

Session 13: Quality Assurance in the context of ACQF

20/04/2022

This presentation is based on Training Module 5

Quality of qualifications is indispensable for trust – learners, workers, employers. Quality must be assured and maintained and all actors and levels are concerned.

Quality assurance – in focus in ACQF referencing criteria

First ideas for a QA framework for TVET, RPL and Work-Based Learning at continental level.

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Overview of presentation

1. Quality assurance in education and training – main concepts

2. Quality assurance in the context of ACQF

These are the substantive chapters of the Training Module 5
This Presentation focuses on 1, 2, 4, 5, 6

regional guidelines

4. Quality assurance in other regional communities

5. Quality assurance of credentials and qualifications

6. Quality assurance framework for TVET in Africa: first ideas

01

Quality assurance in education and training: definitions and concepts

Transparency and trust in qualifications

Transparency and trust in qualifications is key in a context of widespread international learner and labour mobility, and rapid transformation of types of qualifications and credentials for different needs and contexts of lifelong learning.

Quality assurance – as part of a range of measures by governments and institutions – increases **transparency and should underpin trust in the relevance and quality of learning outcomes** (that is, learners' knowledge, skills, autonomy, and responsibility, as certified by qualifications).

The system level

The provider level

Such **trust in learning outcomes** is, in turn, based on **trust in the quality of the institutions and providers of education and training** at all levels and in all subsectors.

Quality assurance: Definitions

- The term 'quality assurance' is relatively new in education and training, even though quality assurance concepts and measures have been intrinsic to the sector for a long time.
 - Definitions of quality assurance emphasise different dimensions of the concept.
 - Some definitions highlight the **complementarity between quality assurance at system level (wider scope) and at education providers' level.**
 - Other definitions focus specifically on **procedures for internal and external quality assurance at providers' level and at the level of quality assurance agencies.**
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Definitions

- The [African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance \(ASG-QA\)](#) define quality assurance as a *‘general term for procedures in **internal or external** quality assurance procedures including accreditation, evaluation, audit both on programme and institutional levels and also **concerning quality assurance agencies**’*.

[UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#) takes into account three levels of quality assurance: **systemic, providers and programmes**.

➤ Quality assurance is *‘an ongoing process by which the quality of a higher-education system, institution, or programme is assessed by the competent authority/authorities to assure stakeholders that acceptable educational standards are continuously being maintained and enhanced’* (UNESCO 2019).

Asia-Pacific, UNESCO: Guideline for the quality assurance of technical vocational education and training

- Quality assurance is defined as
 - ‘planned and systematic processes that provide **confidence** in services provided by TVET institutions under the remit of responsible bodies. Quality assurance of the assessment and qualification processes allows stakeholders in TVET qualifications (e.g., graduates and employers) to have **confidence and trust** in those qualifications’.

Quality assurance in TVET: wider definition - as a multi-dimensional perspective

Quality assurance can be viewed as the 'composite measures established to verify that processes and procedures are in place, which, when effective, ensure the quality and **quality improvement** of education and training [... and] guide **quality assurance in VET policies and approaches** so that they:

- are **fit for purpose and context** with emphasis on relevance and cost-effectiveness
- acknowledge that quality assurance is a dependent variable (on **context and other policy themes**)
- address **education and training inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes**
- apply the **quality cycle: plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate, review and renew**
- make **visible strengths, weaknesses, and improvement successes**
- promote quality improvement through a pervasive **quality culture**
- take into account internationally accepted quality assurance concepts and models' (ETF, 2015).

Question: chat box



1. Quality assurance (QA) in the context of NQF / NQS in your country:

- Quite similar or quite different from the above definitions?

2. Where is the emphasis of QA measures and processes in your national systems (education and training, NQF / NQS)?

- At system level?
- At providers level?
- All levels?

