

AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF) - Towards ACQF level descriptors

Towards the African Continental
Qualifications Framework



Towards ACQF Level Descriptors

Session 4

11th Peer Learning Webinar
Thursday 23 September 2021
Coleen Jaftha

Presentation overview



Context of the
level
descriptors
(LDs)
guideline

Overview of
concepts and
learning from
LDs of other
RQFs

Brief overview
of LDs on the
continent and
options for
ACQF

Some survey
results

Challenges

Key features of an RQF

VISION FOR THE ACQF



▶ Enhance comparability, quality and transparency of qualifications from all sub-sectors and levels of education and training and support people's lifelong learning outcomes;



▶ Facilitate recognition of diplomas and certificates, and mobility of learners and workers;



▶ Work in complementarity with national and regional qualifications frameworks, and support the creation of a common African education space;



▶ Promote cooperation and alignment between qualifications frameworks (national, regional) in Africa and worldwide.

Principles

- **Inclusive:** all types of learning and levels of qualifications (all sub-systems of education and training);
- **Open:** learners' & stakeholders' needs, policy learning & lessons from other QFs
- **Innovation-ready:** transformation of skills and learning: digitalisation, greening & beyond Covid-19 reconstruction.



Functions:

- Overarching framework against which national and regional frameworks and level descriptors - can be calibrated
- Referencing qualifications framework:
- NQF-RQF
 - comparison with other international frameworks
- Hub, catalyst for development of NQFs and their instruments

RECAP

PURPOSE and SCOPE and underpinning

PRINCIPLES

Purpose, principles and scope influence the decision around number of levels and domains of level descriptors

A set of level descriptors

Specified linkages to quality assurance criteria or arrangements

Governance arrangements

Context of the level descriptor guideline (one of ten guidelines)

Each of the ten guidelines
comprise 3 documents:

- * Technical guideline
- * Synthesis guideline
- * Training module

Testing and fine-tuning

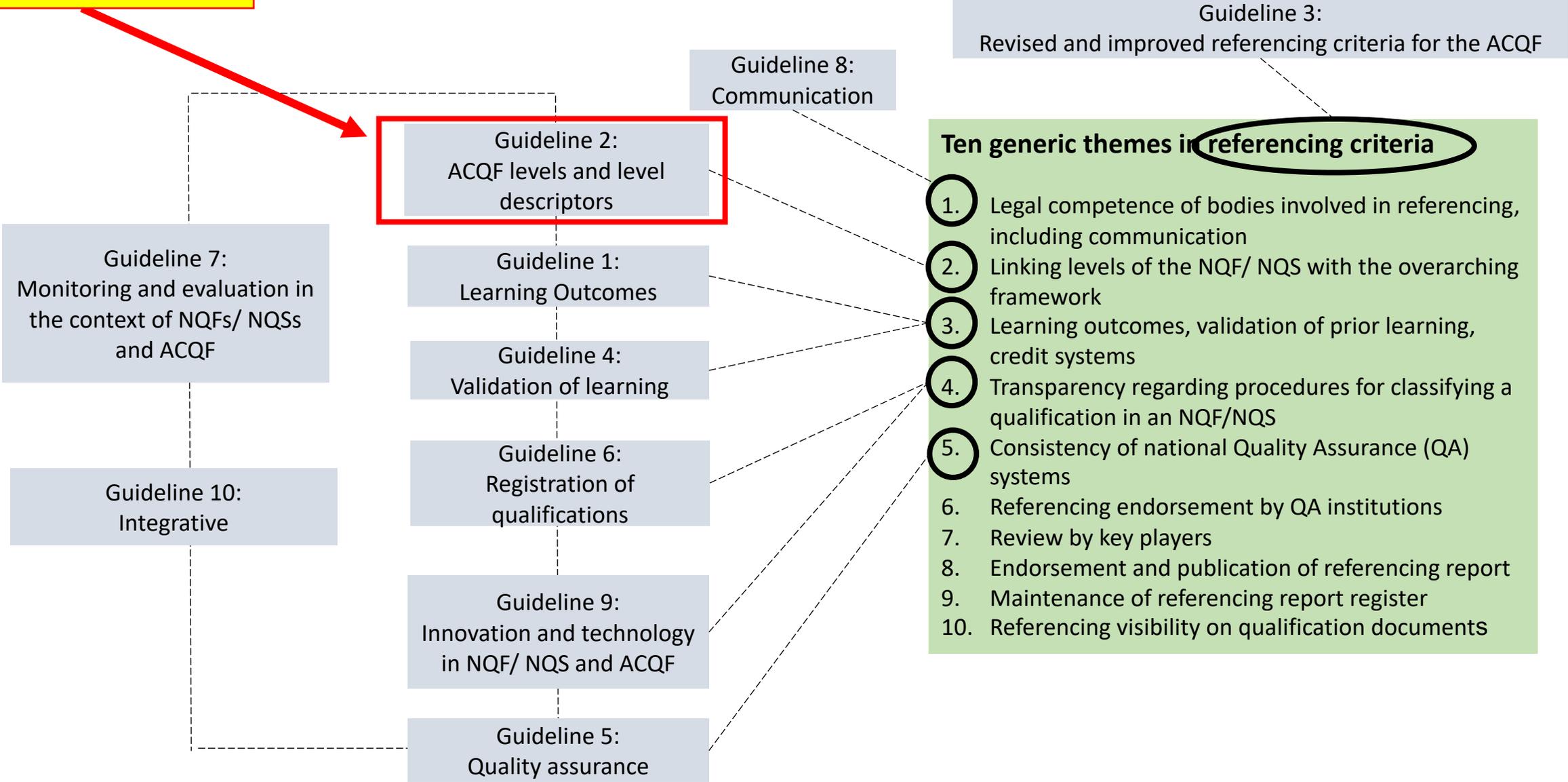
Finalised, tested
and disseminated
ACQF documents

