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African Continental Qualifications Framework ACQF MAPPING STUDY

Regional Report Working Paper

Southern African Development Community

SIFA Skills for Youth Employability Programme

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The reports of this collection are:

- **Reports on countries' qualifications frameworks:** Angola, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and Togo
- **Reports on qualifications frameworks of Regional Economic Communities:** East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC)

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Acronyms

AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
AFRIQAN	African Quality Assurance Network
AQRF	Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework
AQVN	African Qualifications Verification Network
BMZ	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
CoS	Centres of Specialisation
CoE	Centres of Excellence
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICP	International Cooperation Partners
ILO	International Labour Office
IU	Implementation Unit
LQF	Lesotho Qualifications Framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NQS	National Qualifications System
ODL	Open & Distance Learning
REC	Regional Economic Community
RISDP	SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RQF	Regional Qualifications Framework
SAAEA	Southern Africa Association for Educational Assessment
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC QA	Southern African Development Community Quality Assurance
SADCQF	Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework
SADCQVN	SADC Qualifications Verification Network
SAQAN	Southern African Quality Assurance Network
SARUA	Southern African Regional Universities Association
SATUCC	Southern Africa Trade Unions Coordination Council
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TCCA	Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation
TCCA EXCO	Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation Executive Committee
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Introduction on the ACQF Mapping Study

Policy context of this mapping study

This country report forms an integral part of the *Mapping Study on the state-of-play and dynamics of qualifications frameworks in Africa*, which lays the updated evidence foundation for development of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). The purpose of this report is to provide an updated overview - not an evaluation - of policies, practices and instruments related with qualifications frameworks in Africa.

The African Union Commission (AUC) initiated the ACQF development process in September 2019 working in partnership with the European Union (EU), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) over a period of 2.5 years (2019-2022). The ACQF-development activities are part of the African Union (AU)-EU project “Skills for Youth Employability”, which supports a holistic process building on evidence and analysis; AUC political leadership and consultation of African stakeholders (national, regional and continental); awareness raising and capacity development of African stakeholders.

The main planned output of the project by mid-2022 is the ACQF policy and technical document and action plan validated for decision making by the relevant organs of the AU.

The intermediate project outputs planned for 2019-2022 are:

- ACQF Mapping study (by mid-2020)
- ACQF Feasibility study (by mid-2021)

Other key activities:

- Stakeholder consultation workshops / webinars throughout the process (2019-2022)
- Awareness raising and capacity development actions (2020-2022)
- Website to support ACQF development and information sharing
- ACQF related policy and technical information for STC-EST meetings

ACQF Mapping Study: brief overview of the scope and methodology

The ACQF mapping study aims to chart a comprehensive, specific and updated analysis of where Africa stands in respect to qualifications frameworks development, establishment, operationalisation and revision. The scope of the study is wide in terms of explored thematic domains; and inclusive, as it considers the broad range of countries’ dynamics and progression stages in developing and establishing qualifications frameworks.

The mapping study builds on a combination of sources of information and data:

- a) Desk research: collection and analysis of sources, including policy-legislative framework; methodology sources; qualifications websites, registers and catalogues; statistical data; analyses and studies.
- b) Online survey: conducted between beginning of November 2019 and mid-January 2020; a second round was conducted in May 2020. Responses were received from 33 countries.
- c) Technical visits to a group of ten countries and three Regional Economic Communities (RECs): carried out by a team of experts, in the period from mid-December 2019 to mid-March 2020.

Countries included in the technical visits: Angola, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, Togo and South Africa. Cabo Verde was included in March 2020, but due to the Coronavirus Pandemic the research did not include a country visit, and was based on online meetings, a presentation of the NQF and extensive desk research. Three Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were contacted: EAC, ECOWAS and SADC.

Main reports of the mapping study

- Final comprehensive report, encompassing the full set of findings from the continental stocktaking and the thematic analyses on qualifications frameworks developments in Africa. Finalisation: September 2020.
- Synthetic report and infographics focused on key findings. Period: September 2020.

Thematic analyses contributing to the comprehensive mapping study

- Report of continental-wide survey on developments of qualifications frameworks encompassing all AU Member States (AU MS) and RECs
- Report of analysis of qualifications
- Country reports (11 countries) and REC reports (3 RECs)

The field work for this mapping report was conducted in January 2020. It was based on interviews and meetings with a range of representatives of SADC Secretariat, with SADC Private Sector Forum and Southern Africa Trade Unions Coordination Council (SATUCC). The report underwent the following rounds of review: i) by the external reviewer, Ms Andrea Bateman, in May 2020. ii) by the ACQF project expert, Ms Eduarda Castel-Branco, in July 2020, iii) by SADC Secretariat, in September 2020. The ACQF project expresses recognition to SADC Secretariat for the excellent cooperation in leading the third round of review, in consultation with the relevant entities and experts. The constructive dialogue with SADC Secretariat during the last round of review contributed to strengthen information-sharing on SADCQF perspectives and new initiatives and on cooperation with the ACQF process.

The detailed list of participants in meetings and discussions organised for this study is not inserted in this version of the report.

Acknowledgements

The ACQF project would like to sincerely thank the various organisations and individuals in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) who provided information and contributed in one way or another to the success of this study. Our profound appreciation goes to officers from the SADC Secretariat; particularly the team from the Directorate: Social and Human Development and Special Programmes, and Directorate: Policy, Planning, and Resource Mobilisation led by their respective Directors, for their support throughout the assignment. Finally, special thanks are extended to the SADC Private Sector Forum and Southern Africa Coordination Council (SATUCC) for availing their time to be consulted despite their busy schedules.

1. Snapshot of the SADC RQF

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) consisting of 16 Member States¹ is a Regional Economic Community (REC) with a population structure that is predominantly young estimated at 76.4% of age groups younger than 35 years, of which 35% are of aged 15-34 years (SADC, 2011). SADC's aim is to improve sustainable development, alleviate poverty to enhance the quality of life of its people by industrialization and deeper regional integration, leveraging on its comparative advantage of abundant human and natural resources.

