

School Curriculum mapping study

The African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST 3) recognised that there can be misalignment between key components (qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes, curriculum) of the education and training systems and qualifications systems, which results in inconsistencies and inefficiencies that affect both the quality and transparency of learning outcomes and the qualifications achieved.

The curriculum mapping survey conducted in 2021 has provided a first-of-its-kind overview of the state of play of curriculum developments in ECCE, schooling and TVET. The African Curriculum Association (ACA), coordinator of the Continental Education Strategy for African (CESA) curriculum cluster, played a leading role in promoting, initiating and implementing the survey.

Main objectives of the mapping study



1 Map state of play & developments of curricula



2 Underpin and inform common AU orientations on curriculum

Specific objectives of the mapping study

Identify different types of frameworks (conceptual, policy, others) underpinning curriculum development & implementation in AU countries.



Examine the alignment / interaction of school curriculum with NQF principles and descriptors.



Generate evidence and insights contributing to inform and support policies on curriculum development in AU countries



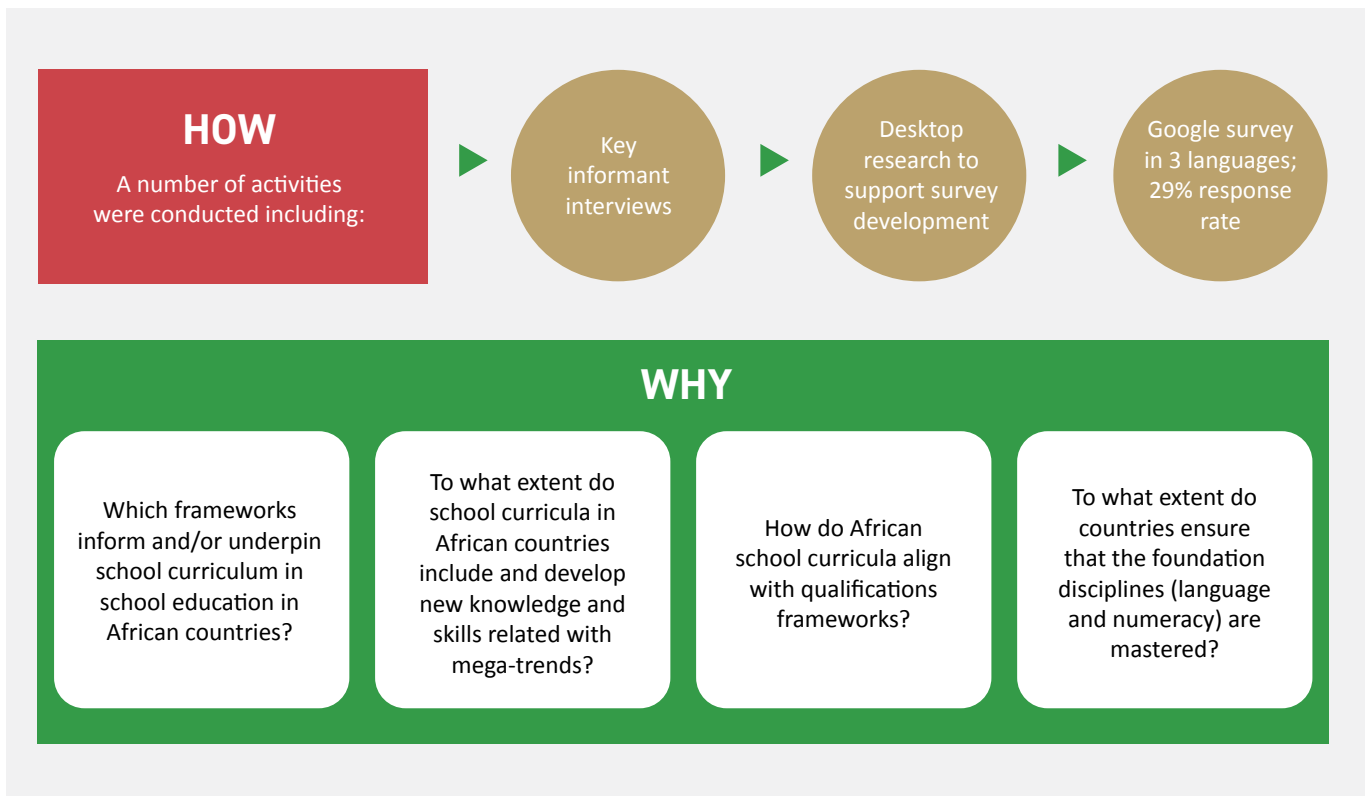
Identify & map important features, trends, new developments & challenges in curriculum development and implementation in the AU countries.