Guideline trio pack

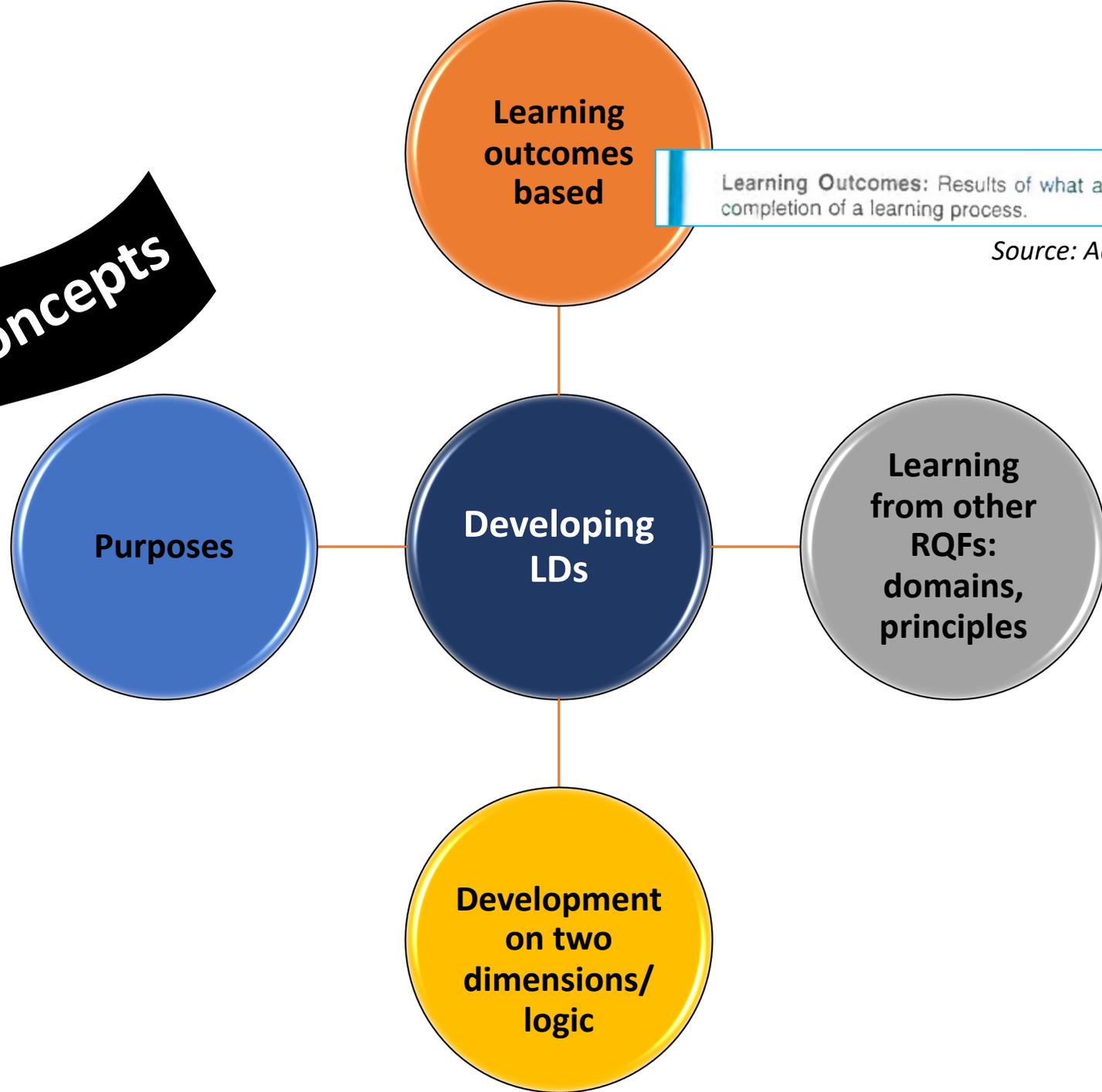
Synthesis guideline (2-3 pages)	Technical guideline (10-25 pages + annexes)	Training module
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concept (s)• Users• Recommendations related with the ACQF guidelines• Links with other ACQF guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehensive presentation of the topic• Recommendations on application in ACQF context• Links with other ACQF guidelines• Literature• Annexes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purpose of the module• Typical users• Learning outcomes• Description of topic/ theme and its importance• Method of implementation• Cases• Self-assessment• Sources