A ten-level reference **SADC regional Qualifications Framework**, referred to as the SADCQF was established in 2011 and launched in 2017 using principles of acting together as a Community (Article 2 SADC Protocol on Education and Training). The SADCQF was largely developed by government stakeholders with less involvement of stakeholders from the private sector, training institutions and employees. Its purpose is to contribute to easier movement of learners and workers as well as promoting life-long learning opportunities across the SADC region and internationally. The SADCQF consists of a set of agreed principles to promote comparability; common understanding of qualifications credits, quality assurance; mutual recognition of qualifications within the region and internationally. In addition, it has level descriptors for each of the ten levels based on learning outcomes with three domains of knowledge, skills, and autonomy and responsibility. It's an inclusive framework encompassing all forms, types, levels and categories of education and training and supported by quality assurance guidelines. The SADCQF is intended to facilitate implementation of the *Addis Convention on the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas, degrees and other academic qualifications in higher education in African States*.

The SADCQF **governing structures** entail policy, technical and administrative structures namely:

- i) SADC Council of Ministers; and Ministers responsible for Education and Training and Science, technology and Innovation that provide strategic policy leadership and monitor implementation of the SADCQF.
- ii) Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) that provides overall technical oversight, advocates and oversees its implementation.
- iii) SADC Secretariat and Implementation Unit (IU)² that has overall responsibility to coordinate, drive the implementation of the SADCQF and report progress of implementation to the TCCA.

Development and enhancement of relevant educated skilled human capital is one of SADC broad strategic objectives for regional integration to foster sustainable development of the Region supported by legal, policy instruments and strategic frameworks. These includes the 1992 SADC Treaty; Protocol on Education and Training 1997-2020; Protocol on Science, Technology and Innovation (2009); Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons (2005); SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) (2020-2030) and the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Road Map 2015-2063. Mobility of human resources and services is at the centre of the integration agenda of SADC. The SADC region is implementing or has embarked on a number of initiatives at both national and regional level to support mobility of human resources and services. This includes the establishment, improvement and implementation of qualification framework, quality assurance and accreditation systems; introduction of a regional visa for students,

¹ Angola, Botswana, United Republic of the Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Kingdom of eSwatini, Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe

² The Implementation Unit is not operational

academics, researchers, customs exemptions and development of mutual recognition of professional qualifications.

According to the Africa Regional Integration Index (2019), SADC's strength lies in free movement of people, but scores low in regional integration of its economies and infrastructure based (2019 Africa Regional Integration Index Report, at <https://www.integrate-africa.org/reports-data/download-the-reports/>)

A trend of ten- level comprehensive NQFs in the countries of the region is evident albeit at different stages of development and implementation. Some countries have started development of comprehensive NQFs (Angola), while others are designing integrated NQFs building on the experience of their existing and operational sectoral frameworks (Malawi, Mozambique).

Type and status of NQFs in SADC

Not in place	Early thinking	In development/Consultation of Comprehensive Frameworks	In place (fully developed, approved as legal acts, started implementation of Comprehensive Frameworks	In place, operational for some time, reviewed Comprehensive Frameworks
Comoros DRC	Madagascar	Angola ³ Malawi ⁴ Mozambique ⁵ Tanzania (TVET)	Kingdom of Eswatini ⁶ Lesotho ⁷ Zimbabwe	Botswana Mauritius Namibia Seychelles ⁸ South Africa Zambia

Sources: SADC Secretariat, 2019 Proposal for implementing the SADC Qualifications Framework; ACQF mapping study survey (2020), ACQF Mapping study: Angola (2020), ACQF Mapping study: Mozambique (2020); Lesotho Qualifications Framework: <http://www.che.ac.ls/lqf/>.

Implementation of the SADCQF was initiated with six programmes that are at various implementation stages utilising national capacities (human, technical, financial) and regionally coordinated government funding to strengthen capacity for its coordination and implementation.

The TCCA mobilised Member States to oversee the development of the six programmes as follows:

³ Angola- conceptualisation and consultations of comprehensive NQF is underway and adoption expected by end of 2020.

⁴ Malawi is implementing a Technical and Vocational Education and Training qualification framework for some time and a comprehensive NQF under conceptualization. In the ACQF Survey (2020), Malawi considers its NQF to be at stage "in development and consultation".

⁵ Mozambique has two operational sector qualifications frameworks: 1) Higher education (QUANQES), adopted by Decree N° 30/2010, 2) TVET (QNQP), adopted by Law N°23/2014, amended by Law N° 6/2016. The new integrated NQF is in advanced stage of development and consultation, and its adoption is expected by 2020. In its submission to the ACQF online survey, Mozambique considers its integrated NQF to be at stage "development and consultation".

⁶ In the ACQF online survey (2020), Eswatini considered its NQF to be at stage "in development and consultation". The NQF legal act was approved in September 2020.

⁷ Lesotho Qualifications Framework (LQF) was approved by Cabinet in June 2019 and officially launched by the Minister of Education in December 2019. LQF revised and LQF Procedures Manual: <http://www.che.ac.ls/lqf/>. Dissemination campaigns and training workshops conducted in 2020. <http://www.che.ac.ls/lesotho-qualifications-framework-lqf-is-disseminated-march-2020/>

⁸ In the ACQF online survey conducted for this mapping report, Seychelles and Zambia considered their NQF to be at the stage "In place, started implementation".

