

DEVELOPING THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)



TRAINING MODULE SIX

06

REGISTRATION AND DATABASES OF QUALIFICATIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	4
EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES.....	5
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE TRAINING MODULE SIX:	
REGISTRATION AND DATABASE OF QUALIFICATION	6
1.1 Purpose of this Training Module	6
1.2 Training Module structure.....	6
1.3 Utilisation of the Training Module.....	7
1.4 Target users	7
CHAPTER 2: KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS	8
2.1 Learning objectives	8
2.2 Introduction	8
2.3 Purpose of registration of qualifications	8
2.4 Benefits of registration of qualifications at national, regional and continental levels	8
2.5 Cases and experiences: registers and databases of qualifications and credentials.....	9
2.5.1 Trends and developments.....	9
2.5.2 Snapshot on some national registers / databases in Africa.....	9
2.6 Qualifications registers and databases in other parts of the world: some examples.....	17
2.6.1 Europe – European Qualifications Framework	17
2.7 Conclusion.....	20
2.8 Reflective questions	20
CHAPTER 3: TECHNICAL DESIGN AND MAIN SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE ACQF PLATFORM /	
DATABASE OF QUALIFICATIONS	21
3.1 Learning objectives	21
3.2 Main features of the Platform/database of qualifications	21
3.3 ACQF Qualifications database – uses	22
3.4 Elements of data fields for electronic publication of qualifications	23
3.4.1 Title of qualification.....	24

3.4.2	Field of education and training	24
3.4.3	Country of origin (country code).....	24
3.4.4	Level (NQF, RQF, ACQF)	24
3.4.5	Type of qualification	24
3.4.6	Authority.....	24
3.4.7	Description of the qualification.....	24
3.4.8	Study hours/credits.....	24
3.4.9	Expiry date	25
3.4.10	Link to National Qualifications Database	25
3.4.11	Unique qualification code	25
3.4.12	External quality assurance/regulatory body.....	25
3.4.13	Ways to acquire the qualification	25
3.4.14	Relationship to occupations or occupational classification	25
3.4.15	Other fields	25
3.5	Conclusion.....	26
3.6	Reflective questions	26
CHAPTER 4: USE OF ACQF LEVELS IN QUALIFICATIONS REGISTERS AND DATABASES		27
4.1	Learning objectives	27
4.2	Use of ACQF Levels in National Registers	27
4.3	ACQF instruments for information sharing	27
4.4	Conclusion.....	27
4.5	Reflective questions	27
CHAPTER 5: GUIDANCE FOR TRAINERS AND LEARNERS		28
5.1	Overview	28
5.2	Assessment of learning outcomes	29
REFERENCES/ LINKS		30
APPENDICES.....		33
APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY		33

ACRONYMS

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
ANEP	Autoridade Nacional de Educação Profissional
ARES	Autoridade Reguladora do Ensino Superior
ASG-QA	African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BQA	Botswana Qualifications Authority
CNQP	Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações Profissionais
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
KNQA	Kenya National Qualifications Authority
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NCQF	National Qualifications and Credit Framework
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
PAQAF	Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework
QA	Quality assurance
REC	Regional Economic Community
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
UC-SNQ	Unidade de Coordenação do Sistema Nacional de Qualificações
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

ABSTRACT

The ACQF platform/database of qualifications is a strategic tool that will be used to generate and access vital information and statistics about most aspects of recognised qualifications in Africa. Further, the platform/database will provide availability of information for decision making in the recognition of qualifications and aid in the enhancement of quality of qualifications. The ACQF platform/database of qualifications will provide information on registered qualifications in African Member States, together with their respective NQF levels and how they compare to the ACQF levels

Across the continent, the information described in existing qualifications documents and databases varies in terms of structure, data fields and format of the main learning outcomes. The rich diversity of qualifications systems on the continent is not an impediment on the way towards comparability and readability of qualifications, which can ease recognition of qualifications of all levels, and contribute to improving mobility and to getting employment in jobs matching the acquired qualification.

As a transparency instrument for users' information and guidance, the ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) serves and supports the national qualifications authorities and the awarding bodies, end-users (for example, learners, employers, career counsellors, teachers, and trainers) and in wider terms, the countries, regions and the continent as a whole. The ACQF Qualifications Platform complements, supports, and can interoperate with national and regional databases, and does not aim at replacing or changing existing national qualifications databases.

The ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) will be conceived for distinct use cases, each supported by adequate and transparent procedures, to be developed and agreed. The scope of the ACQF qualifications platform/database will notably support the various uses namely; use by national qualifications frameworks or systems, international qualifications, common continental qualifications profiles and qualifications from sectoral organisations and other institutions awarding micro-credentials.

EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the training programme, learners should be able to:

- 1) Explain key concepts in registration and registers of qualifications;
- 2) Identify the uses of the ACQF Platform/Database of qualifications;
- 3) Explain the main features of the ACQF Platform/Database of Qualifications;
- 4) Specify the elements of data fields for electronic publication of qualifications; and
- 5) State the uses of ACQF levels in national qualifications registers and databases.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE TRAINING MODULE SIX: REGISTRATION AND DATABASE OF QUALIFICATION

1.1 Purpose of this Training Module

This Training Module is one of the ten ACQF Training Modules. It supports the dissemination and application of the ACQF Guideline 6 on Registration and Databases of Qualifications. The Training Module focuses on concepts, principles and benefits of qualifications registers and centres on the specific features and uses of the future ACQF Qualification Platform (database).

The Training Module aims at providing learners with the knowledge, skills and competences for registration of qualifications on the ACQF, thereby facilitating mobility of persons from one country to another to study, research, teach or work. It highlights the common principles, steps, tools and sources for further reference to help countries and regions in developing, consolidating, reviewing and implementing systems related to the registration of qualifications on the ACQF.

This Training Module has been developed based on the ACQF Technical Guideline 6 on the Registration and Databases of Qualifications.

1.2 Training Module structure

This Training Module:

- a) Is based on the content elaborated in the Technical Guideline, and expand it, exploring the literature, recent research and experiences;
- b) Raises questions and issues in debate that could not be expressed in the Technical Guideline;
- c) Provides examples and cases illustrating the main concepts, issues and application of the approaches and methods; and
- d) Provides examples and cases taken from relevant practices and developments worldwide, with a focus on frameworks and systems with substantial and relevant experience for the different themes.

The Training Module includes:

- a) Reflective questions that could be addressed as an individual or as a group (e.g. workshop group, work group);
- b) Learning activities that could be addressed as an individual or as a group (e.g. class/lecture group, work group);
- c) Access to case studies or examples, readings, disparate views (if relevant) and
- d) Assessment tasks.

This training module covers the following topics:

- 1) Key concepts and definitions;
- 2) Registration of qualifications;
- 3) Technical design and main specifications for the ACQF platform/database of qualifications; and
- 4) Use of ACQF levels in qualifications registers and databases.

As one of the ACQF instruments, this training module complements other ACQF training modules.

1.3 Utilisation of the Training Module

The Training Module is designed for:

- Self-paced learning (individual);
- Teacher / trainer / facilitator directed learning – which may include group learning; and
- A combination of the above.