Links between the ten ACQF guidelines

Guideline 2 fits here



Some concepts



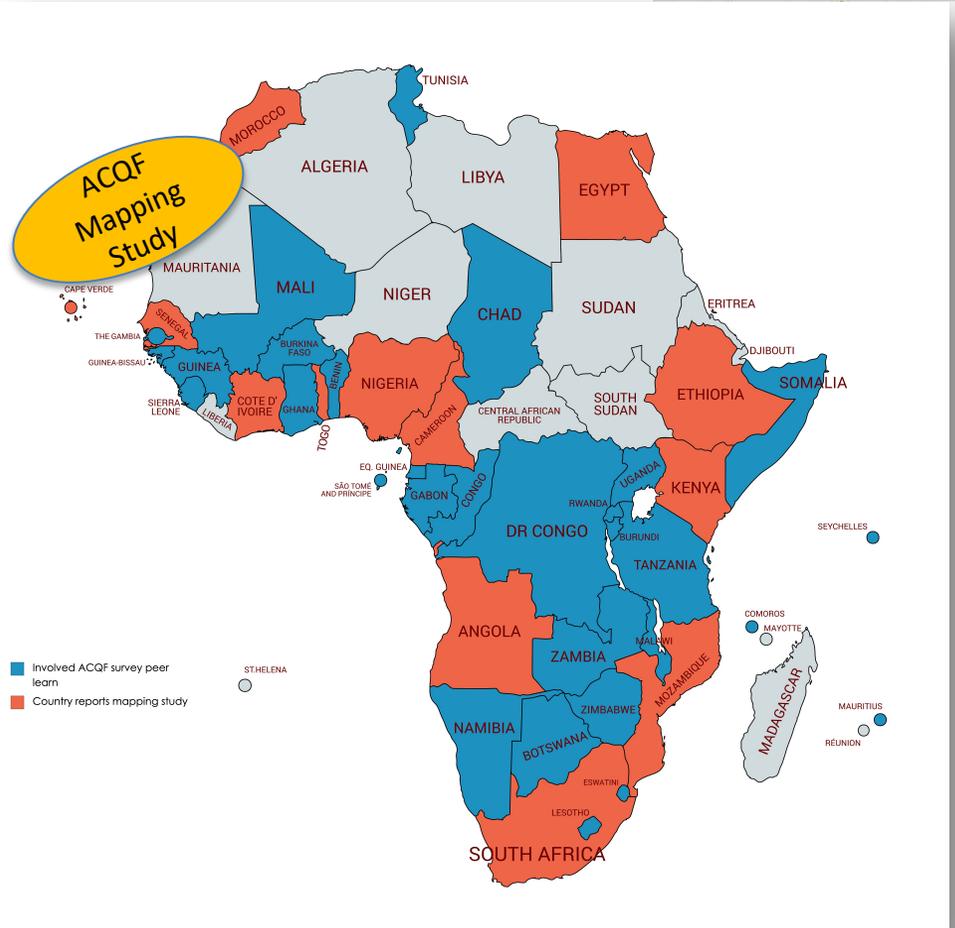
Learning Outcomes: Results of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do upon completion of a learning process.