Programme	Member States driving the programmes	Status
Development and alignment of NQFs to SADCQF	South Africa	Eight countries volunteered to pilot alignment of their NQF to the SADCQF. Two countries namely Seychelles and South Africa have aligned their NQFs to the SADCQF based on alignment criteria developed.
Quality Assurance	Botswana	Alignment of SADC countries' internal and external quality assurance systems with the SADC quality assurance (QA) guidelines is ongoing. Peer learning, sharing of experiences and strengthening the capacity of member states in their implementation of the SADC QA guidelines is facilitated by Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN) and the Southern Africa Association for Educational Assessment (SAAEA), working with the TCCA. SADC envisages a SADC Quality Assurance system aligned to the Pan-Africa Quality Assurance Framework (PAQAF).
Verification of Qualifications	Eswatini	A regional Qualifications Verification Network (SADCQVN) which is a member of the African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN) was established to ensure that credible, trustworthy information is shared across SADC and shares the common goal of ensuring that African qualifications can be trusted. A SADCQVN booklet was produced and is consistently updated annually and shared across the region. The annual collation of statistical information on learner and worker mobility in SADC, as well as on misrepresented qualifications, is a key feature of the work of the SADCQVN. A Draft SADC Recognition Manual is awaiting validation by the TCCA in October 2020.
Advocacy and Communication	Zambia	A SADCQF Communication strategy, Communication tools and Marketing materials have been developed. The SADCQF is published on SADC social media sites. Currently, there is no database or register for the SADCQF.
Articulation, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CATS)	Namibia	The SADC region has a set of RPL guidelines and the status of implementation has not yet been determined. In addition, a Draft SADC CAT Guidelines is awaiting validation by TCCA in October 2020..
Governance	SADC Secretariat	The Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA), meets twice every year. A TCCA Executive Committee (EXCO) was established based on the SADC Troika principles and meets twice a year to review and monitor progress of implementation in the six programmes of the implementation of the SADCQF.

2. Introduction and context of SADC

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is a regional economic community comprising 16 countries namely: Angola, Botswana, United Republic of the Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South

Africa, Kingdom of ESwatini, Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is guided by a vision of a shared future, to be attained through regional cooperation and integration in the socio-cultural, economic and political areas. The objective of SADC is to improve economic growth and development, alleviate poverty, and enhance the quality of life of its people. It also seeks to support socially disadvantaged areas through enhancing productive systems, and deepening co-operation and integration so that the region emerges as a competitive and effective player in international trade and the world economy (SADC RISDP 2005-2020). Since its inception, SADC adopted principles such as concerted agreement and variable progression for cooperation and integration with its Member States in the implementation of its programmes. SADC programmes are guided by SADC Vision 2050 and the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan 2020-2030, which is the successor of the RISDP 2005-2020.

The region is endowed with both natural and human resources, its most valuable resource being human capital with an estimated population of 345.2 million in 2018, growing at an estimated average rate of 1.8% in 2018. Average life expectancy in the region was estimated to be 61 years in 2018. The population structure is young with 76.4% estimated to be younger than 35 years, 35% of which are youth aged 15-34 years (SADC, 2011). About 51% of the population is female. There is a total labour force of about 140 million, with labour force participation rates ranging between 44.8% and 87.6% (SADC, 2018).

The unemployment rate among those of age 15-24 years ranges between 3% and 57.4% in SADC member states in 2017 (SADC, 2018). Graduate unemployment is an increasing phenomenon in the region with some SADC Members States recording about 12% graduate unemployment.

The economy of the region is diverse, spanning a range of sectors from agriculture to manufacturing with a majority of the population dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods. However, the manufacturing sector has been prioritised as the key engine of growth to drive the industrialisation process in the region.

3. Mapping of education and training system

2.1. Policy and Strategic Frameworks

One of the broad strategic objectives of SADC is that the role and contribution of human resource development should facilitate industrial development, competitiveness, regional integration and cooperation (SADC Treaty, 1992).

The quest to increase relevant human capital for industrialisation of SADC economies through the transformation of natural resources is one of the priorities of the SADC Revised Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) (2015), Regional Indicative Strategic Plan 2020-2030 and the SADC Industrialisation Strategy and Road Map 2015-2063.

SADC policy instruments and commitments governing education and training in the region include the Protocol on Education and Training signed in (1997); Protocol on Science, Technology and Innovation (2009); Protocol on Gender and Development (2008); Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons (2005), not yet in force, but promoting the free movement of people in the region; Maseru Declaration on HIV and AIDS (1992); Declaration of Information, Communication and Technology

(2001) and SADC Declaration on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (2017). Periodic long-term strategic frameworks guide regional initiatives and programmes. Currently, the recently approved Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030, a successor to RISDP 2005-2020 (SADC: 2017c) guides regional education and training initiatives. This includes, among others:

- Increasing access to relevant, quality education and training opportunities;
- Development and harmonisation of the qualification and accreditation systems and frameworks to promote comparability in the educational and training systems and their outputs in the region; and
- Mobility of human resources and services.

2.2 Access, quality and relevance

Available information indicates that progress has been made in primary and secondary school enrolments, however, completion rates and transition rates are low. Gross tertiary enrolment ratio is low, estimated at less than 7% (SADC RISDP 2015). To improve achievement of education outcomes (access, performance, completion and retention), the region adopted a number of approaches. These include:

- Utilisation of open and distance learning and blended learning supported by the SADC Open and Distance Learning Policy Framework; and the SADC Guidelines for Development of National Broadband Plans (SADC: 2012);
- Sharing of resources (infrastructure and financial) through establishment of SADC Centres of Specialisation (CoS) and of Excellence (CoE) guided by SADC Framework for Establishment and Sustainability of CoS and CoE, treatment of SADC students as local students with respect to tuition, application and examination fees in public universities of most member states (SADC: 1997).
- Adoption of a holistic model to education for reduction of societal and economic barriers to education guided by the SADC Policy Framework for Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (SADC CSTL Policy Framework 2016); and
- Harmonisation of standards and competencies of teachers supported by the Regional Framework for Teacher Professional Standards and Competencies.
- A Draft Regional Continuing Professional Framework has been developed and awaiting validation and approval.

Technical, vocational, entrepreneurship education and training is prioritised in the education and training system in the region to ensure relevance, matching skills needs of the labour market and social and economic sustainable development. This is supported by SADC strategic frameworks such as the Industrialisation Strategy and Road Map that 'calls for restructuring and re-purposing of the education systems with a focus on technical and vocational skills of all kinds, especially those appropriate for a modern, knowledge economy', and the SADC Framework and Implementation for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), 2018-2027. The Monitoring and Evaluation indicators of the Framework are currently being reviewed to be relevant to Member States. SADC member states are undertaking reforms such as establishment of TVET governance structures; strengthening public/private partnerships in curriculum and development, training delivery and work-based learning,

learner and internship placements, TVET investments and skills competitions; and the integration of TVET into the General Education System, through the provision of additional learning pathways.