The Training Module is freely accessible in several formats for flexible adaptation to different contexts and to learners' needs and possibilities: as PDF files to download from ACQF Website and disseminate; as digital content accessible via ACQF digital Learning Management System, accessible online or offline, including via an App for Mobile phones. Interested users (learners, teachers / trainers and organisations) may use the full set of Modules, or focus on just a few.

1.4 Target users

This Training Module will be used as a training tool on registration of qualifications on the ACQF and as a source of information on registered qualifications in African Member States by various stakeholders within the continent of Africa and beyond, such as:

- a) Ministries, departments and agencies dealing with qualifications frameworks development and coordination, especially in early stages of the development process, or when operationalisation starts and more staff, stakeholders and technical resource persons are involved;
- b) Quality councils, quality assurance agencies - for their staff, members and technical resource persons;
- c) Technical projects designing or reviewing national qualifications frameworks with national taskforces and working groups;
- d) Education and training providers, e.g., as optional or regular training modules on the themes and issues related with qualifications frameworks and systems: teacher training institutes, higher education institutions (departments of education), training centres for staff of public sector institutions, training centres of employers' associations and professional bodies and sector skills councils involved in development of qualifications; and
- e) International organisations' training centres and capacity development activities.

CHAPTER 2: KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Learning objectives

At the end of this chapter, the learner should be able to:

- a) Explain the concept of registration of qualifications in the context of the ACQF;
- b) Explain the purpose of registration of qualifications on the ACQF; and
- c) Outline the benefits of registration of qualifications on the ACQF at national, regional and continental levels.

2.2 Introduction

Registration of qualifications is an important measure that enhances quality and regulation of qualifications. It provides greater protection for the public and employers. Members of the public and employers can have confidence in the qualifications knowing that the quality of qualifications has been independently verified and assured by a competent authority.

In the context of this Training Module, registration is a process through which national quality assured and registered qualifications are placed on the ACQF platform/database of qualifications.

The ACQF is a meta framework for referencing with national qualifications frameworks and systems and supports the development of operational instruments contributing to comparability qualifications and to transparency of qualifications frameworks. This Training Module proposes a range of modalities of use of the ACQF Qualifications Platform, which does not aim at replacing the national registers, but to complement, link and support them for continental information-sharing.

2.3 Purpose of registration of qualifications

The purpose of registration of qualifications is to:

- a) Provide users with information for study and career choices and management;
- b) Enhance mutual understanding, acceptability and recognition of qualifications amongst member states across the African Continent;
- c) Provide for smooth verification and evaluation of qualifications;
- d) Promote the quality of education and training provision; and
- e) Enhance mobility and portability of qualifications thereby creating opportunities for access to learning, transfer of learning and progression in learning among member state nationals.

2.4 Benefits of registration of qualifications at national, regional and continental levels

The process of registering qualifications brings with it a number of benefits at national, regional and continental levels, as outlined below:

- a) Transparency of information on qualifications for different uses (comparison, career information for learners);
- b) Enhances quality and recognition of qualifications;
- c) Facilitates mobility of learners and workers from one country to another as well as across regions and continents;

- d) Protecting learners, employers and the public from misrepresented qualifications;
- e) Deepens integration and harmonisation of qualifications among states;
- f) Eases recognition and transfer of credits; and
- g) Facilitates for smooth verification and evaluation of qualifications.

2.5 Cases and experiences: registers and databases of qualifications and credentials

2.5.1 Trends and developments

Databases / registers of qualifications are important instruments for transparency about the panorama of qualifications of different countries. The quality, completeness and accessibility to this information is fundamental for the end-users (learners, training providers, employers, and workers) at national level, but also for qualifications and recognition bodies globally. Databases / registers of qualifications offer a view on the actual status of implementation of NQFs, and contribute to monitoring and evaluation of the qualifications system.

In many countries in Europe, Africa, America, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the authorities and departments managing qualifications at national level are taking steps to improve and modernise the tools, technology and methods used to structure, manage, and visualise information and data on qualifications. For improved global transparency on qualifications and efficient information-sharing between NQFs across continents and between regions, a number of themes need shared views, e.g.:

- Role of qualifications databases / register for efficient information-sharing - reliable and up-to-date data on standards, programmes, qualifications and credentials
- Interoperability between databases: technical and conceptual aspects
- Minimum fields of information on qualifications and credentials for electronic publication in digital databases
- Concise formulations of learning outcomes of qualifications and credentials for electronic publication in digital databases
- Support to countries and regions in developing and implementing interoperable databases of qualifications and credentials, capacity development.
- Information-sharing and cooperation of national / regional databases of qualifications and credentials with bodies and councils managing quality assurance of education and training and recognition of qualifications.

2.5.2 Snapshot on some national registers / databases in Africa

This brief overview is based on web search (online registers and databases), the ACQF feasibility study (2021) and ACQF Mapping study (2021).

This brief section explores two main questions:

- What can we learn from NQF registers and databases?
- Which qualifications are included in NQF registers and databases – by levels and by sectors?

The ACQF Feasibility study explored existing and accessible registers of qualifications in five countries: Cape Verde, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique and South Africa. In this training module we add information on the register of Botswana National Qualifications and Credit Framework (NCQF). We are grateful to the national experts who shared information and data.

Table 1: Overview on registers / databases of qualifications (associated with the NQFs)

Country	Register / database of qualifications	Qualifications included	Key features
Botswana	Botswana Qualifications Authority – Register of qualifications	465 full qualifications - all levels of NCQF	<p>The register is searchable by title of qualification (search by key word tool). Qualifications documents can be viewed and downloaded.</p> <p>The online register publishes a list of qualifications (title, type, level, field, document). All registered qualifications are formatted based on a standardised model. Section B of the model - Qualifications Specifications contains: graduate profile (learning outcomes) and the associated assessment criteria (detail and clarify the learning outcomes).</p>
Cape Verde	National Catalogue of Qualifications	64 full qualifications (levels 2 to 5 of the NQF)	<p>The digital online Catalogue is accessible as a repository of qualifications documents (PDFs).</p> <p>All qualifications are structured based on a standardised format, including: professional profile, units of competence (learning outcomes and assessment criteria), training programme (modules) and training module in the real context of work.</p> <p>The qualifications in the Catalogue are distributed in 15 professional families. The Catalogue includes also a new Transversal Training Module of 3 units (entrepreneurial competences).</p>
Kenya	New : National Qualifications Information Management System (NAQIMS) Register of qualifications (of accredited bodies)	1 262 qualifications at all levels of NQF	<p>NAQIMS is a system for automating processes, based on Blockchain technology to register: a) qualifications awarding institutions (QAIs), b) qualifications and c) learners' records.</p> <p>Managed and maintained by KNQA</p>