Source: Addis Convention



Level descriptors are the "glue" in NQFs

- Formulated as learning outcomes related to a specific level



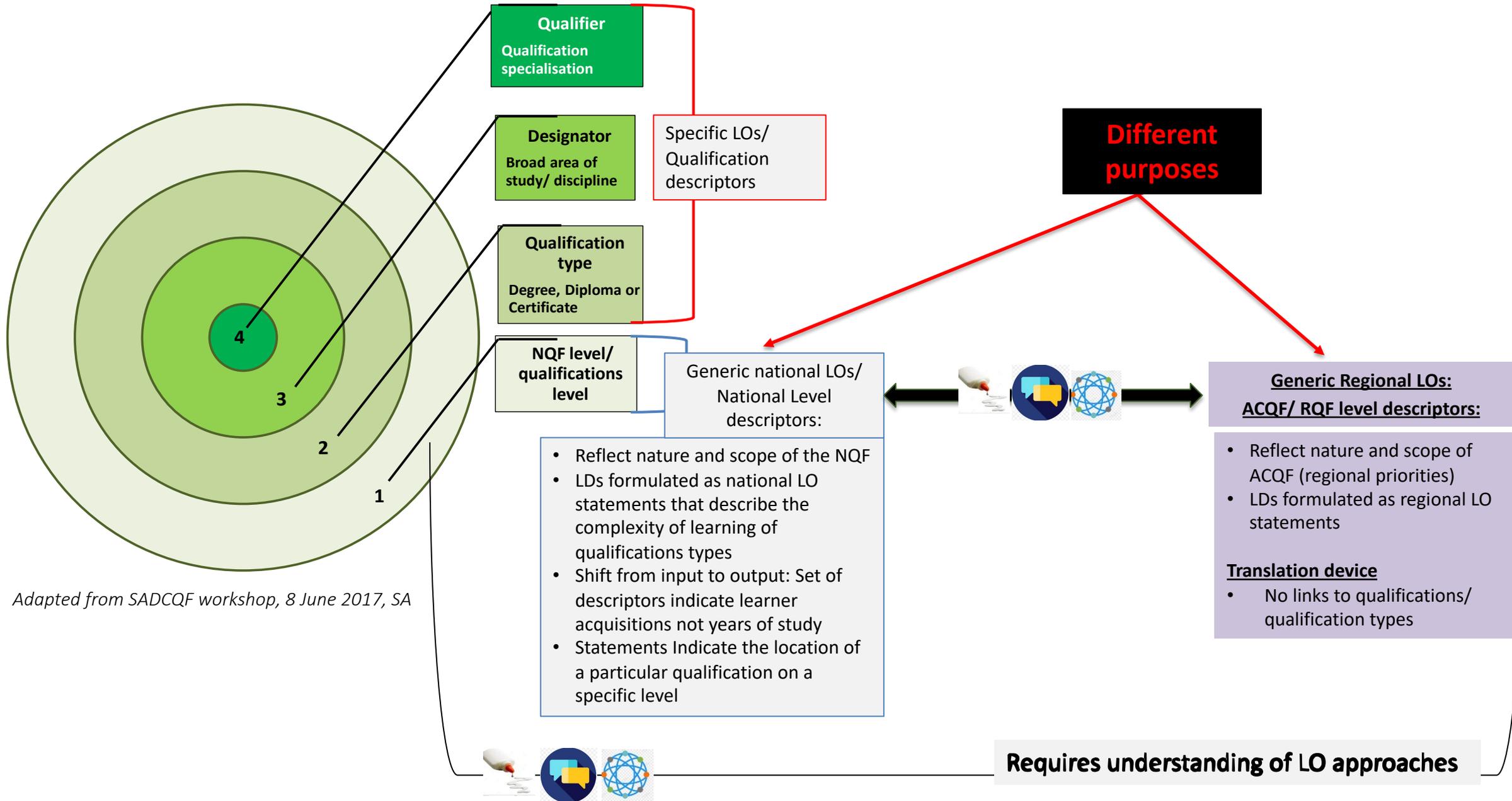
Level descriptors are one of the main communication tools between NQFs and RQFs



Level descriptors enable countries to link their national descriptors/ qualifications levels to the ACQF levels



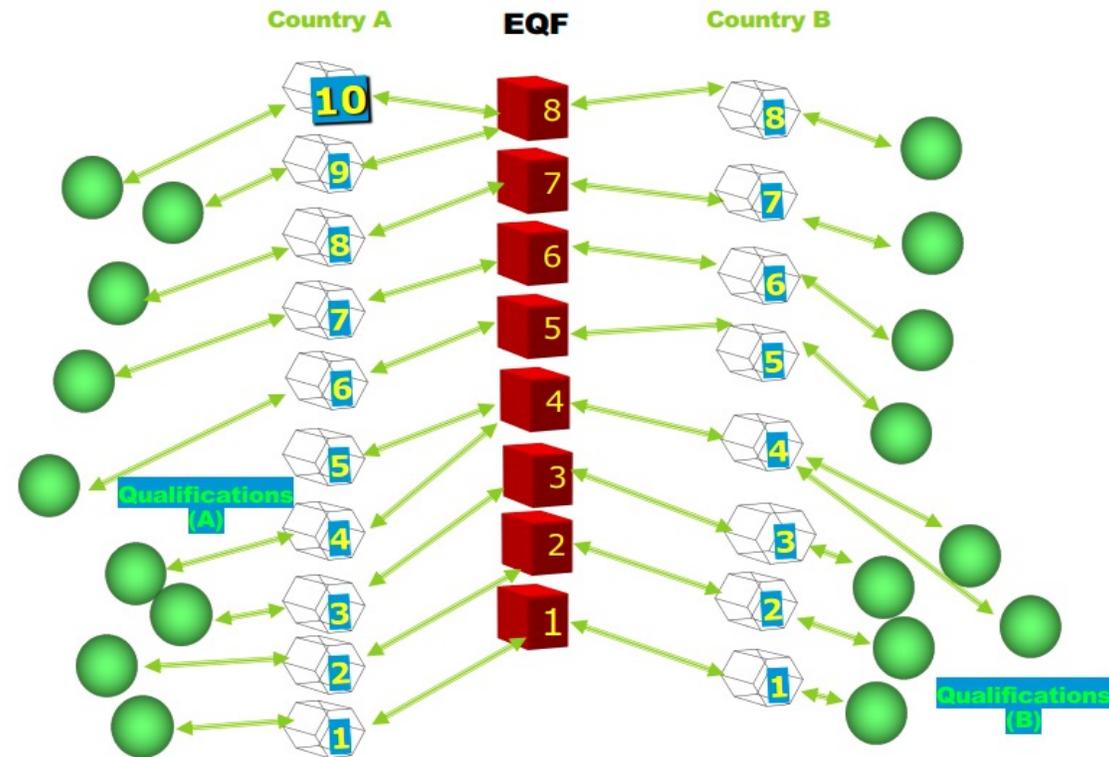
Learning outcomes (LO) based level descriptors (LDs)