2. 3 Qualification and accreditation systems and frameworks

A number of developments are taking place with the establishment, improvement and implementation of qualifications frameworks, quality assurance and accreditation systems in SADC member states and in the region as a whole. One example of such developments relates to the establishment and implementation of national (comprehensive of all levels and sub-sectors of education and training), or of sectoral Qualifications Frameworks (such as TVET or Higher Education Qualifications Frameworks). Table 1 proposes an overview of the stages of development of comprehensive NQFs in SADC countries. Some countries have operational sectoral qualifications frameworks and at the same time are advancing with the conceptualisation and consultation of the integrated and comprehensive NQF (Malawi and Mozambique are examples).

Table 1: Type and status of comprehensive NQFs in SADC

Not in place	Early thinking	In development/Consultation of Comprehensive Frameworks	In place (fully developed, approved as legal acts, started implementation of Comprehensive Frameworks	In place, operational for some time, reviewed Comprehensive Frameworks
Comoros DRC	Madagascar	Angola ⁹ Malawi ¹⁰ Mozambique ¹¹ Tanzania (TVET)	Kingdom of Eswatini ¹² Lesotho ¹³ Zimbabwe	Mauritius Namibia Seychelles ¹⁴ South Africa Botswana Zambia

Sources: SADC Secretariat, 2019 Proposal for implementing the SADC Qualifications Framework; ACQF mapping study survey (2020); ACQF Mapping study Angola (2020), ACQF Mapping study Mozambique (2020); Lesotho Qualifications Framework: <http://www.che.ac.ls/lqf/>.

2. 4 Mobility of human resources and services

⁹ Angola- Conceptualisation and consultations of comprehensive NQF is underway and adoption expected by end of 2020.

¹⁰ Malawi – implementing a Technical and Vocational Education and Training qualification framework for some time and a comprehensive NQF under conceptualization. In the ACQF Survey (2020), Malawi considers its NQF to be at stage “in development and consultation”.

¹¹ Mozambique has two operational sector qualifications frameworks: 1) Higher education (QUANQES), adopted by Decree in 2010, 2) TVET (QNQP), adopted by Law 2014, amended in 2016. The new integrated NQF is in advanced stage of development and consultation, and its adoption is expected by 2020. In its submission to the ACQF online survey, Mozambique considers its integrated NQF to be at stage “development and consultation”.

¹² In the ACQF survey (2020), Eswatini considered its NQF to be at stage “in development and consultation”. The NQF legal act was approved in September 2020.

¹³ Lesotho Qualifications Framework (LQF) was approved by Cabinet in June 2019 and officially launched by the Minister of Education in December 2019. LQF revised and LQF Procedures Manual: <http://www.che.ac.ls/lqf/>. Dissemination campaigns and training workshops in 2020. <http://www.che.ac.ls/lesotho-qualifications-framework-lqf-is-disseminated-march-2020/>

¹⁴ In the ACQF online survey conducted for this mapping report, Seychelles and Zambia considered their NQF to be at the stage “In place, started implementation”.

Migration and free movement are at the centre of integration and mobility of labour and services. The SADC Treaty, Article 5 (SADC, 1992) promotes, among Member States, human resource development and progressive elimination of obstacles to free movement of capital, people, goods and services as one of the broad strategies of the SADC regional integration and co-operation agenda. Introduction of a regional visa for students, academics, researchers, customs exemptions and development of mutual recognition of professional qualifications are initiatives that are ongoing in the region.

4. Scope of the SADCQF

The SADCQF was established as a ten-level reference framework in 2011 with a qualifications portal (currently not yet functional) and quality assurance guidelines. The SADCQF provides level descriptors for each of the ten SADCQF levels based on learning outcomes with three domains of knowledge, skills, and autonomy and responsibility (see figure below).

Its scope is based on the principle of inclusiveness encompassing all forms, types, levels and categories of education and training. This includes out of school, formal, non-formal and informal learning; general education, TVET, higher education and various modes of learning such as face-to-face, distance and on-line.

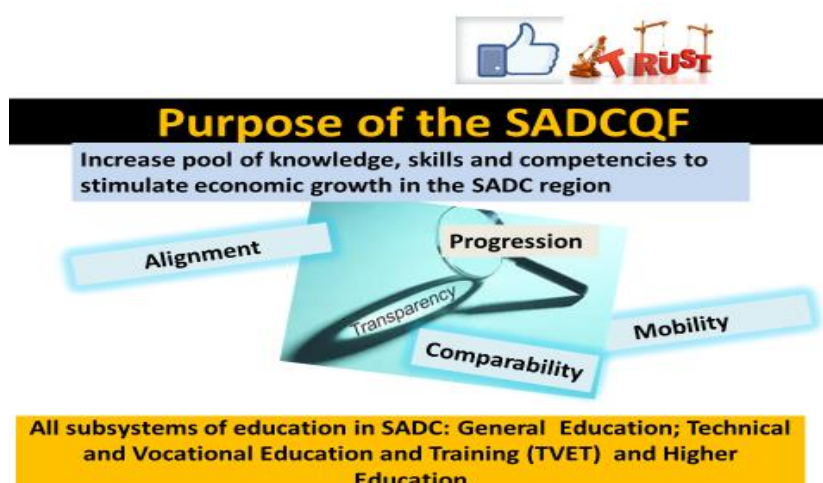


Figure 1: Purpose and Scope of SADCQF

Source: SADC Secretariat 2017; SADCQF Communication Material

The SADCQF serves as a regional mechanism for comparability and recognition of full qualifications, credit accumulation and transfer (CAT), creation of regional standards and promotion of quality assurance within and outside the region based on mutual trust. The purpose is to facilitate movement of learners and workers, and promotion of life-long learning opportunities within the region and internationally. The ultimate aim is to ensure availability of relevant educated and skilled human resources for socio-economic sustainable development (RISDP 2005-2020).