Country	Register / database of qualifications	Qualifications included	Key features
Morocco	<p>Vocational training in figures (2019-2020)</p> <p>Summary of all registered qualifications maintained by TVET Department. Annual update</p>	<p>352 TVET programmes leading to qualifications in 4 levels of NQF</p>	<p>Not a digital database of qualifications, but a statistical overview of the TVET system including the full set of available programmes and qualifications (formal initial TVET)</p> <p>Distribution of programmes by levels of qualification and sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 levels: specialization, qualification, technician, technician specialist - 21 sectors
Mozambique	<p>National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications (CNQP)</p> <p>Managed and maintained by ANEP</p>	<p>164 qualifications registered, at levels 2 to 5 of Professional qualifications framework.</p> <p>Published on the online Catalogue- (21/03/2022): 149.</p> <p>19 independent modules</p>	<p>The digital online Catalogue is accessible as a repository of qualifications documents (PDFs).</p> <p>All qualifications are structured based on a standardised format, including: general information, units of general competencies, units of vocational competencies, training modules (general and vocational), training programme (modules) and training module in the real context of work.</p> <p>The qualifications in the Catalogue are distributed in 16 professional families. Moreover, the Catalogue also includes 19 independent modules.</p>
South Africa	<p>SAQA: register of qualifications and part-qualifications</p> <p>Managed and maintained by SAQA</p>	<p>Large number of qualifications all all levels (over 22 000)</p>	<p>SAQA online register contains searchable databases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All qualifications and unit standards (no matter their status) 2. Registered qualifications and unit standards (NQF qualifications) 3. Qualifications and unit standards that have passed their registration end date 4. Professional Bodies and Professional Designations

What else do we learn from this overview of six African cases?

- The NQF qualifications registers and databases of the six cases are differently structured. But the digitalised information on the format and content of qualifications accessible online for users is very useful for such objectives as:
 - Comparison of qualifications between countries – learning outcomes, assessment criteria, volume of learning in various credit accumulation and transfer systems, links to classifications (fields of study, occupations).
 - Transparency on the learning outcomes behind the diplomas and certificates held by graduates.
 - Support for career orientation and progression, and choice of study pathways and programmes – for different types of learners, and for career guidance professionals.
 - For mobility of learners and workers – reference to the qualifications register of the sending and receiving country helps shedding light and clarifying the nature, outcomes and place of programmes and qualifications.
 - For recognition of qualifications (for further study and employment): ease access to targeted and reliable data for recognition bodies, higher education institutions, employers.
 - For digital credentials and certification: registers / databases of qualifications provide reliable information on the learning outcomes, volume of learning and quality assurance of qualification.
- In five out of the six countries mentioned in this analysis the national registers of qualifications are available online and maintained on the website of the institution tasked with the coordination and implementation of the NQF. Morocco publishes annual reports updating information on existing qualifications and has developed a version of a comprehensive digital searchable information system of TVET standards, programmes and qualifications (to be launched online for all users). Morocco plans to establish a comprehensive register of the NQF at a later stage.
- SAQA ensures the integrity and maintenance of the [Register of qualifications and part-qualifications](#). The Register contains four searchable databases (more information in table 1), and a large number of qualifications at all levels of the NQF.
- KNQA, as the custodian of national qualifications, developed NAQIMS, based on Blockchain technology. At the moment access to qualifications documents is possible via this [KNQA database](#). Qualifications in the database are structured by institution, and currently the number of qualifications of TVET institutions largely exceeds the number of qualifications of other bodies (university bodies, professional bodies, foreign qualifications awarding bodies, basic level bodies). Analysis based on data submitted by KNQA: Figures 3 and 4.
- Botswana: [Botswana Qualifications Authority – Register of qualifications](#) contains 401 qualifications at all levels of the NCQF. Registered and accredited Education and Training Providers (ETPs) are encouraged to develop learning programmes, based on the registered qualifications, for accreditation in Botswana. The search function allows queries by title of qualification.
- Cape Verde is implementing an inclusive and already reviewed eight-level NQF. The NQF register ([National Catalogue of Qualifications](#)) is available online and is managed by the leading NQF institution – the Coordination Unit of the National Qualifications System (UC-SNQ). However, it includes only TVET qualifications (levels 2–5). All qualifications in the NQF register are displayed according to a standard template, which includes the qualifications profile, the training standards and assessment, described in learning outcomes. Qualifications of the higher education system are registered by the regulatory authority of higher education, Agência Reguladora do Ensino Superior (ARES). Analysis of qualifications data from National Catalogue of Qualifications: Figures 1 and 2.

- Mozambique has significantly advanced the process of design and consultation of the integrated comprehensive NQF, and its decree is to be approved in 2022 by the Cabinet of Ministers. Historically Mozambique implemented two sectoral qualifications frameworks, which work in parallel (TVET and Higher education). Each framework is based on a different legal basis, defining the level descriptors, types of qualifications and quality assurance requirements. The TVET qualifications framework is implemented by the National TVET Authority (ANEP), while the Higher education qualifications framework is coordinated by the National Council for Quality Evaluation (CNAQ). Data on the higher education qualifications is not available in an online register, but can be obtained via a request to CNAQ. All qualifications in the TVET qualifications framework database ([National Catalogue of Qualifications](#)) are displayed according to a standard template.

The distribution of the number of qualifications in the indicated NQF registers, by levels and by sectors, is visualised below by two graphs for two countries (Kenya and Cape Verde). One graph depicts the distribution of qualifications by levels; the other shows the distribution by sector.

- A salient finding concerns the large difference in the total number of qualifications included in the NQF registers. Comparing the two cases that have comprehensive registers comprising all levels: Kenya has 1 262 qualifications, while South Africa has 22 026 qualifications. The distribution by levels in these two cases shows a different pattern of concentration of qualifications in higher, medium and lower levels. The South African NQF register has a concentration of qualifications in the higher levels (especially levels 8 and 9), while the NQF register of Kenya has a balanced distribution across levels 3 to 7.
- A fine and contextualised analysis of the distribution of qualifications by sectors is not necessary in the chapter, and will be done with a larger sample of countries at a later stage of the ACQF project. For this training module, it is important to take note of the following findings:
 - Different sectoral classifications in use: different underlying concepts, different range and number of sectors. Some countries use a classification based on education sectors (Mozambique higher education register), others use a mix of education and economic sectors, while others apply the occupational structure of their classification of qualifications.
 - A closer analysis of the concentration of the distribution by sectors shows that, for now, most of these NQFs have a rather limited number of qualifications in ICT, which raises questions about the ability of the qualifications system to enable the digital transition, and the adaptation of the labour force to the requirements of automation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
 - The analysed NQF registers have qualifications in all sectors of the used classification, broadly speaking in different sectors of services, industry and agriculture. There are asymmetries to be noted, such as high concentration of qualifications in one sector in some of the analysed cases.