Purpose of RQF as translation device between QFs/ qualifications levels



European qualifications framework (EQF)



Example: EQF (8-level)

- Level descriptors described as regional/ European learning outcome statements

Purpose of EQF: Translation device between QFs (regardless of level)

- Links to level descriptors/ qualifications levels
- No links to qualifications/ qualification types

Source: Slava Pevec Grm, senior expert Cedefop

Level descriptor development on two dimensions of logic

← **horizontal** →

Horizontal dimension: Domains and sub-domains of learning

NQF:

- reflects what is NB to a nation and should be reflected in the qualifications
- Universally described as: **Knowledge, Skills**
- More contentious domain: **application, competence, autonomy, responsibility**

RQF: Horizontal

LDs need to be generic/ broad statements of outcomes of complexity to accommodate all forms of learning (formal, non-formal, informal)

- **DESIRABLE: Clarity; Define domains and sub-domains; Include what is reasonable**
- **NOT DESIRABLE: Too much detail/ too many domains/ over-complicated framework**

← **Both horizontal and vertical interplay informs level of complexity
Domains must be read together to give a true indication of “level”**

RQF: Vertical

- **DESIRABLE: Clarity; Understanding and agreement on levels of complexity/ degree of comparability across the domains**

vertical ↓

Vertical dimension: Levels of learning complexity

NQF:

- Hierarchical, from lower to higher levels, with enough detail to differentiate one level from the next
- Describes the levels of learning complexity of qualifications or qualification types; often referred to as levels of learning progression

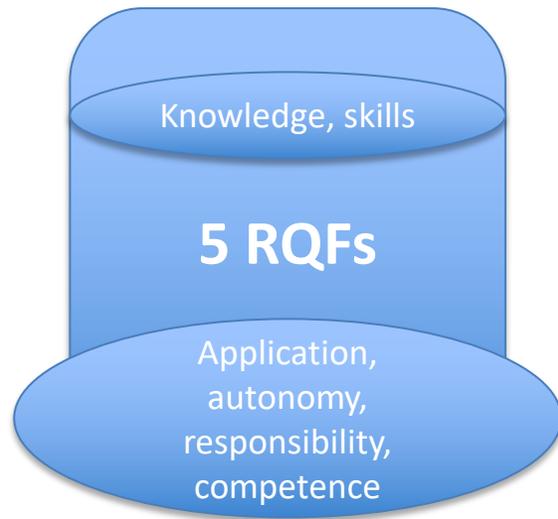
Matrix/
framework of level
descriptors

Some learnings from other RQFs (contd.)

Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework (AQRF)

8 levels, 2 domains

1. **Knowledge** and **Skills**,
2. **Application** and **Responsibility**



Typical considerations for level descriptor development:

Purpose, principles and scope influence determination of levels and domains

RQF LDs are generic and applicable across all education and training sectors

- LOs may reflect some or all domains of participating NQFs or
- include aspects that RQFs wish to encourage in NQFs of member countries

European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

8 levels, 3 domains

1. **Knowledge**,
2. **Skills**,
3. **Responsibility** and **Autonomy**

Pacific Register of Qualifications and Standards (PRQS)/ Pacific Qualifications Framework (PQF)

10 levels, 3 domains

1. **Knowledge** and **Skills**,
2. **Application**,
3. **Autonomy**

Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF) of the Virtual University of the Small States of the Commonwealth (TQF VUSSC)

10 levels, 2 domains:

1. **Knowledge** and understanding,
2. **skills** and wider personal and professional competencies

Southern African Development Community (SADC) Qualifications Framework (SADCQF)

10- levels, 3 domains

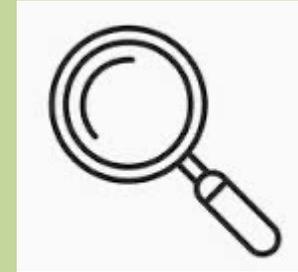
1. **Knowledge**,
2. **Skills**,
3. **Autonomy** and **Responsibility**



Learnings from other RQFs: Underpinning principles for drafting ACQF LDs

ACQF LDs will play a role in referencing between RQFs and NQFs and encompass all components of transparency:

- Learning outcomes approach
- Validation of learning from non-formal and informal contexts
- Placement of qualifications in NQF levels and registers
- Quality assurance of qualifications and NQFs
- Stakeholder participation and endorsement/ agreed and credible reference point