02

**Quality assurance in
the context of ACQF**

Quality Assurance – place in ACQF referencing process

- **Referencing of NQFs / NQS to the ACQF** is a process of transparency, self-assessment and continuous improvement.
- The referencing criteria provide the framework for comparability between countries, of the analytical process and results, and the robustness of the final report.

Read more :

- Training Module 5: on quality assurance
- Training Module 3: on referencing to ACQF

Join sessions 20-22 on 22/04/2022: full presentation on referencing

4 main ACQF Referencing criteria

The main ACQF referencing criteria

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the ACQF. |
| 2 | The national qualifications frameworks or systems are based on learning outcomes principles and related to arrangements for recognition of prior learning (including non-formal and informal) and, where appropriate, to credit systems. |
| 3 | There are transparent processes and procedures for including qualifications in the national qualifications framework or system or for describing the place of qualifications and information on qualifications is accessible, trustworthy and verifiable in a national register(s) of qualifications. |
| 4 | The national quality assurance system for education and training refers to the national qualifications framework or system and is consistent with the principles of quality assurance of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). |

At heart
of
Criterion
4

Criterion 4 of referencing – application principles

- The referencing to the ACQF of national qualifications frameworks or systems demonstrates the degree to which quality assurance of national qualifications:
 - addresses the qualifications quality chain, from design of standards underpinning qualifications to learning, assessment, and certification;
 - addresses the application of the learning outcomes approach;
 - includes feedback instruments and processes supporting continuous quality improvement;
 - addresses internal and external quality assurance, and the regular review of quality assurance agencies;
 - is based on measurable objectives, standards, and guidelines for quality assurance;
 - is supported by resources; and
 - provides transparent information-sharing on results of evaluation.
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Translating into a simple question

Can existing quality assurance arrangements support:

- *the shift to learning outcomes and also*
 - *the transparent classification and registration of qualifications in NQF?*
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ACQF Quality assurance in the context of ACQF

- Based on internationally accepted concepts and practice
 - Complementary to national and regional systems (standards and guidelines) – not replacing...
 - Consistent with African Union policies, e.g. CESA-16 and ASG-QA
 - Address qualifications at all levels of learning
 - Dialogue between quality assurance systems and qualifications frameworks
 - Quality assurance of referencing process to ACQF
 - Streamlined and efficient procedures, analysis, stakeholders' dialogue, peer review
 - Referencing: opportunity for self-evaluation
 - Highlight the complementarity between referencing criteria
 - Quality assurance of outcomes – qualifications
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03