Contribute with qualitative information relevant for the SDGs.



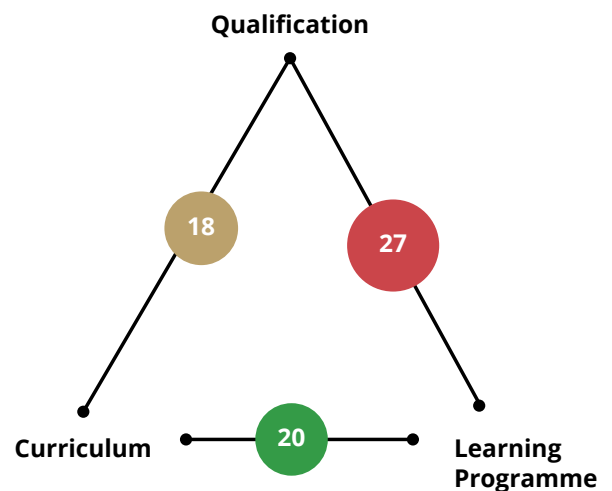
Methodology adopted for the curriculum mapping study



Key findings from the study

Key concepts covered in the survey

- **Curriculum:** the inventory of activities implemented to design, organise and plan an education or training action
- **Qualification:** the planned combination of learning outcomes with a defined purpose or purposes, including defined, applied and demonstrated competence and a basis for further learning.
- **Learning programme:** A written document planning learning experiences in a specific learning setting. It is developed on the basis of the curriculum and takes into account the learners' needs



From the survey, 20 individual respondents confirmed the interrelationship between a curriculum and a learning programme, 27 confirmed an interrelationship between a learning programme and a qualification, and then 18 confirmed the same between a qualification and a curriculum.