Cape Verde

Figure 1: TVET qualifications in the NQF Catalogue of Qualifications, by levels

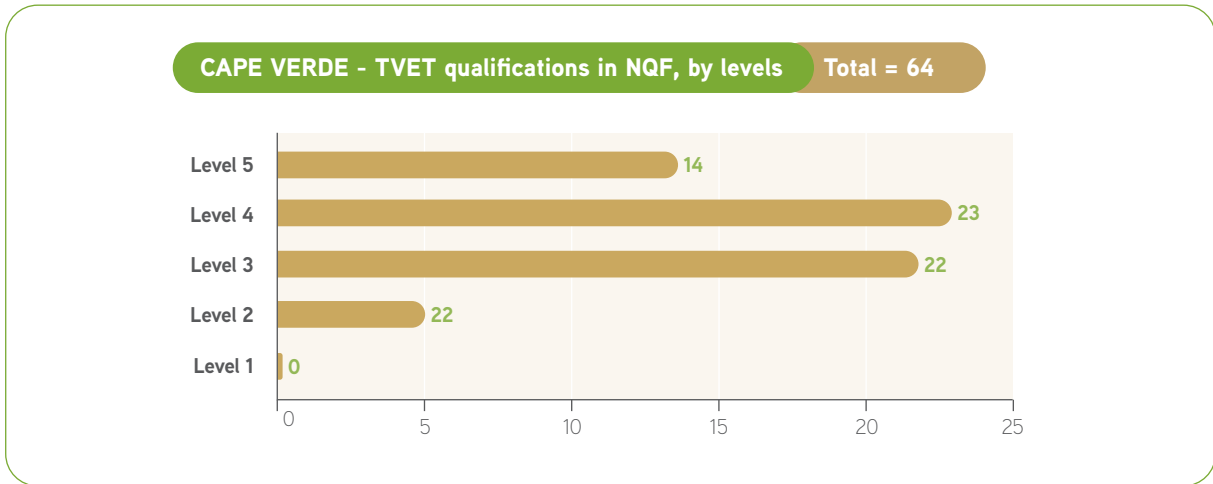
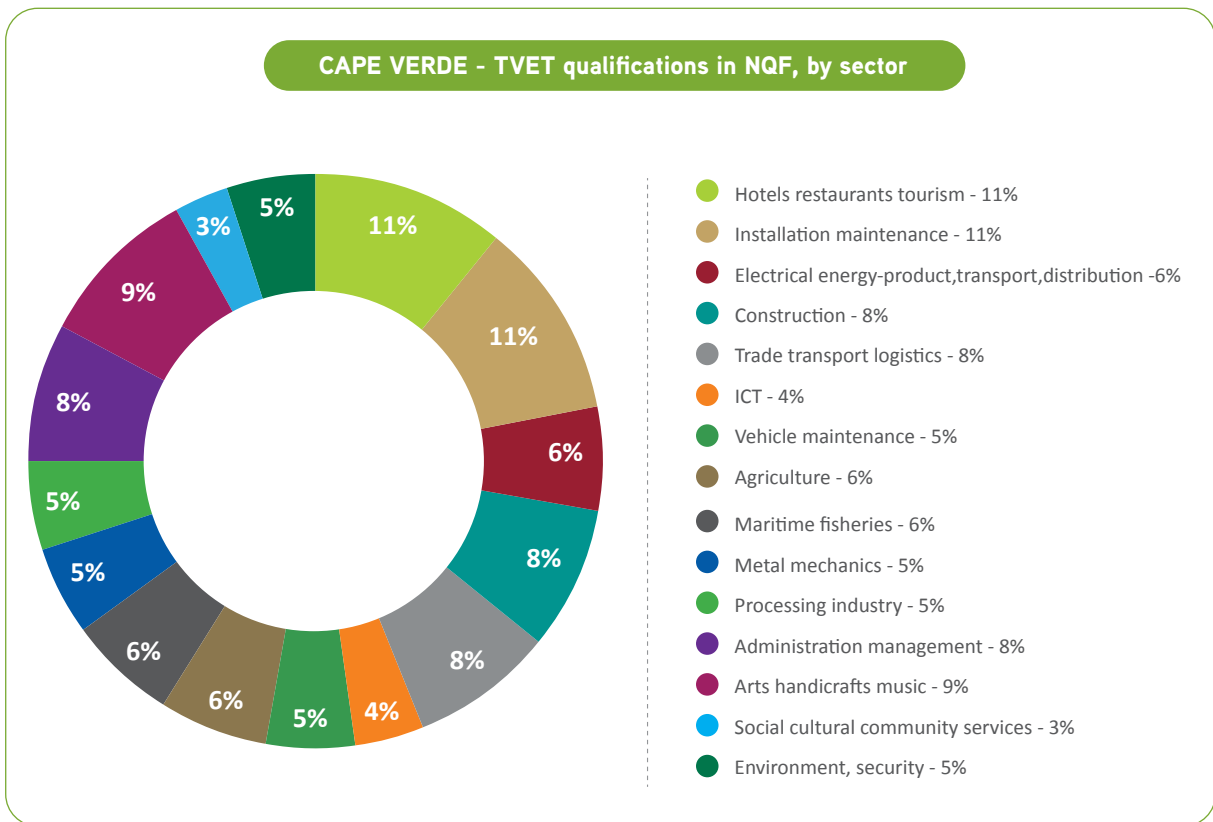


Figure 2 : TVET qualifications in the NQF – National Catalogue of Qualifications, by sector (15 professional families)