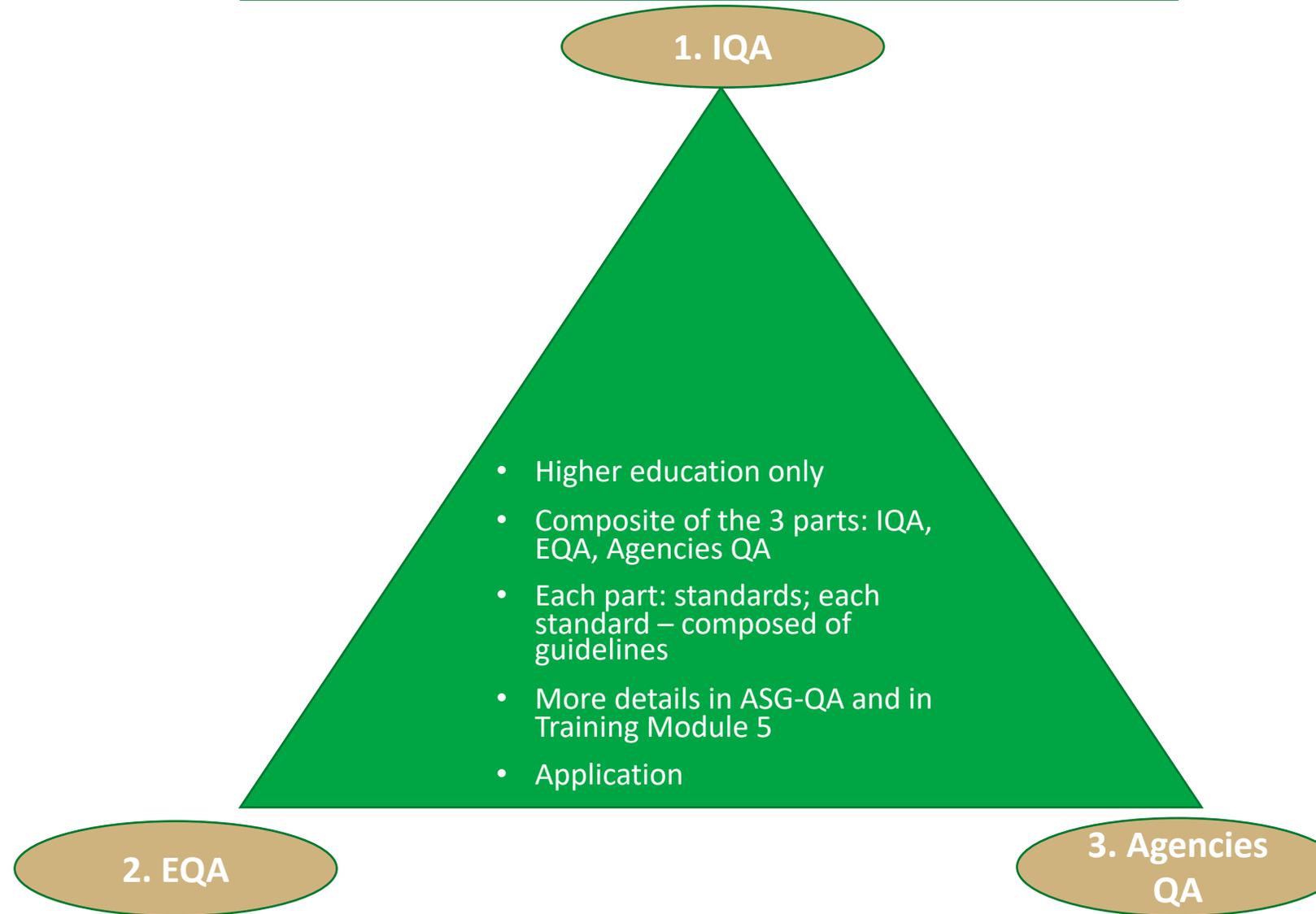
**Quality assurance in
African Union policies**

Snapshot – Quality Assurance in AU policies

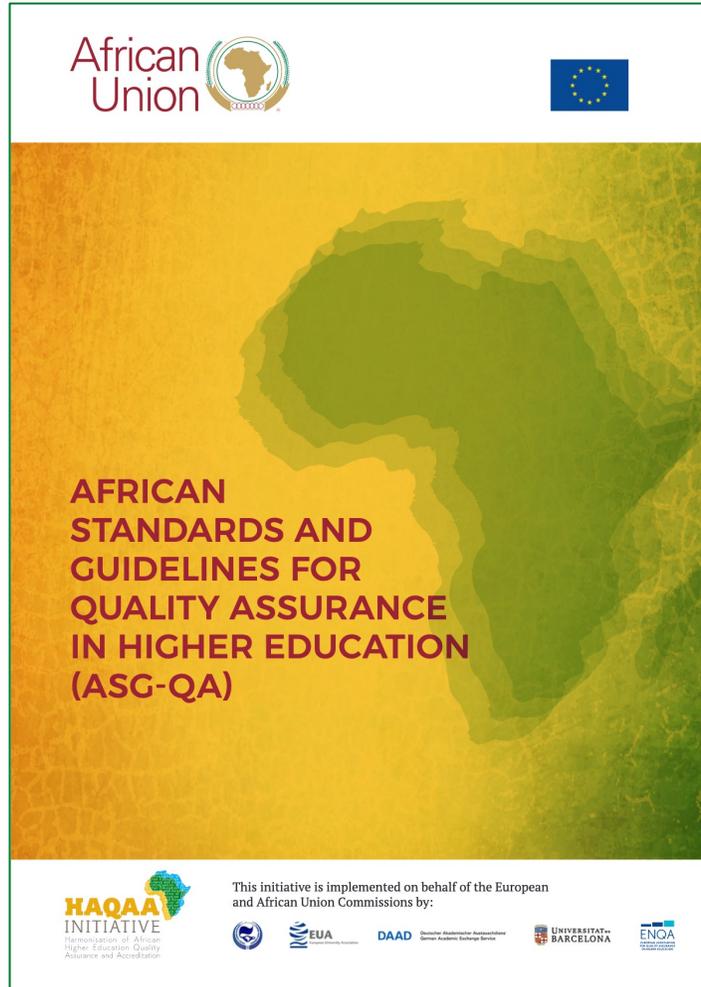
African Standards and Guidelines for QA (ASG-QA)