The SADCQF is intended to facilitate implementation of the *Addis Convention on the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas, degrees and other academic qualifications in higher education in African States*. The SADCQF consists of a set of agreed principles to promote comparability; common understanding of qualifications credits, quality assurance; mutual recognition of qualifications within

the region and internationally (SADC: 2011). A technical structure/advisory body referred to as the Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) provides overall technical oversight, and advocates for and oversees the development and implementation of the SADCQF.

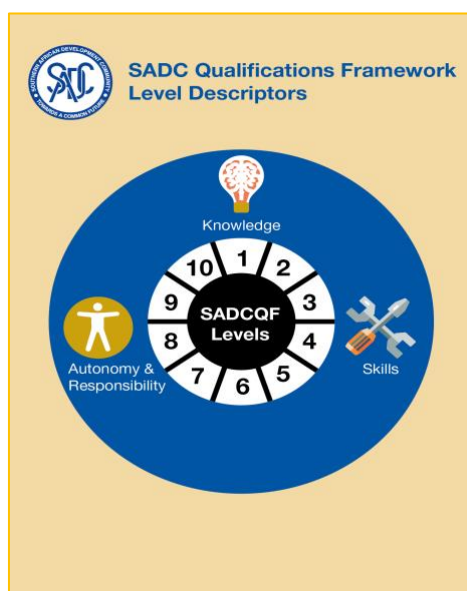


Figure 2: Infographic on the SADC Level Descriptor categories/ domains
Source: SADC Secretariat 2017. SADCQF Communication Material

5. Legislation

The overarching legal instrument that guides the development and implementation of the SADCQF is the Protocol on Education and Training (1997-2020). The Protocol promotes the comparability of standards, mobility and portability of qualifications across the region in order to ease mobility of learners, workers and educational services. SADC recognises that migration and movement of persons for employment or education opportunities is inevitable in the integration and co-operation of the region. SADC policy instruments that support an appropriate environment of mobility of qualifications and free movement of labour include the Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons (2005), not in force and the Labour Migration Policy Framework. The Labour Migration Policy Framework ‘calls for the harmonisation and recognition of education and training, among others, to facilitate and manage migration in the region’. The Protocol on Trade in Services (Article 7) 2012, updated in March 2017, calls for mutual recognition of qualifications for professional services.

6. Organising systems: governance, institutions, stakeholders

The SADC Council of Ministers, Ministers responsible for Education and Training, the Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA), the TCCA Executive Committee (TCCA EXCO) and an Implementation Unit (IU) are the main governing structures for the implementation of the SADCQF as outlined in the figure below.



Figure 3: SADCQF Governance structure

SADC Council of Ministers: is a ministerial body consisting of ministers responsible for SADC affairs, from all member states, that oversees the development and functioning of the SADC Common Agenda. It approves all SADC policies, strategies and programmes (including cross-sectoral) for implementation and provides advice to the Heads of State/Summit on various issues of regional integration.

Ministers responsible for Education and Training: is a ministerial body consisting of ministers responsible for education and training from all member states that provides strategic and policy leadership, as well as monitors and endorses policies, strategies, projects and structures for the development and implementation of the SADCQF. It recommends all related matters of SADCQF for final approval by the SADC Council of Ministers.

Technical Committee of Certification and Accreditation (TCCA): is a technical structure/advisory body comprising representatives of national certification, accreditation/ NQFs and systems in all member states, and representatives from regional and international technical partners and institutions such as UNESCO, the ILO and the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA). The TCCA is mandated to develop, and recommend to SADC ministers responsible for education and training, regional policy guidelines, instruments, structures, procedures and related matters that would facilitate comparability, harmonisation, common understanding of accreditation and certification of qualifications to enhance mobility of learners and workers in SADC, as well as follow-up on the implementation of the SADCQF. (SADC: 2016b). In addition, it establishes thematic and sub-working groups of experts identified on the basis of their comparative relevance to the task to be undertaken for implementation of the SADCQF as needed. Further, it establishes partnerships with regional, continental and international partners and institutions as technical resources for implementation of the SADCQF. Currently, two sub-working groups have been established and are operational namely:

- TCCA Executive Committee (TCCA EXCO) comprising the current and outgoing and incoming chair of TCCA in a given period (in accordance with the SADC Troika principles), to monitor progress and recommend remedial action for implementation of TCCA decisions between meetings;

- SADC Qualifications Verification Network (SADCQVN) - A network comprising experts that verify national and foreign qualifications in all the SADC member states to promote quick, innovative and cost-effective verification of qualification; building credibility and trust in the qualifications produced and used in the region.

SADC Secretariat and Implementation Unit (IU): The SADC Secretariat and the IU has overall responsibility to coordinate, drive the implementation of the SADCQF and report progress of implementation to the TCCA. However, this unit is yet to be established. The TCCA has mobilised Member States to assist the SADC Secretariat by driving the six implementation programmes of the SADCQF.

The main stakeholders that have been involved in the development and kick-starting the implementation of the SADCQF are national governments, national qualification/ training authorities, representatives of universities and regional multilateral organisations. There is no evidence of involvement or input from students or learners, private sector or workers in the development and implementation of the SADCQF at regional level.

7. Quality assurance of qualifications

The SADC region is cognisant of the importance of robust and effective systems of quality assurance mechanisms in education and training provision to ensure trust and credibility of qualifications. The SADCQF is supported by regional quality assurance guidelines, which set principles and standards for both internal and external quality assurance systems and mechanisms. The figure below represents an infographic on the sixteen QA guidelines.