Kenya

Figure 3: Qualifications in the NQF register, by levels

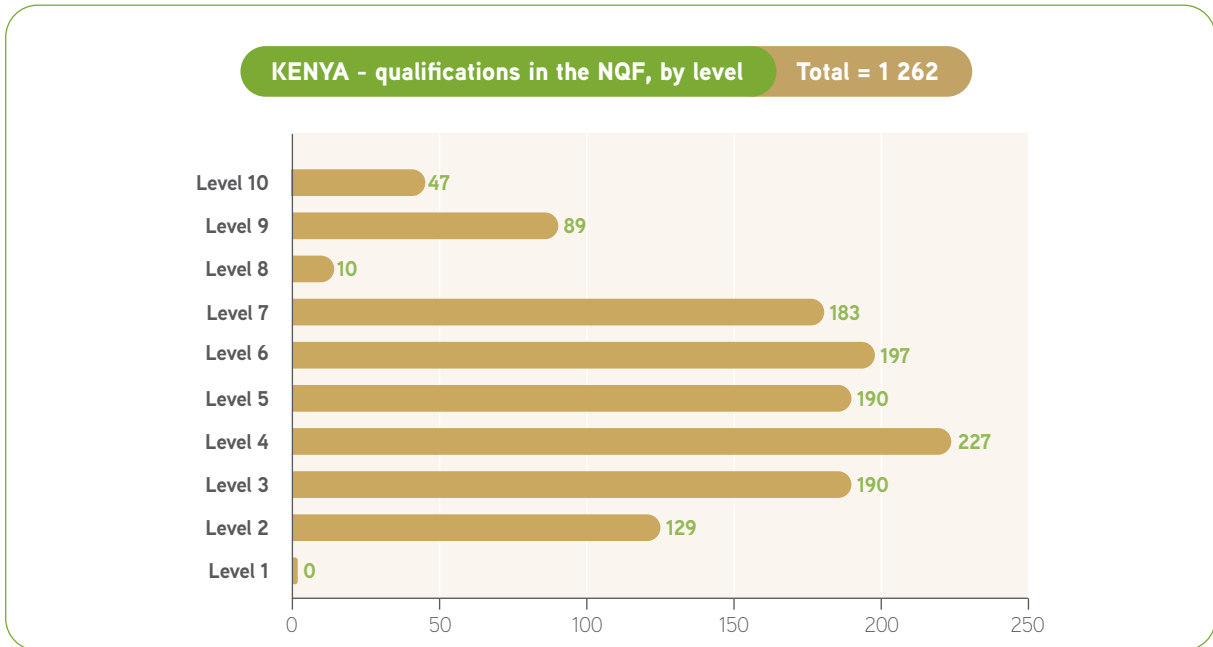
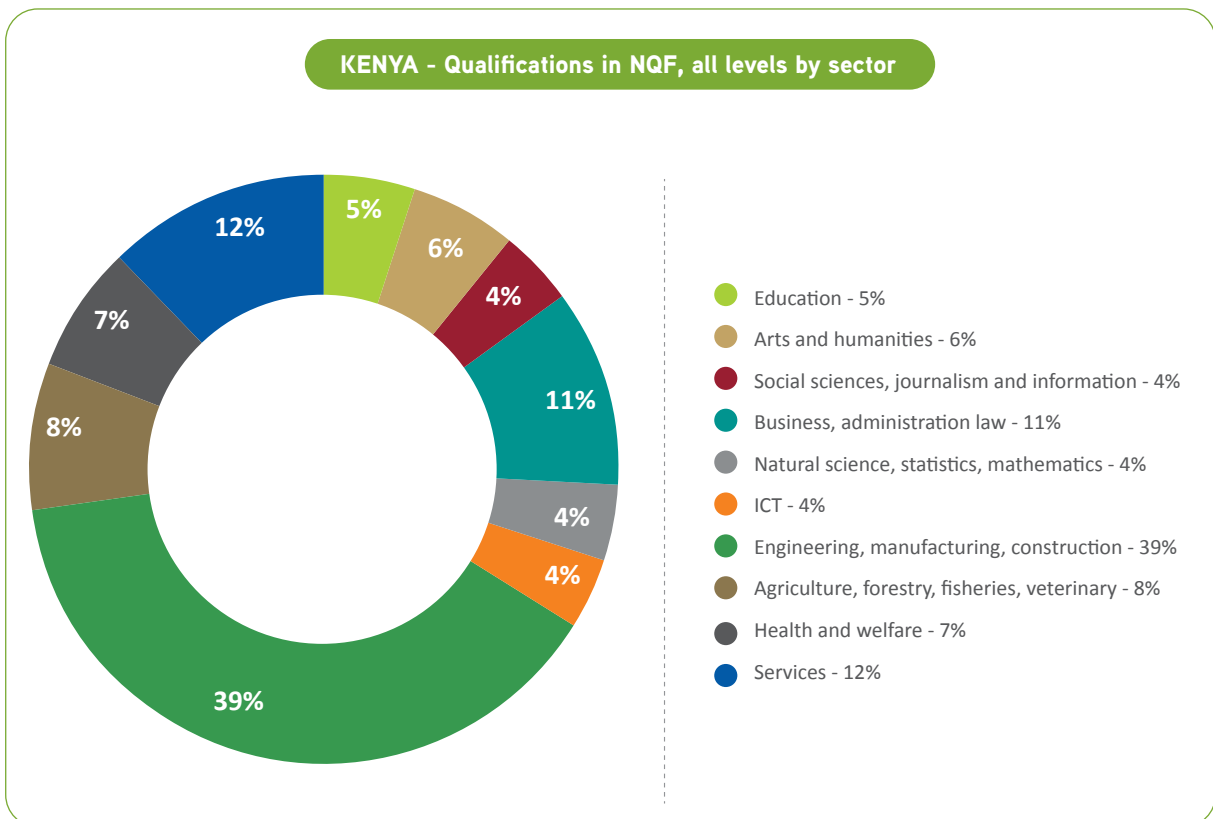


Figure 4: Qualifications in the NQF register, by sectors



Morocco

Table 2: Distribution of qualifications in TVET by level of qualification and sector (2019-2020)

SECTOR	Level of training - qualification				Total
	Specialisation	Qualification	Technician	Technician specialist	
ADMINISTRATION GESTION ET COMMERCE	1	7	10	12	30
AGRICULTURE		8	3	10	21
ARTISANAT	10	8	5	4	27
ASSISTANCE AUX MENAGES	1	4	2	3	10
AUDIO VISUEL ET CINEMA		1	8	12	21
BTP *	7	7	9	18	41
CHIMIE ET PLASTURGIE ET MINES		1	1	5	7
COIFFURE ESTHETIQUE	2	3	1		6
CUIR	3	4	5	2	14
HOTELLERIE ET TOURISME		5	7	11	23
IMME **		12	13	12	37
INDUSTRIE AGROALIMENTAIRE		4	3	11	18
PARAMEDICALE ET SANTE		2	5	13	20
PECHES MARITIMES		2	3		5
TEXTILE HABILLEMENT	2	5	8	3	18
SPORT EQUESTRE	1		6	2	9
TIC ***			3	5	8
AERONAUTIQUE			3	5	8
TRANSPORT ET LOGISTIQUE			4	4	8
AUTOMOBILE		2	3	10	15
ENERGIE RENOUVELABLE				6	6
TOTAL	27	75	102	148	352

Source: VET in figures (2019-2020). <https://www.dfp.gov.ma/publications/330-la-formation-professionnelle-en-chiffres.html>

2.6 Qualifications registers and databases in other parts of the world: some examples

2.6.1 Europe – European Qualifications Framework

Implementation of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and availability of targeted funding from the EU budget (Erasmus+ and other programmes) has contributed to development and operationalisation of NQFs across the 38 involved countries, including qualifications databases accessible online. An overview of progress of EQF implementation is summarised in table 3:

Table 3: Main outcomes of EQF implementation (as of February 2022)

Feature	EQF
Region / community	European Union and other countries with specific status of cooperation 38 countries: 27 EU Member States and 11 countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, Turkey).
Establishment and legal basis	Council Communication: 2008 Council Recommendation revised in 2017, repealing the Council Recommendation of 2008
RQF scope and levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehensive; Inclusive of all sub-sectors and modes of learning (including non-formal and informal). - 8 levels - Descriptors: knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy
Countries that referenced / aligned NQFs to RQF	36 countries (out of 38) referenced to EQF and these reports are published . 5 countries have updated referencing reports in the period 2019-Feb 2022 (The Netherlands, Latvia, Ireland, France and Italy)
Use of EQF levels by countries	33 (out of 38) use EQF levels on their qualifications documents (diplomas, certificates, supplements) 23 countries use EQF levels on their national qualifications databases
Countries with functioning NQFs	37 (out of 38) The large majority have developed and made accessible online digital qualifications databases / registers.

The most recent update on the status of NQF implementation in EQF countries provides information on NQF databases / registers. Table 4 contains the URLs to the existing and accessible national qualifications databases / registers. Some EQF countries are not included in the table due to lack of information on the most recent and functioning online register of qualifications.