In strategies and plans:

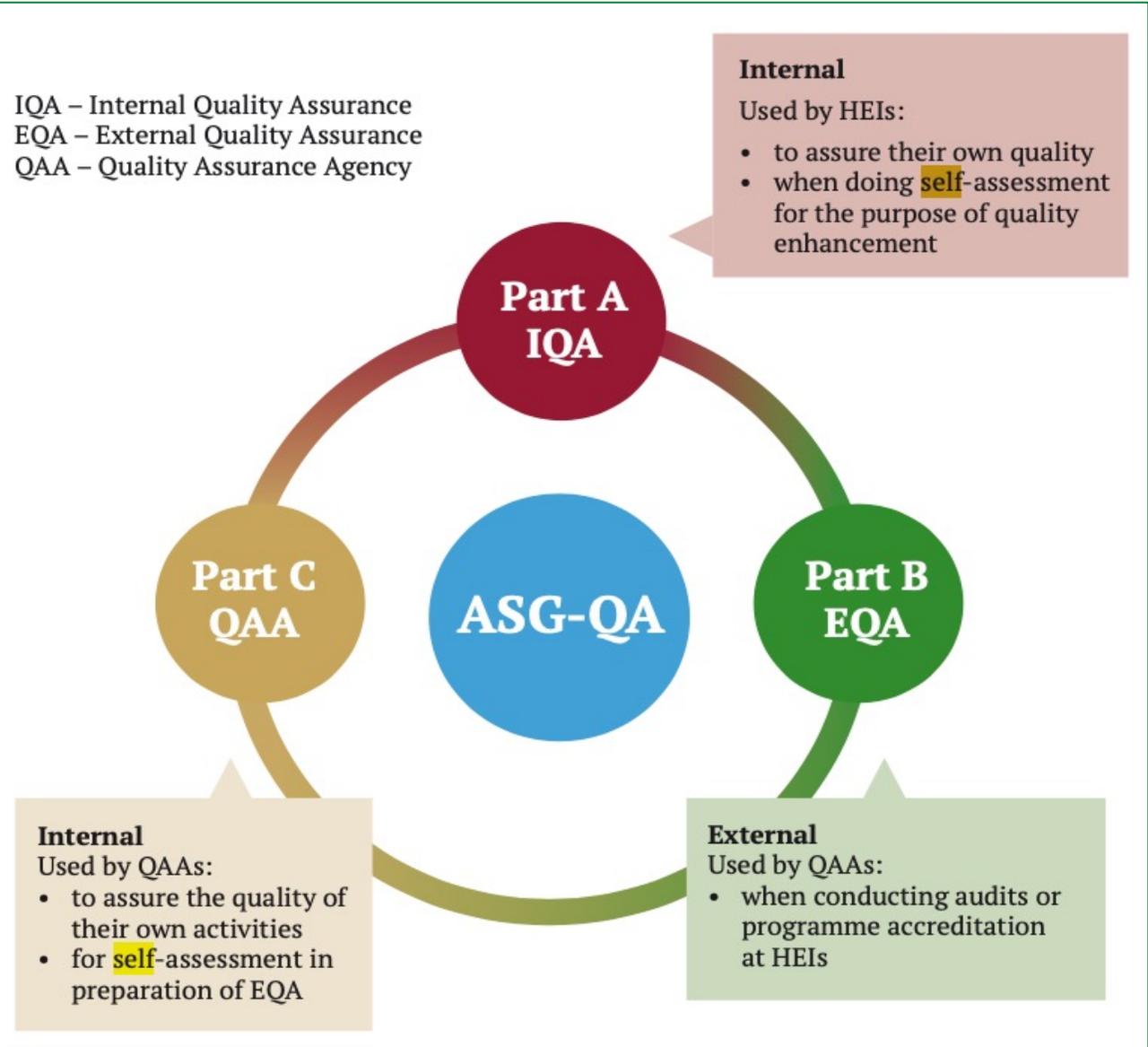
- CESA-25
- Plan of Action for the African Decade for Technical Professional Entrepreneurial Training and Youth