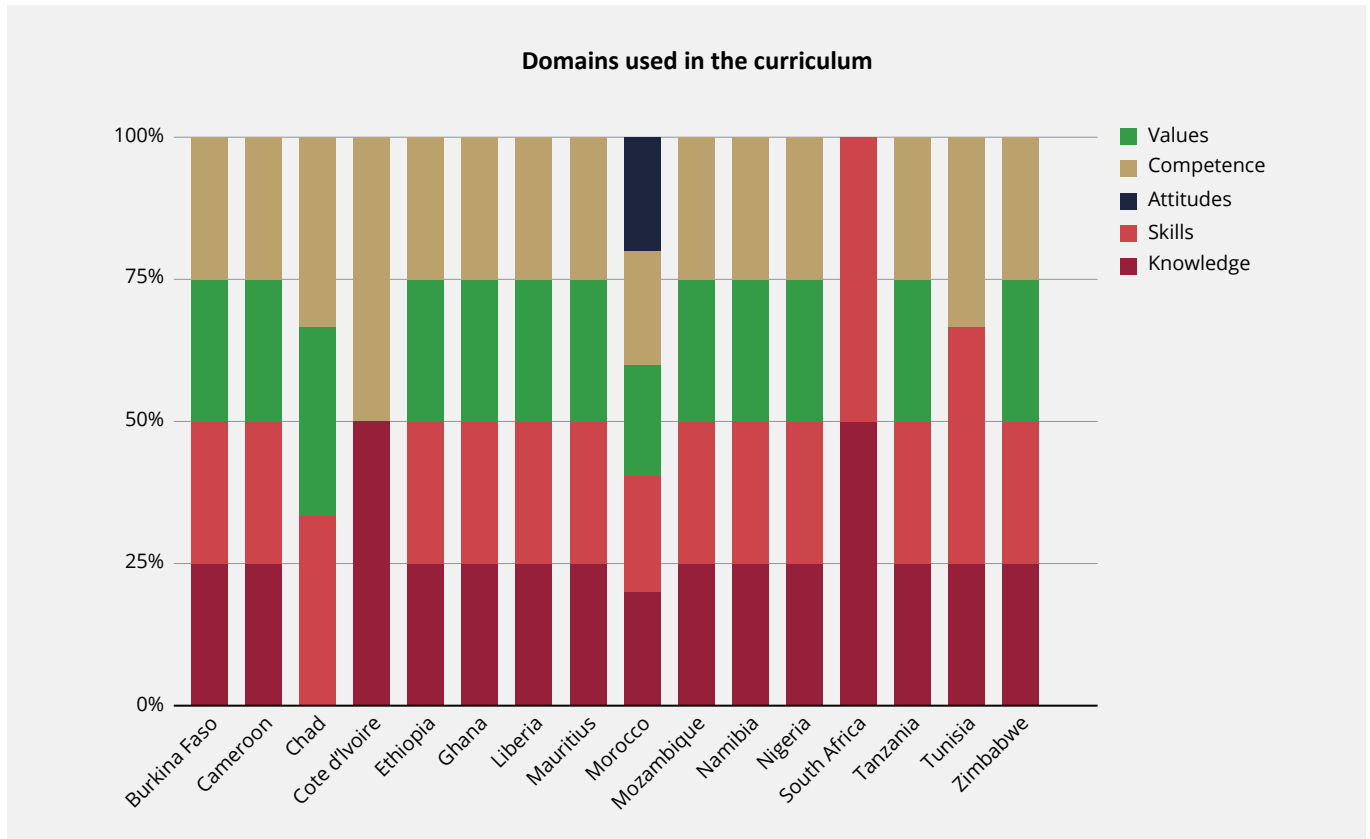


A common thread between all three concepts is the notion of **learning outcomes**. Learning outcomes are defined as statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process constitute the common base taxonomy on which the concepts of curriculum, qualification, and learning programme are understood, developed and interrelated.

Curriculum underpinnings

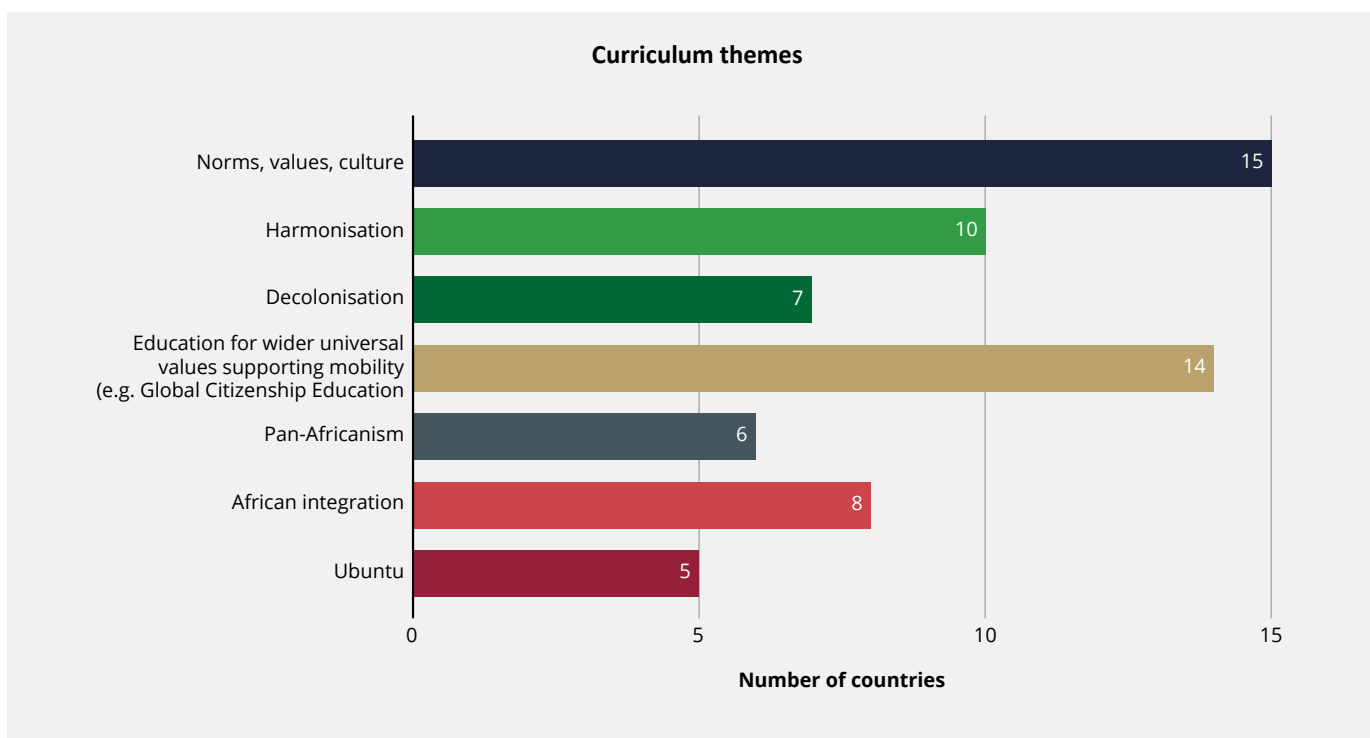
Domains used in the curriculum

Knowledge (15), skills (15) and competence (15) were the most reported domains, followed by attitudes (12). The use of values in the curriculum was only reported by one country which could indicate that it's an area that requires more attention.