Figure 4: Infographic of SADCQF quality assurance guidelines
Source: SADC Secretariat 2017: SADQF Communication Material

8. SADC Qualifications Framework implementation

In 2017, the SADCQF was launched with an implementation model that consists of six programmes (see Figure 5 below) and an implementation process owned and driven by the Member States of the region. Taking cognisance of regional resource constraints (human and financial) that have hampered the implementation of SADCQF since its establishment in 2011, a strategy was adopted to utilise national capacities (human, technical, financial) and regionally coordinated government funding to strengthen capacity for coordination and implementation of SADCQF at regional level (SADC: 2017e). Member states, particularly TCCA members, volunteered to augment the capacity of the SADC Secretariat by providing administrative support on a rotational basis, using their capacities (human, technical expertise and funding) in the absence of the IU to drive the implementation of the SADCQF on a daily basis. The TCCA mobilised Member States to technically drive the implementation of the SADCQF programmes as follows:

- Alignment of NQFs to SADCQF - South Africa;
- Quality Assurance - Botswana;
- Verification - Kingdom of Eswatini;
- Articulation, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) -Namibia;
- Advocacy and Communication – Zambia; and
- Governance TCCA and SADC Secretariat

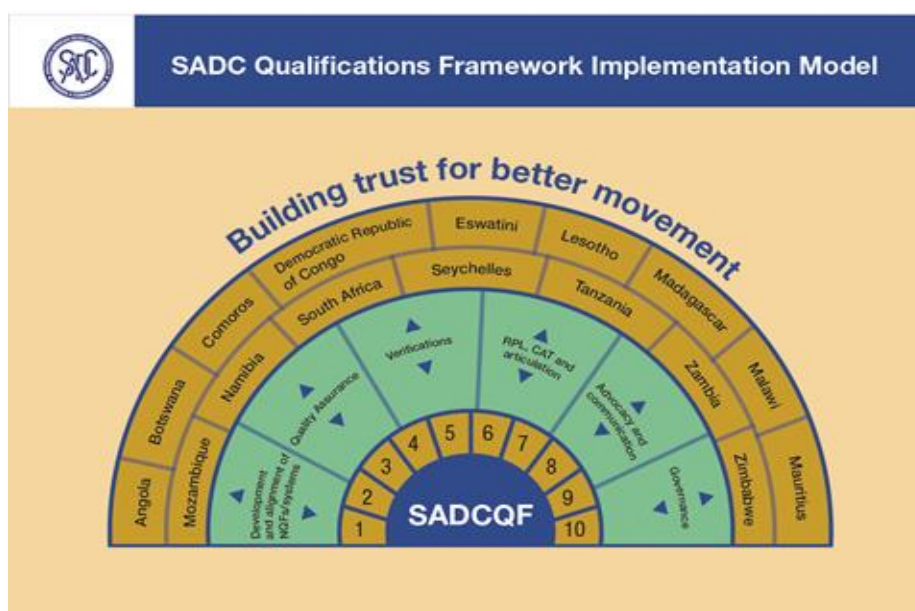


Figure 5 : Infographic of the SADCQF Qualifications Implementation Model

Source: SADC Secretariat 2017 : Communication Material

8.1 Regional Initiatives

The following regional initiatives are currently being undertaken as part of the implementation of the SADCQF:

Alignment of NQFs to SADCQF: A guideline for alignment that contains the alignment criteria that was piloted and amended (see Table 2 and graph 6 below) and steps for the alignment process (self-assessment exercise) (see figure 6 below) and adjudication process was developed. SADC Member States have started aligning their NQFs to the SADCQF using the guideline.

Table 2: SADCQF Alignment Criteria

1. Responsibilities of relevant national bodies involved in the alignment process are determined and published by the relevant competent authorities;
2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between qualification levels in the NQF/ National Qualification System (NQS) and level descriptors of the SADCQF;
3. The NQF/ NQS is based on learning outcomes and links to non-formal and informal learning and credit systems (where these exist);
4. Procedures for including qualifications in the NQF or describing the place of qualifications in the NQS are transparent;
5. The National Quality Assurance System for education and training refers to the NQF or NQS and is consistent with quality assurance guidelines of the SADCQF;
6. There is a clear indication of the relevant national authorities responsible for the verification of the qualifications obtained in the national system;
7. The alignment process shall include a stated agreement of relevant quality assurance bodies;
8. Competent national bodies shall certify the alignment of the NQF/ NQS with the SADCQF. A comprehensive report on alignment and its evidence must be published by competent national bodies;
9. The official platform of the country must provide for a public comment process for the alignment report; and
10. Clear plans have been made to make changes to legislation and policy supporting alignment to SADCQF levels on new qualification certificates, diplomas and other documents issued by competent authorities.

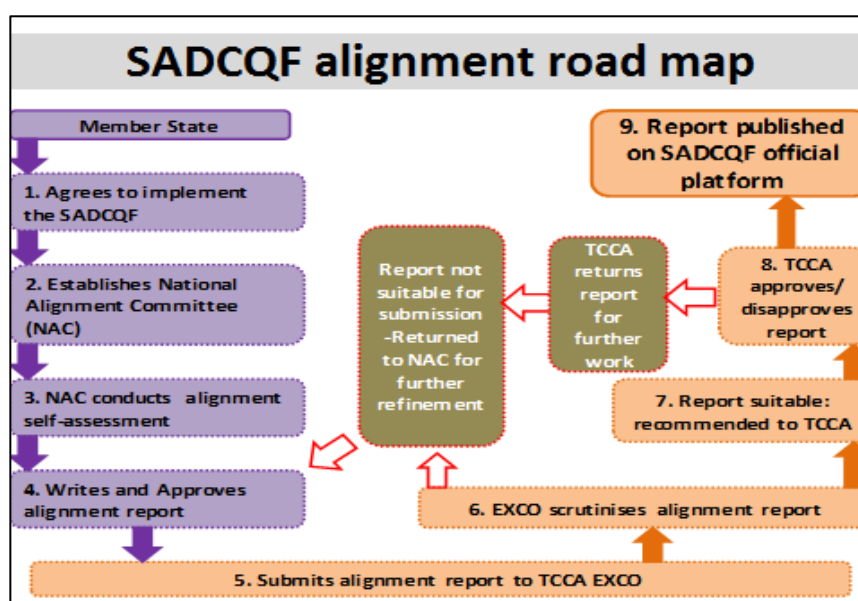


Figure 6. Infographic- Alignment process flow chart
Source: SADC Secretariat : 2017 SADC Alignment Guideline

The alignment plan of NQFs to SADCQF consists of two phases: a pilot phase of countries, and roll-out to the rest of SADC member states based on their readiness. Peer learning and capacity building workshops were undertaken to assist the countries with the process. Eight countries (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia) agreed to be part of the pilot phase of alignment of their NQFs to SADCQF in 2017. Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe expressed an interest in 2019.