ASG-QA



IQA – Internal Quality Assurance
 EQA – External Quality Assurance
 QAA – Quality Assurance Agency



Question to chat box

- ❖ Is your organisation informed and applying elements of African Standards and Guidelines for QA (or planning to do so)?
 - ❖ What elements of any of the 3 parts are you planning to apply?

Snapshot: Quality assurance frameworks in other regional blocks

Asia-Pacific: Guidelines for QA TVET qualifications

- **Focus:** outcomes and qualifications acquisition process
- **13 principles** – each complemented by qualitative and quantitative indicators
- Types of governance arrangements
- Stages of implementation of QA

EU: EQAVET (QA TVET)

- Addresses 2 levels: system level and providers level
- Indicative indicators:
 - Structured by phases of quality cycle: Planning-implementation-evaluation-review
- 10 reference indicators – 3 categories
 - Overarching indicators for QA
 - Indicators supporting quality objectives for VET policies
 - Indicators of context information
- EQAVET is a community of practice, peer review, network meetings

EQAVET

Newsletter:

<https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/empl/newsletter-archives/36930>

1. Purpose and Plan

Set up clear, appropriate and measurable goals and objectives in terms of policies, procedures, tasks and human resources.

2. Implementation

Establish procedures to ensure the achievement of goals and objectives (e.g. development of partnerships, involvement of stakeholders, allocation of resources, and organisational or operational procedures).



4. Review

Develop procedures in order to achieve the targeted outcomes and/or new objectives; after processing feedback, key stakeholders conduct discussion and analysis in order to devise procedures for change.

3. Assessment and Evaluation

Design mechanisms for the evaluation of achievements and outcomes by collecting and processing data in order to make informed assessment.

European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (EFQEA)

- Quality apprenticeships can make a difference in helping people get into the labour market.
- They provide people with real work experience and skills, becoming a fast track to employment. They are a bridge to jobs.

EFQEA: criteria and actions contributing to effective apprenticeships

14 quality criteria in 2 blocks

1. Criteria for learning and working conditions
 - Such as: pedagogical support, workplace component, social protection
2. Criteria for framework conditions
 - Such as: regulatory framework, support to companies, flexible pathways and mobility, QA based on EQAVET