All forms of learning outcomes are covered, irrespective of the learning context or institutional context:

- Generic and applicable to academic, vocational and work-based qualifications
- Neutral:
 - does not require changes to NQFs/NQSs;
 - does not identify learning or workplace context
- General in scope but explicit in defining domains
- Common language and independent reference point/ Deliberately uses general language (does not capture complexities of an NQF/NQS)
- Does not exclude specific learner groups through the use of language or implied contexts/ Not sector specific/ Content free
- Future-oriented



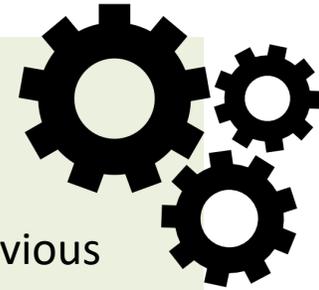


Learnings from other RQFs:

Underpinning principles for drafting ACQF LDs contd.

Developmental:

- Each successive level implies a higher level of complexity of learning:
- Adequate distinction is made between the descriptors of lower and higher levels
- Repetition is avoided, i.e. each level should build on the lower levels and encompass all the previous levels
- Clear taxonomy of learning outcomes/ fit-for-purpose



Conceptual and technical clarity and consistency:

- Each domain and sub-domain is conceptually determined with clear definitions
- As simple, brief and general as possible to facilitate clarity of the concept of the level
- Only positive, clear, specific statements are made
- Jargon-free, non-technical language/ transparent for the non-expert reader
- Concrete and definite in nature and avoid the use of words such as narrow and good, or cross references such as narrower, broader or appropriate



African NQF snapshot

RECAP

- ** Mapping study
- ** Feasibility study
- ** Thematic briefs
- ** PLWs
- etc

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CDP) 2021

THEMATIC CDP BRIEFS 3.1

Level descriptors in qualifications frameworks

OVERVIEW FROM 24 AFRICAN QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS

African Union THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP LE PARTENARIAT AFRICUE-UE

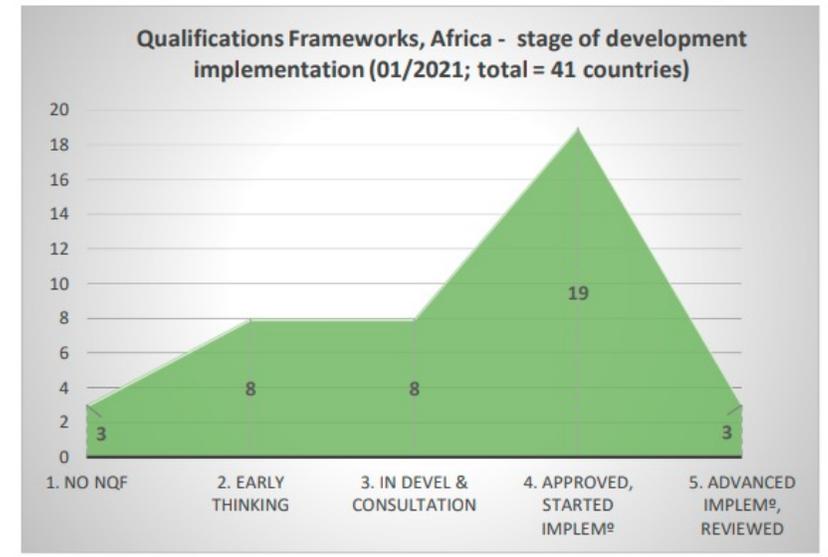
Source: Castel-Branco, E

Table 1: qualifications frameworks in Africa - by stage of development and implementation - overview (end 2020). Highlighted: countries with qualifications framework of sectoral scope (mostly focused on qualifications of TVET systems)

Stage of NQF development and implementation	Countries
1. No NQF	Chad, Republic of Congo, SãoTomé e Príncipe
2. NQF in early thinking	Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Union of Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Guiné-Bissau, Mali, Togo
3. NQF in development and consultation	Angola, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Madagascar, Morocco, Sierra Leone, Somalia
4. NQF legal act approved, implementation started	Botswana, Eswatini, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe,
5. NQF in advanced implementation and reviewed	Cape Verde, Mauritius, South Africa

Source: dataset of ACQF Mapping study

Figure 1: Overview – distribution of qualifications frameworks by stages of development and implementation



Source: dataset of ACQF Mapping study

Options for ACQF LDs- levels and domains

Possible ACQF levels

QFs levels	No	Countries/ regions
NQFs		
NQF: 10 levels	12	11 in SADC (Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe) + Kenya =12
NQF: 8 levels	6	Cape Verde, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Rwanda
NQF : 7 levels	1	Tunisia
Sector QF: 6 levels	2	Nigeria, Uganda (TVET)
Sector QF: 5 levels	2	Senegal (TVET), Tanzania (HE)
RQFs		
RQF: 10 levels	1	SADCQF
RQF: 8 levels	1	EAQFHE (HE)
	25	TOTAL