Curriculum themes

Based on data collected from respondents from 16 countries, the top three themes considered in the curriculum identified by respondents were norms, values and culture (94%); education for wider universal values supporting mobility (87.5%); and harmonisation (62.5%). These themes could indicate the development of common standards across the continent.



Curriculum governance

Curriculum development

The Ministry of Education is the responsible entity for curriculum development in most countries across subsectors. Although other government agencies, leading institutions and social partners are less frequently responsible, there is a good mix of roleplayers operating in most countries' education sectors.

Curriculum implementation

Curriculum implementation in the ECCDE, schooling and TVET sectors rests predominantly with the Ministry of Education, while fewer countries report the involvement of other government agencies, institutions and social partners.

Quality assurance of curriculum delivery

(QA) of curriculum delivery did not appear to be the exclusive domain of any one particular entity, with responses fairly evenly distributed across the organisations, departments and entities listed.

Curriculum financing

In general, for the majority of respondents, it is clear that curriculum innovation is supported through the public system. In general, curriculum innovation in the schooling sector is almost exclusively supported by public funds (94%), except in one country where the financing of school level curriculum innovation is left to the private sector. For the ECCDE (80%) and TVET (73%) sectors, the majority of respondents indicated that curriculum innovation is supported throughout the public system, with a handful of respondents indicating that curriculum innovation is financed through or with the addition of special projects.

Qualified & competent teachers

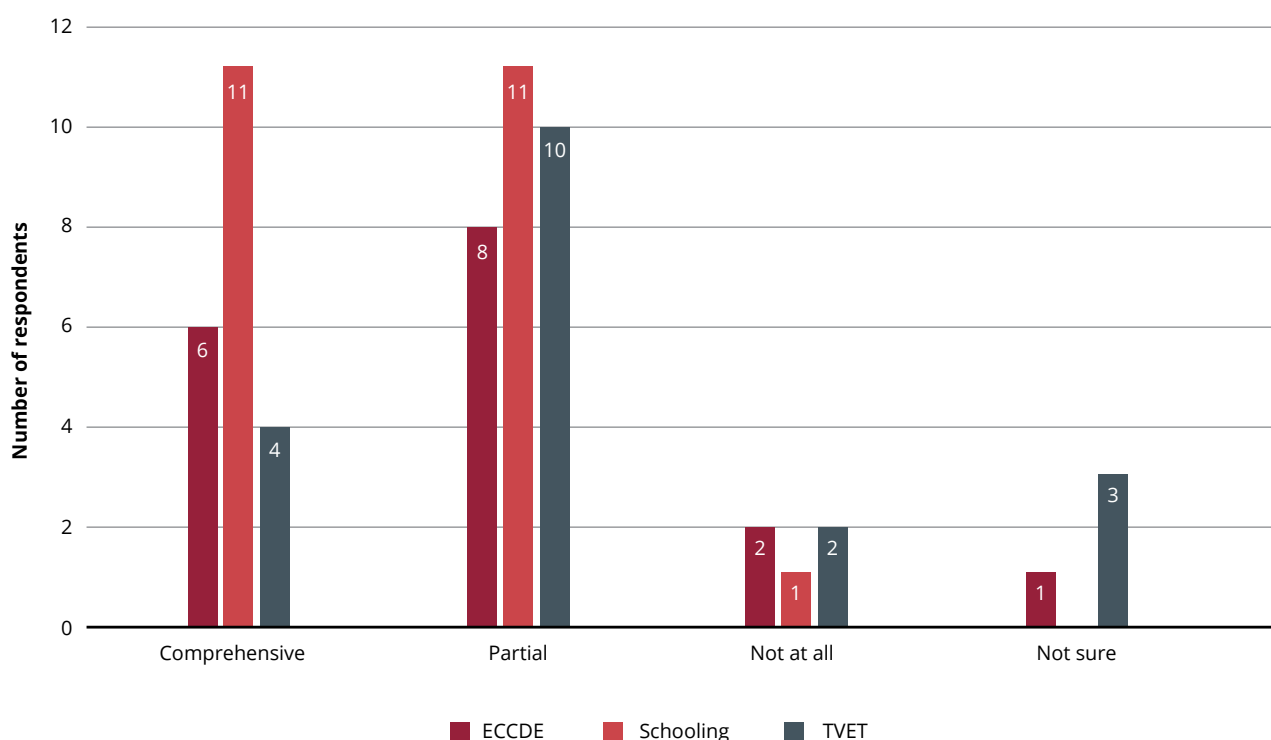
The "ISCED" is a standardised 'scale' for categorising all possible levels of education, their relevant programmes and attainments. A majority of respondents were not sure of the ISCED level of minimum qualifications required to teach in their country. The remainder of the responses varied considerably between ISCED Level and education sub-sector, with respondents suggesting that either an ISCED Level 2, 4 or 7 qualification was the minimum qualification required to teach. This suggests that respondents are either not familiar with ISCED Levels, or with the necessary minimum qualifications, or both.