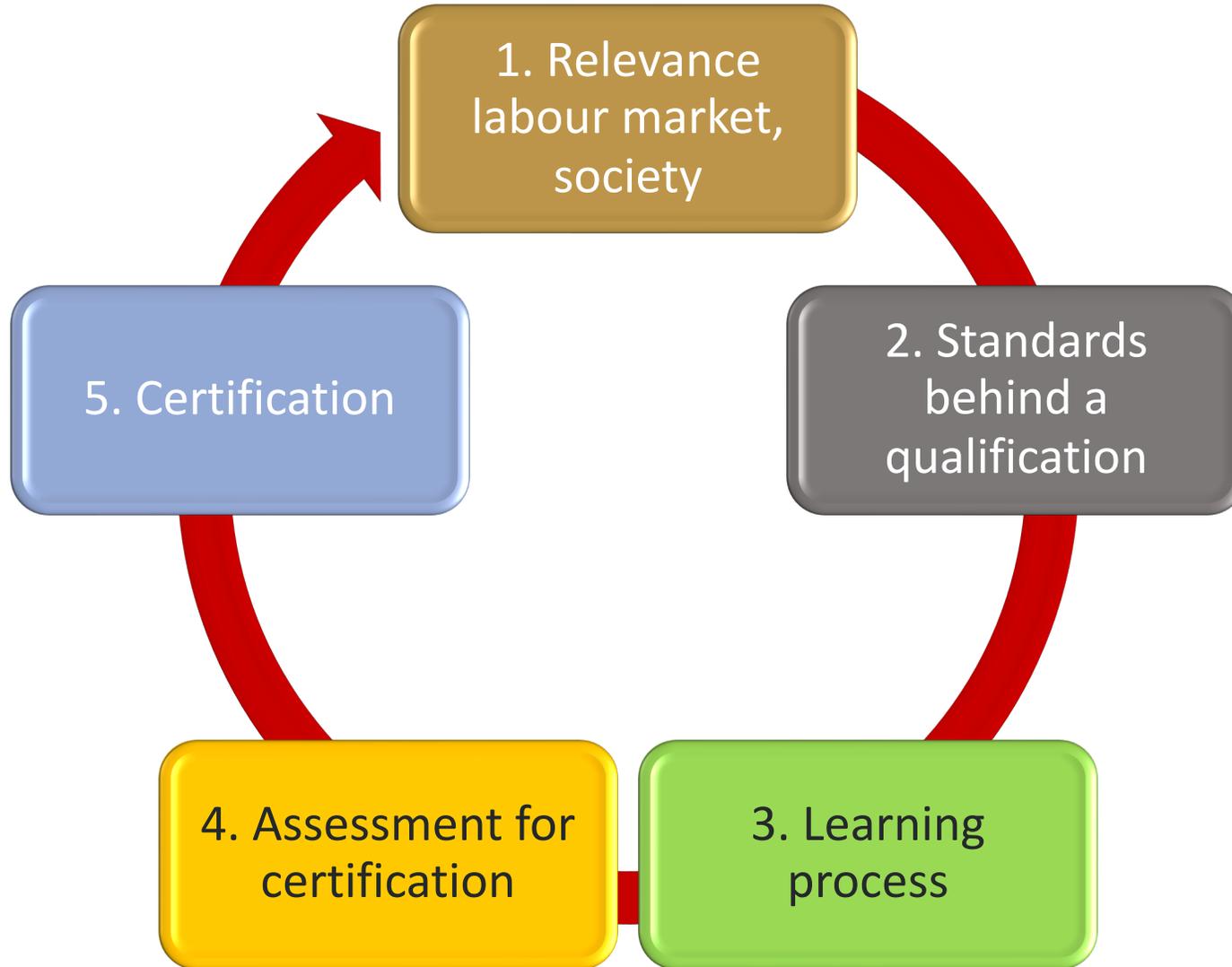
04

**Quality assurance of
credentials and
qualifications**

Quality assurance of qualifications is concerned with four dimensions

- A. Quality qualifications: concepts and characteristics, quality cycle;
 - B. Minimum criteria for the quality of qualifications;
 - C. Quality assurance elements from a qualification system perspective: qualification standards, assessment and certification; and
 - D. Qualifications quality chain: from standards to awards.
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Minimum criteria for quality of qualification



Qualifications quality chain

- Quality assurance for quality qualifications consists of two broad processes:
 - Ensuring that qualifications are relevant and have value; and
 - Ensuring that the people who are certificated meet the conditions of the qualification.