Table 4: EQF countries: national qualifications databases / registers

Country / NQF	Database / register of qualifications
Austria	Qualifications Register Connection to Europass in preparation
Belgium (Francophone)	Qualifications register Connected to Europass
Belgium (Flandres)	VKS Database connected to Europass (phase of testing)
Bulgaria	List of TVET qualifications: NAVET
Czech Republic	National Register of Qualifications Connected to Europass 1 448 qualifications
Denmark	UddannelsesGuiden (Education Guide)
Estonia	Qualifications Register-search Connected to Europass 4 279 qualifications
Finland	StudyInfo
France	RNCP – search Connection to Europass in testing phase
Germany	Qualifications Register-search Connected to Europass
Greece	Qualifications Register-search Connected to Europass
Ireland	Irish Register of Qualifications - QQI Connected to Europass
Latvia	Latvian Qualifications Database Connected to Europass
Lithuania	AIKOS – register of qualifications Connected to Europass
Hungary	Hungarian Qualifications Framework – register Connected to Europass
Malta	Malta Qualifications Database Connected to Europass 633 qualifications of all levels
Netherlands	NLQF Qualifications Database Connected to Europass
Poland	Integrated Qualifications Register Connected to Europass

Country / NQF	Database / register of qualifications
Portugal	Catálogo Nacional de Qualificações Connected to Europass 392 qualifications (levels 2-5), 3621 competence units, 8536 units of short-duration training
Slovenia	SQF Register Connected to Europass
Slovakia	SOK Register of qualifications
Sweden	NQF register of qualifications Connected to Europass

2.6.2 America, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong

Other countries have well-developed and functional registers / databases of qualifications and credentials.

United States

- [Credential Engine](#) (United States) has a sophisticated technology, and services and analytical capabilities.
 - o [Credential Finder](#): is a tool for exploring all of the information published to the Credential Registry. As of March 2022, the Registry contains 30 258 credentials
 - o [Credential Publisher](#): Publish to the Credential Publisher

New Zealand

- The search tool to find qualifications is integrated in the website of NZQA - [New Zealand Qualifications Authority](#). As an example of the search function accessible for users of the register of We found 1 116 qualifications of the type “Diploma” and 1 240 of the type “Certificate”– all levels and subject areas.
- There is has a [register of NZQA-approved Micro-Credentials](#), containing 224 micro-credentials at different levels of the NQF (levels 3 to 7).

Australia

- The Australian Qualifications Framework has issued a specific policy on the register (2013), available at [AQF Qualifications Register Policy](#). The website of the Register is not accessible (March 2022).

Hong Kong

[Qualifications Register \(QR\)](#).

- QR is a centralised online database containing information on quality assured qualifications and their operators and assessment agencies for Recognition of Prior Learning. All qualifications listed on the QR are quality-assured and recognised under the [Qualifications Framework](#). Under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance, the [Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications](#) is specified as the QR Authority.

2.7 Conclusion

Undoubtedly, registration of qualifications is very important as it enhances the quality and regulation of qualifications, thereby providing greater protection for the public and employers. In the context of the ACQF, registration of qualifications is viewed as a process through which national quality assured and registered qualifications will be placed on the ACQF platform/database of qualifications.

Once actualised, the registration of qualifications on the ACQF will, among other things, promote mobility and portability of qualifications thereby creating opportunities for access to learning, transfer of learning and progression in learning among member state nationals.

2.8 Reflective questions

- 1) Visit at least three of the online registers of qualifications indicated in tables 1 and 2, and in heading 2.6.2.
 - a. Comment on the information you found related with qualifications.
 - b. What are the strengths and weakness of the registers you have visited?
 - c. Please could you compare with the register / database of qualifications of your country?
 - d. How can qualifications databases from different countries communicate and exchange information useful for learners' mobility?
- 2) Explain what you understand by the term registration of qualifications in the context of the ACQF.
- 3) What is the purpose of carrying out registration of qualifications on the ACQF?
- 4) What are the benefits of registration of qualifications on the ACQF at national, regional and continental levels?

CHAPTER 3: TECHNICAL DESIGN AND MAIN SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE ACQF PLATFORM / DATABASE OF QUALIFICATIONS

3.1 Learning objectives

At the end of this chapter, the learner should be able to:

- a) Explain the importance of the ACQF platform/database of qualifications;
- b) Specify the elements of data fields for electronic publication of qualifications;
- c) Explain the main features of the ACQF platform/database of qualifications;
- d) Explain the uses of the ACQF platform/database of qualifications
- e) Carry out the registration of qualifications on the ACQF platform/database of qualifications.

The ACQF platform/database of qualifications is a strategic tool that will be used to generate and access vital information and statistics about most aspects of recognised qualifications in Africa. Hence, with proper and up-to-date maintenance of the platform/database of qualifications, the ACQF is poised to become a key continental source of information for human resource and skills development in policy, infrastructure and planning. In addition, the platform/database will help to shape policies and incentives to steer the education and training system in a more positive direction on the continent. Further, the platform/database will provide availability of information for decision making in the recognition of qualifications and aid in the enhancement of quality of qualifications.

The ACQF platform/database of qualifications will provide information on registered qualifications in African Member States, together with their respective NQF levels and how they compare to the ACQF levels. As a transparent instrument for users' information and guidance, the ACQF Qualifications platform/database will serve and support the national qualifications authorities and the awarding bodies, countries, regions, and the continent.

In the context of the large size of the continent, the diversity of qualifications systems and ongoing rapid developments related with new types of qualifications and credentials, digitalisation, recognition of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal contexts, the ACQF Qualifications platform/database will be conceived to operate for different use cases, each supported by adequate and transparent procedures.

3.2 Main features of the Platform/database of qualifications

- a) Security – the database should protect against unauthorised access to data. The database should clearly specify access restrictions
- b) Accessibility – should be easily accessible from any part of the world at any time and allow for multi-user data access.
- c) Usability – the database should be simple and user-friendly.
- d) Stability – the database should be designed in such a manner as to prevent the loss of data due to among other things system crashes.
- e) Interoperability – the database should allow for communication and interchange of information with other national and regional databases.
- f) Dependability – the database should produce data that is reliable, consistent and accurate.
- g) Flexibility – the database should allow for modifications as and when need arises.
- h) Recoverability – the database should allow for recovery and restoration of lost or manipulated data.

3.3 ACQF Qualifications database – uses

As a transparency instrument for users' information and guidance, the ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) serves and supports the national qualifications authorities and the awarding bodies, end-users (for example, learners, employers, career counsellors, teachers, and trainers) and in wider terms, the countries, regions and the continent as a whole. The ACQF Qualifications Platform complements, supports, and can interoperate with national and regional databases, and does not aim at replacing or changing existing national qualifications databases.

The ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) will be conceived for distinct use cases, each supported by adequate and transparent procedures, to be developed and agreed.

