Candidates should submit the duly completed appeal forms to the facilitator who will forward them to the Regional VETA Director. The regional director will get these reviewed and make a recommendation.

The decision of the VETA Regional Director shall be final.

RPL Flow Chart

Awareness generation about RPL and
making information easily accessible

VETA facilitator guides the candidate about the RPL
procedure, competences required for an occupation/
module, eligibility, and evidences for portfolio

Not suitable

Suitable

Candidate submits the application and the
portfolio; VETA assessor screens it and
interviews the candidate

Not suitable

Suitable

VETA assessors guides the candidate in
preparation for the final assessment

Suitable

Candidate assessed against the standards for the
selected qualifications

Not suitable

Suitable

VETA awards the certificate to
the candidate

Applicants informed
about the
shortcomings, and
how to overcome
those

4   Key stakeholders

Success of RPL depends on the effectiveness of the roles played by key stakeholders and institutions, such as: VETA HQ, VETA regional offices, VETA centres, employers and workers organisations, enterprises in formal and informal economies, facilitators, assessors, moderators, potential candidates for RPL, development agencies, government and its agencies, community based organizations, professional associations, etc. The stakeholders' roles will range from facilitating conducive policy, legal and regulatory environment, ensuring incentives for private owned enterprises and individuals to participate, maintaining quality and standards as well as having necessary flexibility to allow more participation, mobilizing resources to finance RPL, innovating and adapting tools and methods to the situation continuously, building capacity, collaborating and prioritising RPL in the work plans, promoting social inclusion and gender equality, and enhancing participation of workers and employers.

4.1   Facilitator

For administrative ease, there should be RPL focal person at all levels. The lowest level being the Vocational Training Centre. The facilitator will coordinate all RPL activities including facilitating and supporting applications and verifications. All information regarding the RPL process, eligibility, levels of competency and evidence building should be available with the facilitator. He or she is responsible for giving information and coordinating activity at the Centre level. The position will be replicated at administrative levels at the regional and the HQ, with HQ dealing with more macro level issues including, interpreting policy guidelines into more implementable activities in consultations with stakeholders. The Headquarters will also provide guidelines for quality assurance and M&E frameworks.

4.2   Assessor

The one who carries out the assessment to ascertain the claimed competencies based on evidence submitted and/ or observed. The assessor determines **comparability** of learning against the Standards. The RPL assessor should show professional judgment in assessing the value of experience vis a vis formal learning.

4.3   Moderator

A qualified and registered RPL expert (vocational teacher or workplace supervisor) who will moderate assessment tools, methods and results.

For more information, please contact:

VETA HEAD OFFICE,

CHANG'OMBE,

P. O. BOX 2849,

DAR ES SALAAM,

Telephone: +255 22 2863683

Fax: +255 22 2863408

E-mail: info@veta.go.tz

Website: http://www.veta.go.tz/