Teacher training programmes and CPD

The CPD offerings across the surveyed countries suggest that a more comprehensive training programme is in place for pre-service teachers and CPD is prevalent in most countries across sectors, either comprehensively or partially (see figure below).

The importance of qualified, competent, and confident teachers in curriculum development, delivery and reform, cannot be understated. Curriculum reform can only be carried out successfully in conjunction with appropriate teacher training to ensure that both new and experienced teachers have the necessary subject knowledge and skills required for curriculum implementation

Prevalence of CPD for teachers



Teachers' role in curriculum development and learning outcomes

The survey found that teachers are only partially taught how to develop curriculum during pre-service and in-service training across all three sub-sectors. Proportionally, few respondents indicated that comprehensive training in curriculum development is provided for teachers. The extent to which teachers are taught to formulate and write learning outcomes varies between countries, and between sectors, with most sectors reporting comprehensive training offerings of below 50%.

New trends

According to respondents, the top 21st century skills needed in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) that are being developed across the curricula in respondents' countries were creativity (94%), critical thinking (87.5%), active learning (87.5%), and digital skills (81%). Employability and entrepreneurial skills were identified by 75% of respondents, while skills promoted for the development of 4IR at the global level, like Artificial Intelligence skills, were only identified by 25% of respondents. Respondents from all 16 countries indicated that gender equity is included in the curriculum (100%), followed by digitalisation and global citizenship (87.5% respectively). Employability (75%) featured slightly less, with ecological transformation (62.5%) the least likely to be in curricula.