Back-chaining from the final outcome to the start of the process



05

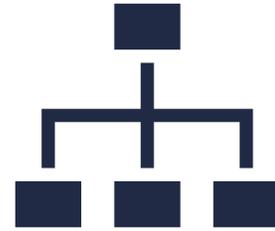
**Quality assurance
framework for TVET in
Africa: first ideas**

Quality Assurance in TVET and qualifications systems should address several levels



The system level:

Underpinning the TVET policy cycle, supporting the culture of continuous improvement, contributing to policy monitoring and review, and engaging the stakeholders.



The providers' level:

Internal quality assurance

External quality assurance

First ideas: principles of QA TVET



Principles: 1, 2, 3



Principles: 4, 5, 6,
7, 8, 11, 12



Principles 9, 10

Principles	Principles
<p>1. Holistic and systemic view (S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Linkages and intersections all components b) Culture of continuous improvement, not limited to quality control 	<p>7. Quality cycle and stages: 1) Plan; 2) Implement; 3) Evaluate / monitor; 4) Review and renew. Specificities of each stage and links between stages to be considered. (A)</p>
<p>2. QA for quality qualifications encompasses: standards behind qualifications; inclusion of the qualification in the NQF; learning pathways; assessment; certification (S)</p>	<p>8. Minimum quality criteria: develop a common approach to minimum quality criteria covering the components of TVET system (formal, non-formal learning), the qualifications quality chain and the NQF. (A)</p>
<p>3. Quality must be assured and maintained. Systemic and holistic approach - combines measures at various levels (S)</p>	<p>9. Indicators: set of indicators to measure and monitor quality – coordinated with main performance indicators TVET system (M)</p>
<p>4. Qualification standards: skills needs; learning outcomes; partnership key stakeholders/industry; regular review; underpinning QA programmes, curricula, assessment. (A)</p>	<p>10. Capacity development, networking and mutual learning: support collaboration stakeholders, online platform, joint activities, peer learning (M)</p>
<p>5. Quality assurance processes and mechanisms can be aided by digital tools, new data sources (A)</p>	<p>11. Align the national QA framework with QA regional frameworks (A)</p>
<p>6. The role of certification in safeguarding confidence and trust is crucial. Certification must be clearly included in QA of qualification. Appropriate standards and instruments of certification. (A)</p>	<p>12. Anticipate the future – how changing and emerging roles, tasks, occupations and new skills will affect qualifications profiles, and the supply and demand for qualifications. (A)</p>

06

**First ideas: QA at
providers' level**

Internal QA

Internal quality assurance procedures serve two major purposes:
accountability and improvement.

- **Accountability** – summative approach: ‘A central aspect of “accountability” in any form is that of “rendering an account” of what one is doing in relation to goals that have been set or legitimate expectations that others may have of one’s products, services or processes, in terms that can be understood by those who have a need or right to understand “the account”’ (Middlehurst and Woodhouse 1995).
 - **Improvement** – formative approach: ‘Quality assurance for improvement purposes implies a formative approach: the focus is not on control but on improving quality’ (Billing 2004).
-

The internal quality assurance procedure allows the education and training provider to identify the existing gaps in its practices, as well as the good practices that need to be sustained. During the self-assessment process, the education and training provider must reflect on the extent to which it has:

- designed and implemented an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, and resource allocation;
 - positioned its processes to support continuous improvement of its instructional programmes and support services, paying particular attention to student achievement and student learning;
 - prepared and implemented institutional plans for improvement supported by adequate sources of data and other evidence; and
 - established its own institution-set standards of performance regarding student achievement and student learning and assessed its effectiveness against those standards (ACCJC 2020).
-

The self-assessment process is based, however, on the guiding principles directed by the NQF, which are as follows:

- mission, academic quality and institutional effectiveness and integrity;
 - student learning programmes and support services;
 - human resources;
 - physical resources;
 - technology resources;
 - financial resources; and
 - leadership and governance.
-

External QA

Authorisation and accreditation are external quality assurance measures put in place by the quality assurance body or agency.