As of June 2020, two member states, namely Seychelles (SQA, 2018) and South Africa (SAQA, 2019), have completed the alignment of their NQFs to the SADCQF while the others are at various stages of aligning their NQFs to the SADCQF. Mauritius developed a draft alignment report and is in the process of refining it (MQA, 2019). The reports are published on the respective national websites.

Quality Assurance: This entails harmonisation of regional quality assurance (QA) systems; policies and frameworks; promotion of credible institutions/ providers; credible qualifications; credible, accurate qualifications information and alignment with the modalities in the Addis Convention. Alignment of SADC countries' internal and external QA systems with the SADC QA guidelines is ongoing. Peer learning, sharing of experience and strengthening the capacity of member states in their implementation of the SADC QA guidelines is facilitated by Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN) and the Southern Africa Association for Educational Assessment (SAAEA), working with the TCCA. SADC envisages a SADC QA system aligned to the Pan-Africa Quality Assurance Framework (PAQAF).

Articulation, RPL and CAT: The region foresees the development and implementation of a regional Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS), and articulation systems to foster pathways and progression opportunities within and between schooling, TVET and higher education.

Verification: A regional platform has been established, (SADC Qualifications Verification Network [SADCQVN]), to enable experts, responsible for verification of qualifications, to communicate and co-operate on verification matters, to ensure trust and credibility of qualifications in the region. This network is a member of the African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN), which shares the common goal of ensuring that African qualifications can be trusted. To ensure that credible, trustworthy information is shared across SADC, a SADCQVN booklet of contacts has been developed, containing contact details (including name, address, telephone, email) of experts and organisations dealing with verification of qualifications in the SADC region. The SADCQVN booklet is updated annually and shared across the region. Statistics on the number, source and status of the qualifications verified on a yearly basis, in each member state, is collected through the SADCQVN to indicate the mobility statistics. In addition, a Draft SADC Recognition Manual has been developed to standardise the verification of qualifications across the region.

Furthermore, an **E-certificate** is being piloted to speed up delivery to clients, reducing waiting periods for evaluation of qualifications to enable quicker application outcomes for further learning or for visas, and to reduce misrepresented and fraudulent qualifications. To date, four countries (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia) are piloting the E-certificate.

Advocacy and Communication: A SADCQF Communication strategy, Communication tools and Marketing materials have been developed. The SADCQF information is published on SADC social media sites. Currently, there is no database or register for the SADCQF. However, a SADC qualifications portal that includes part-qualifications and full qualifications was initially developed but was discontinued due to inadequate funding. In addition, indicators for the SADCQF have been developed, coordinated by the Technical Committee on Education Management Information System (TCEMIS) (SADC Records of TCEMIS 2017). SADC envisages the revival and further development of a SADC Qualification Portal with data and information on qualifications and skills, covering qualifications both internally and externally acquired and evaluated in each country. This will facilitate the sharing of expertise and skills between countries in the region and beyond, thus minimising or alleviating skills deficits within countries in the SADC region. Stakeholders emphasised that for a portal to exist, the capacity of Member States will need to be built and strengthened.

8.2 Monitoring, evaluation and development

There is no monitoring framework for SADCQF, but work has been initiated through development of the indicators of the SADCQF to form part of the overall SADC online Monitoring and Evaluation System. Progress in regard to implementation of the SADCQF is currently monitored twice annually through the TCCA, and on an annual basis by SADC Ministers responsible for Education and Training and Science, technology and Innovation. The SADC stakeholders who were consulted for this case study recommended the need for a robust SADCQF monitoring framework and system.

8.3 Resource mobilisation

Mobilisation of financial resources for the implementation of the SADCQF is ongoing. A funding proposal for the implementation of the SADCQF has been developed, and is under consideration by the SADC International Cooperating Partners (ICP) through regular SADC ICP dialogue platforms.

9. Validation of prior learning, non-formal and informal learning

The region is cognisant that most adults and young people acquire skills, knowledge and competence through non-formal and informal learning settings. (SADC RPL 2016). This is due to socio-economic challenges such as poverty, high unemployment, inability of most formal education systems to recognise non-formal and informal learning, and high prevalence of an informal economy. Accredited qualifications and certificates are a pre-requisite for finding decent jobs and accessing further education and training.

The importance of alternative methods of valuing and recognising different forms of knowledge, skills and competencies as well as to transit the economies of the region from informal to formal has been acknowledged. (SADC RPL 2016). In 2016, the region adopted the recognition of prior learning (RPL) as a mechanism for recognition of informal and non-formal learning, and developed a regional guideline. The guideline provides strategic guidance on the implementation of RPL for use by multiple users, such as Member States, government departments, quality assurance bodies, education and training providers, business and industry, labour unions, RPL practitioners, and citizens of member

states. It serves as a framework for regional harmonisation and benchmarking of RPL across the region in the promotion of lifelong learning; employability; social inclusion and self-esteem of individuals (SADC RPL: 2016). It is supported by SADC policy and strategic instruments such as the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2020-2030 and the Industrialisation Strategy 2015-2063, and places emphasis on development of relevant skills required to formalise the region's predominantly informal economy. The SADC Youth Policy Framework (2016) promotes recognition of prior learning, and works with informal economy associations to improve and formalise informal training systems.