The scope of the ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) will notably support the following uses:

- a) Use by national qualifications frameworks or systems – notably in two ways:
 - Information sharing on national qualifications included in national qualifications frameworks or systems referenced to the ACQF. The ACQF offers the infrastructure as a free public service for NQFs that have referenced to the ACQF. These NQFs may link their qualifications databases to the ACQF Platform. Having referenced to ACQF levels, the national qualifications of these NQFs and national registers are automatically associated with the ACQF levels. This information is shared publicly for different target users.
 - The ACQF Platform can be used at national level – countries may adopt the technology and infrastructure provided by the ACQF Platform as a free service to list and manage their national qualifications. The national qualifications database is managed by the competent national authorities but can be built on the infrastructure provided by the ACQF Qualifications Platform (database), upon the necessary feasibility analysis and agreement on terms and conditions.
- b) International qualifications with high labour market, societal, technological value and currency can contribute to AU policies of economic integration, growth, and innovation. International qualifications are awarded by a legally established international body (association, organisation, professional sector, or company) or by a national body acting on behalf of an international body, are used in more than one country and include learning outcomes assessed with reference to standards established by an international body. Such qualifications may not be included in the NQF and may not have a NQF level. Inclusion of international qualifications in the ACQF Qualifications Platform (database) contributes to transparency and trust, and their registration builds on transparent procedures based on accepted state-of-the-art practice, on relevant aspects of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ASG-QA), and other relevant guidelines and regulations.
- c) Common continental qualifications profiles related to priorities and sectors of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and other AU policies. Such qualifications profiles/standards should focus on high labour market, societal, technological value for the continent and be developed by multi-country teams based on agreed methodology and quality assurance to ensure acceptability and endorsement across borders in Africa. These common profiles are free for countries to use to design national courses and programmes in secondary and tertiary education, continuing training, and employment training. The related full qualifications are awarded by the countries' competent bodies.
- d) Qualifications from sectoral organisations and other institutions awarding micro-credentials: This approach involves the registration of qualifications on the ACQF from sectoral organisations and institutions awarding micro-credentials. Under this approach, the awarding institution should first register the qualification in the Member State where they intend to award the qualification. This is to ensure that only quality assured qualifications are registered on the ACQF platform/database. The registration of such qualifications on the ACQF platform/database will be undertaken according to Approaches 1 and 2 above.

3.4 Elements of data fields for electronic publication of qualifications

Contribution to enhanced transparency, quality and comparability of qualifications is a major objective of the ACQF. Across the continent, the information described in existing qualifications documents and databases varies in terms of structure, data fields and format of the main learning outcomes. The rich diversity of qualifications systems on the continent is not an impediment on the way towards comparability and readability of qualifications, which can ease recognition of qualifications of all levels, and contribute to improving mobility and to getting employment in jobs matching the acquired qualification.

ACQF countries are invited to consider the following elements in structuring the information on qualifications included in the NQF/NQS referenced to the ACQF. The ACQF implementation structure will provide practical guidance to national qualifications institutions on the implementation of this recommendation.

Elements for structuring the information on qualifications:

a) Required:

1. Title of qualification
2. Field of education and training (according to ISCED-2013, fields of education and training – ISCED-F 2013)¹
3. Country code
4. NQF level – ACQF level
5. Type of qualification
6. Awarding body or competent authority
7. Description of the qualification: short statements on the learning outcomes – what the learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do
8. Credit points/notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes (if available)
9. Expiry date (if available)
10. Link to qualifications database (if available).

b) Optional:

1. Unique qualification code
2. External quality assurance/regulatory body
3. Ways to acquire the qualification
4. Relationship to occupations or occupational classification
5. Other fields.

2. ISCED-F 2013. <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/isced-fields-of-education-and-training-2013-en.pdf>

Required fields:

3.4.1 Title of qualification

The title should be concise, distinctive, appropriate and indicative of the type and area of specialisation of the qualification, for example, Bachelor of Arts in Economics. In this example, Bachelor is the type of qualification and Economics is the area of specialisation.

3.4.2 Field of education and training

The qualifications must be classified² according to the areas of specialisation or field of education and training. For example, the areas of specialisation would include Marketing, Engineering, Accountancy, Legal Studies, Medical Sciences, etc.

3.4.3 Country of origin (country code)

The country of origin of the qualification will be indicated for purposes of registration.

3.4.4 Level (NQF, RQF, ACQF)

This field will indicate the level of the qualification (NQF or NQS, RQF, ACQF – as adequate).

3.4.5 Type of qualification

The qualifications should be categorised by their type, that is, Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees.

3.4.6 Authority

Name of competent recognition authority

The name of the competent recognition authority responsible for the registration of the qualification in the country of origin.

Name of awarding body

The name of the awarding body responsible for awarding the qualification in the country of origin.

3.4.7 Description of the qualification

This field will provide a short statement on the aim and learning outcomes of the qualification.

3.4.8 Study hours/credits

The notional study hours and credits needed to achieve the learning outcomes of the qualification should be provided, where applicable.

2. ISCED-F 2013. <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/isced-fields-of-education-and-training-2013-en.pdf>

3.4.9 Expiry date

Qualifications referenced on the ACQF platform/database should be assigned an expiry date, after which registration of qualifications on the ACQF platform/database should be renewed.

3.4.10 Link to National Qualifications Database

Optional fields:

3.4.11 Unique qualification code

National qualifications have a unique identification code given in accordance with national rules and procedures. Qualifications linked to ACQF Qualifications Platform should have a code comprise the country alpha code, qualification classification code and number.

3.4.12 External quality assurance/regulatory body

Information on external quality assurance process / competent regulatory body

3.4.13 Ways to acquire the qualification

Information on access, assessment and certification, including RPL procedure.

3.4.14 Relationship to occupations or occupational classification

Information on links to occupational classification (national, sectoral, international).

3.4.15 Other fields

3.5 Conclusion

The ACQF platform/database of qualifications is a strategic tool that will be used to generate and access vital information and statistics about most aspects of recognised qualifications in Africa. Further, the platform/database will provide availability of information for decision making in the recognition of qualifications and aid in the enhancement of quality of qualifications. The ACQF platform/database of qualifications will provide information on registered qualifications in African Member States, together with their respective NQF levels and how they compare to the ACQF levels. The platform/database will complement, support and can interoperate with national and regional databases, but will not replace or change existing national qualifications databases. The scope of the ACQF qualifications platform/database will notably support the various uses namely; use by national qualifications frameworks or systems, international qualifications, common continental qualifications profiles and qualifications from sectoral organisations and other institutions awarding micro-credentials.

3.6 Reflective questions

- 1) Briefly explain the importance of the ACQF platform/database of qualifications at national, regional and continental levels.
- 2) African states are at different levels of developing NQFs. While some have fully developed and implemented their NQFs and established national databases of qualifications, others are either in the process or yet to commence the development. Briefly describe the method that countries without NQFs and databases of qualifications can use to register their qualifications on the ACQF.
- 3) With reference to your country, explain how the registration of qualifications on the ACQF platform/database of qualifications can be achieved.
- 4) You are designing a database of your National Qualifications Framework, which should mirror the ACQF database of qualifications. Explain the eight (8) main features of the ACQF Platform/Database of Qualifications, which should be included in your design of the National Qualifications Framework.
- 5) Explain any two (2) uses of the ACQF Platform/Database of qualifications
- 6) Identify at least five (5) elements of data fields for electronic publication of qualifications

CHAPTER 4: USE OF ACQF LEVELS IN QUALIFICATIONS REGISTERS AND DATABASES

4.1 Learning objectives

At the end of this chapter the learner should be able to:

- a) Explain the use of ACQF levels in national qualifications registers and databases; and
- b) Identify the main ACQF instruments for information sharing on qualifications.