Curriculum and qualifications frameworks

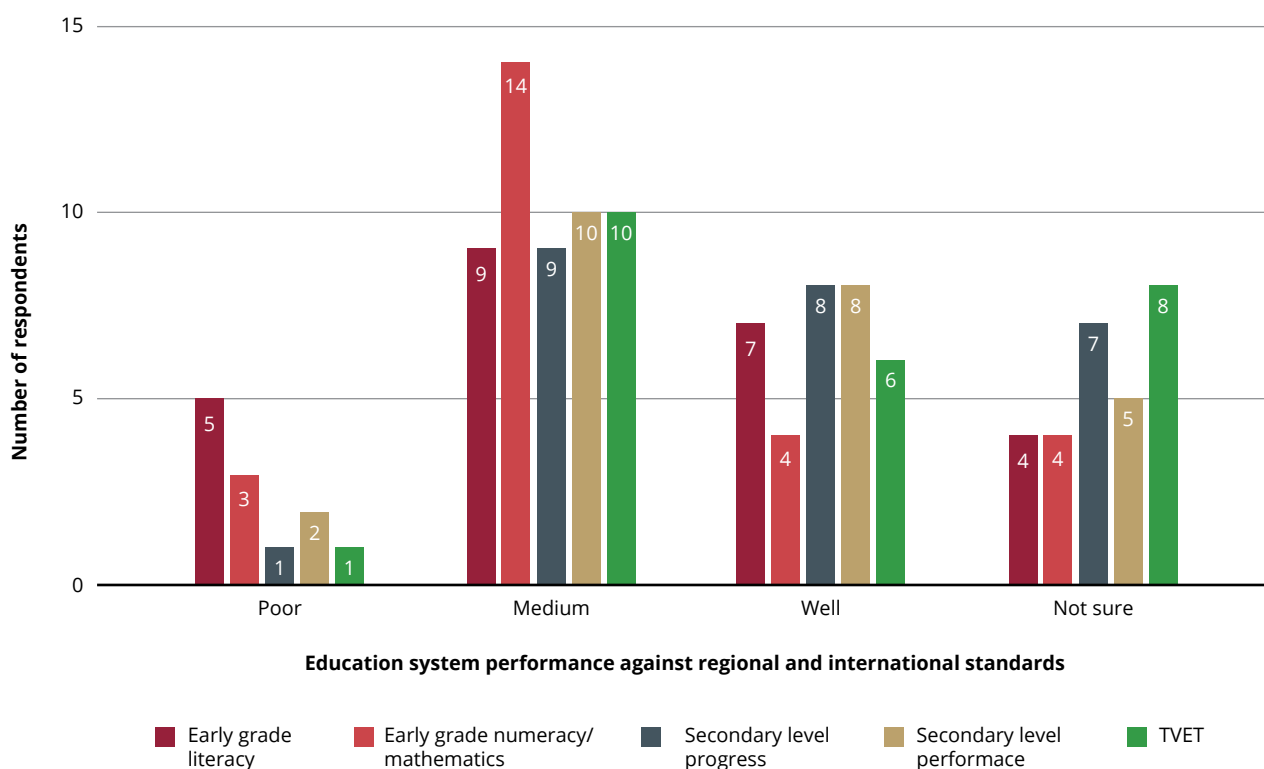
The majority of respondents (69%) reported positively with regards to the existence of a national qualifications framework (NQF) in their countries. The majority of respondents (47%) reported that curricula align with NQF descriptors, a third (33%) of respondents indicated that curricula align with levels and cycles in the NQF, while one country indicated that their curricula align with NQF principles.

International comparisons

Education system performance against regional and international standards (see figure below).

The mapping study has shown that from the sample of countries that participated, 37% are involved in the Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC) assessment for Francophone countries, while the same proportion participate in the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) assessment. The same ratio of countries, also 37%, reported involvement in the international TIMSS assessment. The trend that more than a third of countries are involved in a regional and/or international assessment is encouraging, but still very low

Reported performance of national education systems against regional and international standards



Covid-19 Response

Impact

The greatest impact was a reduction in curriculum coverage. For 50% of countries, the curriculum was re-focused to cover core subjects, including basic numeracy and literacy. 50% of countries reported that Covid-19 has resulted in a review of the curriculum.

Ensuring curriculum delivery

The predominant action to ensure curriculum delivery during the pandemic was using online methods (87.5%). Other popular methods reported included providing materials and support to learners (75%) and providing teachers with guidelines (68.7%).

Catch up measures for curriculum recovery

87.5% of countries reported that the predominant method for curriculum recovery was using online systems. 75% of countries reported using extra teaching time to catch-up, and 68.7% of countries reported a reduction of holiday periods to ensure catch up of the curriculum.

Digital technologies adopted

Reflecting worldwide trends, some of the digital technologies adopted by countries to ensure continuation of teaching and learning during the pandemic included video conferencing and online learning tools (87.5%), instant messaging services (81%), and social media. COVID-19 acted as the catalyst for investment in online learning technologies.

Trends

- An increase in learning outcomes-based approaches across African countries
- Gender equity, global citizenship and digitalisation are megatrends
- Emergence of teacher professional standards
- The promise of a continental systemic assessment regime
- Harmonisation of teacher qualifications
- Access to digital platforms

Challenges

- Unequal access to technology and the internet
- Underutilised African Union policy instruments
- Underdeveloped TVET
- Lack of data

Looking forward



Curriculum review & reform: the role of ACA

Because of planned or current curriculum review in all 16 surveyed countries, ACA has a clear opportunity to play a leading role in the harmonisation of African curricula. ACA can also advocate for more digital platforms, data standards and collaboration across regions and the continent and champion the development of an African Curriculum Framework.



Qualifications frameworks

Majority of surveyed countries have an NQF in place. The ACQF process has gained good momentum between 2019 and 2021 and provides an incredibly rich platform for mutual learning and capacity building across both curriculum and NQF developments.



Suggestions for future mapping surveys

A standardised survey instrument should be used for the collection of longitudinal data. An official (vetted) response per country should be requested. ACA to develop, review and administer a survey of this nature at least every two years.