RPL in the region, is understood as a process that makes all learning outcomes and competencies visible, entailing the identification, assessment and certification of knowledge, skills and competencies – regardless of how, when or where the learning occurred – against prescribed standards for a part (modular) or full qualification. Establishment and implementation of RPL systems should be guided by the principles of integration and comprehensiveness; a systemic approach; inclusion and non-discrimination; participation; transparency and sustainability towards the establishment and implementation of a RPL system.

Member States in the region are at various stages of development and implementation of RPL Systems.

10. Recognition of foreign qualifications

Statistics on qualifications verified and recognised per country is collected and compiled annually through the SADCQVN. A report on mobility statistics that shows the total number of applications received for verification, their origin, and status of verification per country is produced. In addition, it highlights the number of qualifications recognised and of fraudulent qualifications (including their origin, name, and education sub-sector).

11. Interrelationships with other regions

The SADC region has relations with the African Union, ILO and UNESCO guided by Memoranda of Understanding and Action Plans. However, it has no relationships with respect to qualifications with other regional economic communities on the African continent. The TCCA participates in the African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN), UNESCO initiatives such as World Reference Levels (WRLs), Addis Convention and Global Convention on recognition of qualifications in higher education and ILO Skills Portability initiatives.

The SADCQF is currently not referenced to any continental or other regional qualifications frameworks. However, the SADCQF has benchmarked with the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in terms of the level descriptors, coordination and implementation mechanisms of these regional qualifications frameworks. The benchmarking was facilitated by a study that reviewed, among others, the SADCQF with existing regional qualifications on the African continent and internationally (SADC:2017b) [https://www.academia.edu/32433237/Southern African Development Community Regional Qualifications Framework Analytical Review of Level Descriptors](https://www.academia.edu/32433237/Southern_African_Development_Community_Regional_Qualifications_Framework_Analytical_Review_of_Level_Descriptors) and TCCA EXCO peer learning visit in 2017 to the EU to study the EQF institutional arrangements and applicability to the SADCQF.

12. Implications for the ACQF mapping study

SADC stakeholders expressed interest to be further informed on the ACQF development process and the interviews and exchanges conducted in the framework of the ACQF mapping study were the main source of information on the started process and its objectives. Stakeholders highlighted the need for the ACQF to:

- Serve as a developmental tool, platform for skills, expertise and experience sharing to ensure availability of a pool of relevant human resources in all professions and occupations for government, industry and the private sector to draw from for socio-economic development and industrialisation on the continent;
- Facilitate mobility of professional expertise among member states and regional economic communities (RECs) in the context of the established AU Continental Free Trade Area;
- Promote quality control at national, regional and continental levels thereby enabling comparability, recognition and harmonisation of qualifications based on trust, to alleviate existing differences in qualifications on the continent, and allow SADC countries, experiencing access shortages, to send their students to universities outside SADC;
- Improve portability, articulation of credits and qualifications within and across education systems at national, regional and continental level for lifelong learning and employment/employability; and
- Promote collaboration between universities in the SADC region and those elsewhere on the continent, thereby facilitating joint awarding of qualifications through implementation of collaborative programmes.

It was noted that ideally, the best scenario would have been the utilisation of a cascade model for the harmonisation and recognition of qualifications on the continent, with ACQF developed first and RECs and Member States domesticating, aligning or referencing. Given the prevailing situation, SADC stakeholders proposed that in the development of the ACQF, the following be considered:

- Contextualisation of the continent and its RECs, guided by AU Agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) so that it provides a broader scope for mutual recognition of both academic and professional qualifications and sets standards for RECs and Member States to domesticate and align their qualification frameworks and systems. The policy and strategic frame of SADC (RIDSP 2015-2030) represents the entry point to reconcile continental, REC and SDG dimensions. One of the outputs of the Implementation Framework of RIDSP 2020-2030 under education focuses on Monitoring the implementation of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2025) and the education-related SDGs.
- Peer learning/ sharing platforms of to share their lessons learnt in the development and implementation of REC qualification frameworks;
- All levels of education and training, types and forms of learning (in light of the technological era) should be accessible and accommodated. The learning outcomes of each level should also take into account the requirements of competencies and standards for each profession/ occupation by industry and business;

- Common standards should be developed to bridge existing gaps resulting from the diversity of education systems on the continent consequent to British, French, Portuguese and Arabic colonial histories of member states. However, the standards should be internationally benchmarked;
- Scope and nature of existing REC qualifications frameworks to facilitate harmonisation to ensure domestication, alignment and referencing;
- The private sector (labour, non-state actors, industry), continental quality assurance bodies such as AFRIQAN and professional/ occupational bodies should be at the centre of the development process, in order to guide the learning outcomes and standards so that the qualifications meet the needs of industry, business and the economy (both formal and informal) and are trusted.

Representatives of business and the private sector pointed out that an environment that offers rights of entry, residence and establishment of businesses is paramount in facilitating mobility of services including labour. Hence, harmonisation of the management of migration and free movement of students, researchers and workers across the African continent should be undertaken in parallel with development and implementation of the ACQF. Worker representatives underscored the need for balance between knowledge, skill and competency requirements of each occupation or trade in defining the level descriptors of the ACQF, since skill and competency requirements of some occupations are at a higher level than their academic knowledge. Furthermore, a centralised African qualifications portal was proposed to avoid Member States having to provide qualification data and information to the AUC and RECs.

13. Conclusion and future plans

The ACQF infographic that was developed and circulated as part of the mapping study promoted awareness of the ACQF development process. Awareness, domestication of continental initiatives and understanding of the qualification framework and its benefits, especially among workers and the private sector, were observed to be weak in the SADC regional economic community. In addition, there was little involvement or participation of the private sector and employees in the development and implementation of the SADCQF.

In the development and implementation of the ACQF, there must be a linkage and inter-relationship between qualification issues and issues affecting migration and free movement of people, as well the economic status of member states in the continent. Expectations and involvement of industry and business in the development of standards, competencies defined in learning outcomes for each level in a qualifications framework were noted to be of paramount importance. The challenge of consulting regional organisations responsible for both public and private education providers for all levels of education and training seems largely due to lack of information of their contacts if these exist, or non-responsiveness.

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