4.2 Use of ACQF Levels in National Registers

Competent authorities will reference their NQFs or qualifications to the ACQF level descriptors as recommended under Guideline 3 of the ACQF.

Competent authorities who have referenced their NQFs or qualifications to the ACQF level descriptors will then be required to indicate the ACQF level against all qualifications registered on their national registers/databases.

4.3 ACQF instruments for information sharing

African Union member states are encouraged to use the ACQF Qualifications platform/database to publish information on their NQF and their national qualifications.

ACQF supports information-sharing on NQFs in Africa to facilitate recognition and portability of qualifications. Moreover, ACQF contributes to innovation in the domain of qualifications and credentials. ACQF's main instruments for information-sharing are the website and the Qualifications platform/database.

4.4 Conclusion

The recognition and portability of qualifications is well supported where there is adequate information sharing on the qualifications by Member States. Accordingly, indicating the ACQF Level against all qualifications registered on national registers/databases will facilitate information sharing and recognition of qualifications among Member States. Therefore, competent recognition authorities are encouraged to indicate the ACQF Level against all qualifications registered on their national registers/databases.

4.5 Reflective questions

- 1) Explain how you would use the ACQF Levels in your national register/database of qualifications.
- 2) What main instruments would ACQF use for information sharing?

CHAPTER 5: GUIDANCE FOR TRAINERS AND LEARNERS

5.1 Overview

This section provides guidance to trainers and learners on the various aspects pertaining to the conducting of training and learning based on this Training Module.

a) Recommended Pre-requisite (baseline learner's background):

- i) General knowledge and understanding of at least one of the following areas:
 - National/Regional/International Qualifications Frameworks/ Systems
 - Quality assurance of learning programmes
 - Curriculum development
 - Education systems.
- ii) Practical experience in at least one of the following areas:
 - Validation and recognition of qualifications
 - Development of curricula
 - Quality assurance of learning programmes
 - Development or implementation of National/Regional/International Qualifications Frameworks/ Systems
 - Setting or implementing qualification standards.

b) Notional time to complete the module:

The recommended notional time for completing the module is as 12 hrs distributed as follows:

- Reading: 4 hrs
- Face-to-face: 6 hrs
- Assessment: 2 hrs.

c) Materials:

- Training Module 6 - on Registers and databases of qualifications
- Guideline 6 - on Registers and databases of qualifications
- ACQF Website (<https://acqf.africa/>)
- Registers of qualifications and Websites of National/Regional Qualifications Authorities (source: Tables 2, 4 and heading 2.6.2 of this training module)
- Websites of Competent Authorities

d) Organisation:

The training will be delivered in three ways namely

- Self-paced learning (individual),
- Teacher / trainer / facilitator directed learning – which may include group learning, and
- A combination of the above.

This will be achieved through the following delivery and learning modes:

- Online
- Face-to-face
- Blended

5.2 Assessment of learning outcomes

- The assessment will comprise questions, debates, presentations, case studies and practical exercises as elaborated in section 6.
- It is suggested that the weighting of the notional time required to complete the assessment(s) should not exceed 10% of the overall notional time allocated to the specific module.

The assessment modalities will comprise the following:

- Reflective questions – indicated by chapter of this training module
- Assessment questions hinging on the overall module and section specific learning outcomes (to be addressed individually or as a group response)
- Debate with other learners individually or in a group
- Individual/ group presentation
- Response to case studies, if necessary
- Practical exercises.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Glossary

Access: The possibility for eligible candidates to apply and to be considered for admission to education.

African Continental Qualifications Framework: The ACQF is a policy initiative of the African Union and its development process is underway (2019-2022). The current vision for the ACQF is: to enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications from all sub-sectors and levels of education and training; facilitate recognition of diplomas and certificates; work in cooperation and complementarity with national and regional qualifications frameworks; promote cooperation and alignment between qualifications frameworks (national and regional) in Africa and worldwide.

Awarding body: A body issuing qualifications formally recognising the achievements of an individual, following a standard assessment procedure.

Competent recognition authority: An entity which, in accordance with the laws, regulations, policies, or practices of a Member State, assesses qualifications and/or makes decisions on the recognition of qualifications.

Credit: Means confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes.

Education: All programmes of learning, study, or sets of courses of study, training, or training for research which are recognised by the relevant authorities of a Member State as belonging to its education system.

Education Institution: An institution providing education and recognised by the competent authority of a Member State as belonging to its education system.

Knowledge: Knowledge is central to any discussion of learning and may be understood as the way in which individuals and societies apply meaning to experience. It can therefore be seen broadly as the information, understanding, skills, values and attitudes acquired through learning. As such, knowledge is linked inextricably to the cultural, social, environmental and institutional contexts in which it is created and reproduced.

Learning outcomes:

- Results of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do upon completion of a learning process.
- Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Level: One of the series of levels of learning achievement according to which an NQF or RQF is organised. Levels are typically arranged in ascending order, from lowest to highest, depending on the number of levels in the NQF or RQF.

Level descriptor: A statement describing learning achievement at a particular level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that provides a broad indication of the types of learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are appropriate to a qualification at that level.

Lifelong learning:

- Education through experience and formal or informal studies covering the entire span of one's life.
- Learning that takes place in all contexts in life – formally, non-formally and informally. It includes learning behaviours and obtaining knowledge; understanding; attitudes; values and competencies for personal growth, social and economic wellbeing, democratic citizenship, cultural identity and employability.

National Qualifications Framework:

- A policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.
- An instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies along a continuum of agreed levels. It is a way of structuring existing and new qualifications, which are defined by learning outcomes – clear statements of what the learner must know or be able to do, whether learned in a classroom, on the job, or less formally. The qualifications framework indicates the comparability of different qualifications and how one can progress from one level to another, within and across occupations or industrial sectors (and even across vocational and academic fields if the NQF is designed to include both vocational and academic qualifications in a single framework).

Prior learning: Learning and/ or experience that have already been acquired in different ways either formal or informal.

Qualification: Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by an accredited education institution attesting the successful completion of an approved education programme.

Qualifications Frameworks: Systems for classification, registration, publication and articulation of quality assured qualifications.

Quality assurance:

- An ongoing process of evaluating and enhancing the quality of a higher education system, institutes or programs to assure stakeholders that acceptable standards are maintained and enhanced.
- Processes and procedures for ensuring that qualifications, assessment and programme delivery meet certain standards.

Recognition: A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of a party of the value of a foreign education qualification or a validated training.

Region: A sub-part of the African continent.

Regional Qualifications Framework: A broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country.

Skills:

- A bundle of knowledge, attributes and capacities that can be learnt and that enable individuals to successfully and consistently perform an activity or task and can be built upon and extended through learning.
- Skills means the ability to apply knowledge and use know how to complete tasks and solve problems. In the context of the EQF, skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking) or practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments).

Stakeholder: A person or organisation with an interest or concern in something. In vocational education and training, stakeholders include government, providers of training, industry, clients and the community.

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