Quality assurance through external evaluation includes:

- registration of education and training providers;
 - accreditation of training programmes;
 - re-accreditation of education and training providers;
 - periodic control of the implementation of training programmes; and
 - periodic control of providers.
-

External QA

Authorisation provides recognition to an organisation as an education and training provider, which is granted permission to operate.

Phases of accreditation include:

- a provisional authorisation, that grants the right to carry out the education and training process and to organise the admission to education and training programmes, as the case may be; and
 - a full accreditation after having satisfied all the requirements. Full accreditation also grants the right to issue diplomas, certificates and other documents recognised by the NQF, and to organise graduation/certification exams.
-

External QA

The external processes such as quality assurance assessments/visits are coordinated by a competent body. Such external processes consist of the following:

1. monitoring of education and training providers' and programmes' quality;
 2. offering guidance and support to education and training providers in the quality assurance process, quality control to verify the fulfilment of the quality requirements;
 3. proposals for quality improvement measures; validation of education and training providers' self-assessment reports; and
 4. approval of education and training providers' improvement plans.
-

07

**Quality assurance of
RPL**

Guiding principles of QA of RPL

Accessible

Consistent

Fair

Valid

Rigorous

Guiding principles QA of RPL

Accessible

- Processes provide information, advice and access by being responsive to applicant questions
- Cost-efficient for both applicant and organisation
- Timely in both frequency of assessment and gap-filling options
- Adult learner-centred, voluntary, available, and inclusive of all abilities and differences

Consistent

- Decision-makers (advisor, assessor, administrator) work together to be consistent with criteria, training, tools, procedures, and outcomes
- Definitions must be agreed across sectors to allow for transferability

Fair

- Processes are unbiased and recognise a wide range of ways people learn. Therefore, applicants are allowed optional ways to prove learning
- An appeal mechanism is provided
- Policies and procedures of the organisation align with RPL principles

Valid

- Assessment methods align with the expected measures of achievement (competencies, occupational standards, goals, or outcomes)

Rigorous

- RPL assessment methods:
 - reflect the purpose for the required learning have equivalent expectations to traditional assessment methods;
 - are conducted by subject matter experts; and
 - meet requirements of work or performance criteria (CAPLA 2015)

QA at all RPL phases

Identification

- Awareness, information and guidance: clarity, equity, access.
- QA - enables proper circulation of information throughout all modalities.

Documentation

- Support, tools
- Individualised

Assessment

- QA - assessment is fair and reliable for all RPL candidates.
- Based on learning outcomes
- QA - during all assessment, whatever form it takes, assessors moderators properly fulfil their role

Certification

- QA – equitable, no discrepancy or delay in the issuing of certificates to RPL learners.

08

Final comments

Can QA frameworks be user-friendly and also robust?



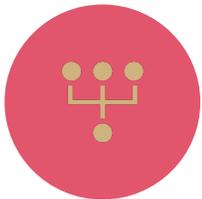
Balanced approaches – avoid over-regulation, over-bureaucratisation



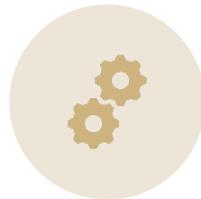
Measure effectiveness of QA arrangements using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and data



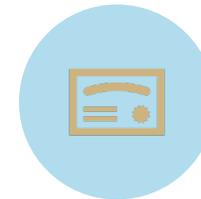
What is the cost of implementing vs non-implementing QA



How can QA adapt to change happening in learning and qualifications systems?



QA in LLL systems / LLL arrangements: a space for dialogue and learning across all sub-sectors; sharing of tools and methods; experimenting novel approaches



QA in spaces such: work-based learning, RPL, micro-credentials



And again: stakeholders buy-in and support is essential



Peer reviews