Majority from one African region (SADC)

Possible ACQF domains

Agency
Attitudes
Attributes
Autonomy
Autonomy and Responsibility
Competence
Creativity
Independence
Knowledge
Responsibility
Skills
Values

Innovation- role and place of new skills (green, digital, social, others)

- May be related with new types of qualifications and wider opening up to RPL

Learning from EQF: included innovation under skills domain,

- From L4 onwards develops creative thinking
- L5 explicit
- L6 mentions innovation
- L7: mentions “new, .. innovation”
- L8: not explicit

Notion of creativity also blended through other EQF domains e.g. K &RA

Knowledge-

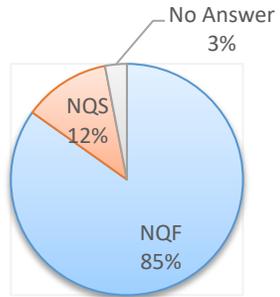
- L7: “original thinking”

Responsibility and autonomy

- L7: “new” and
- L8: “new ideas or processes”

Some survey results

Which category applies best in your work?

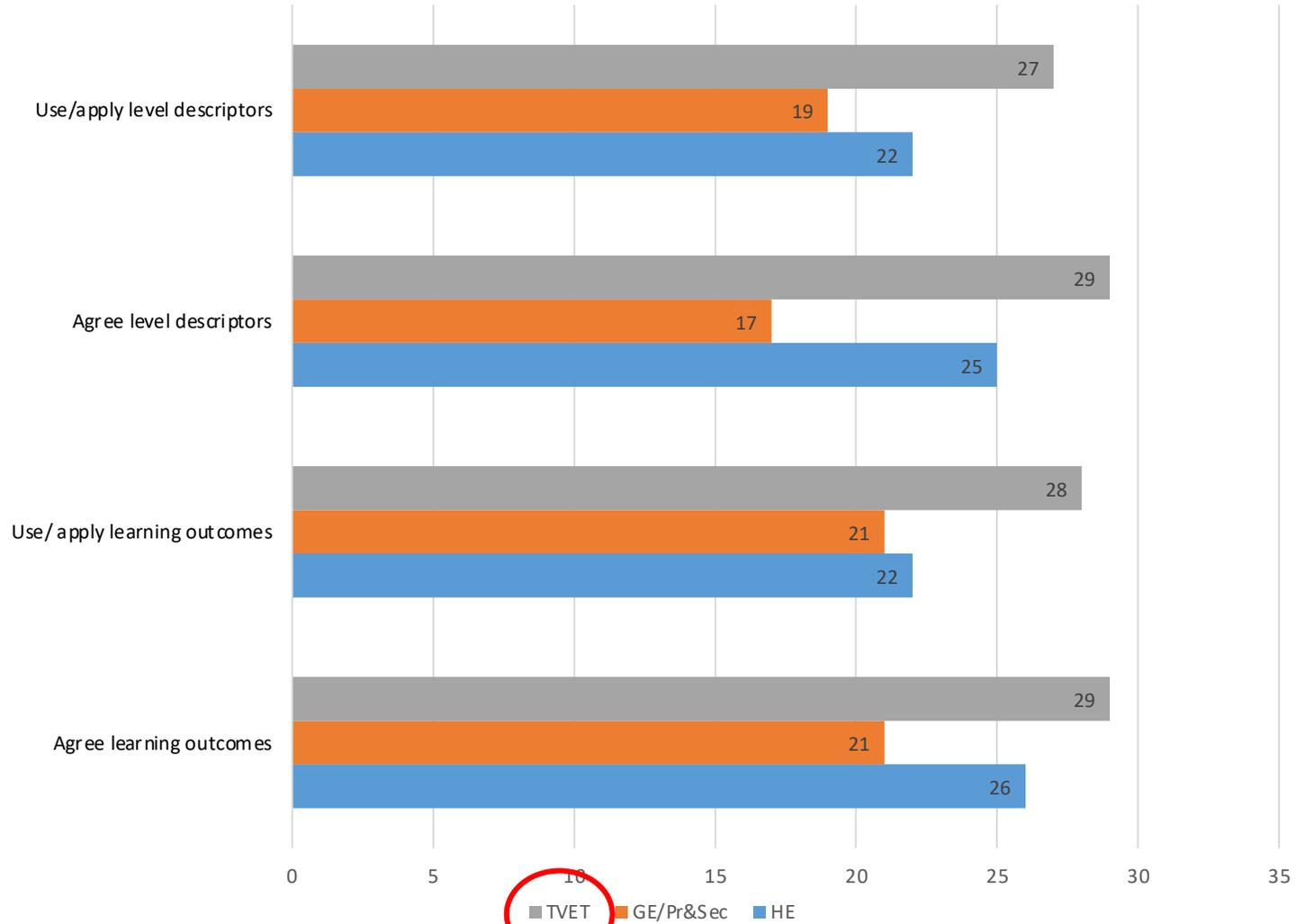


■ NQF ■ NQS ■ No Answer

Similar patterns in agreement and use/application of learning outcomes and level descriptors:

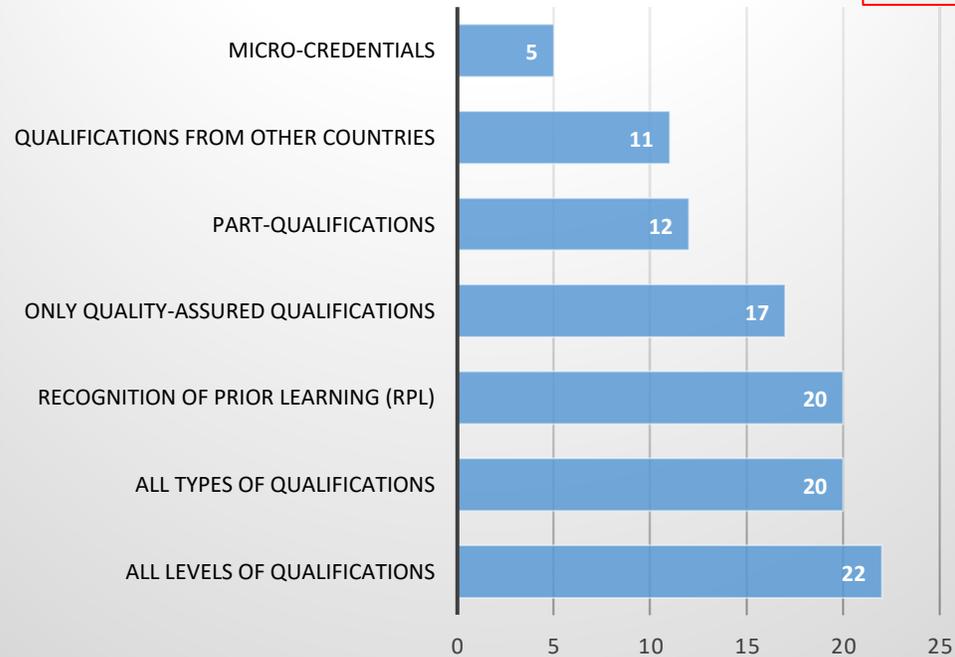
- TVET sector most popular

Agreement and use of learning outcomes and level descriptors



Some survey results (contd.)

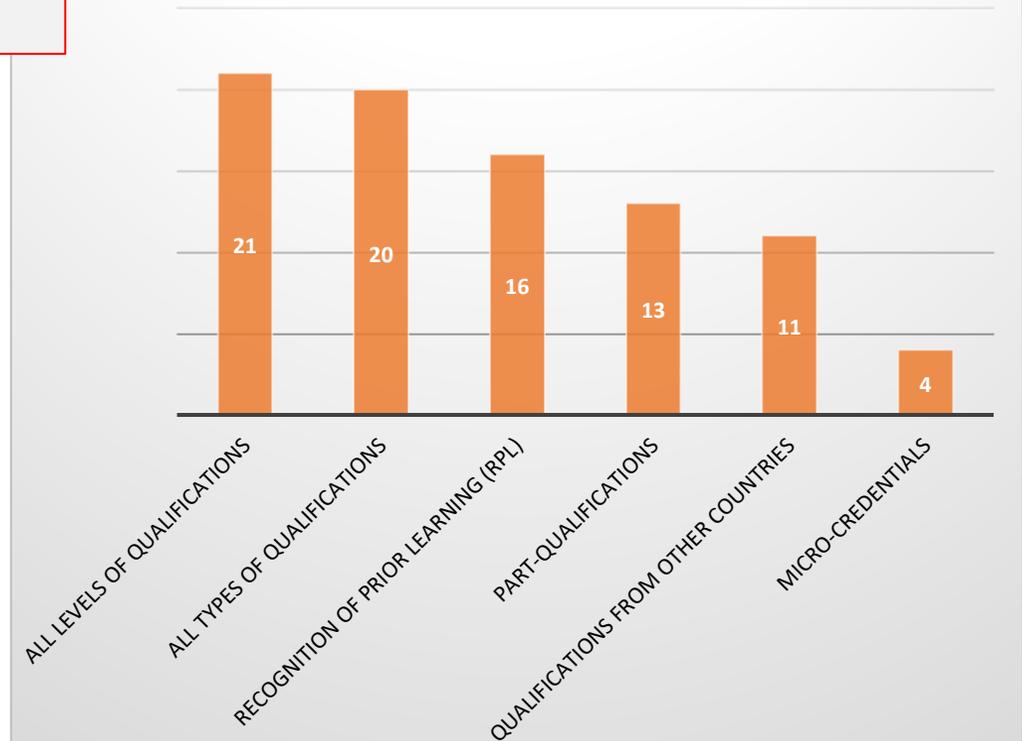
Scope of NQF/ NQS



Similar results:

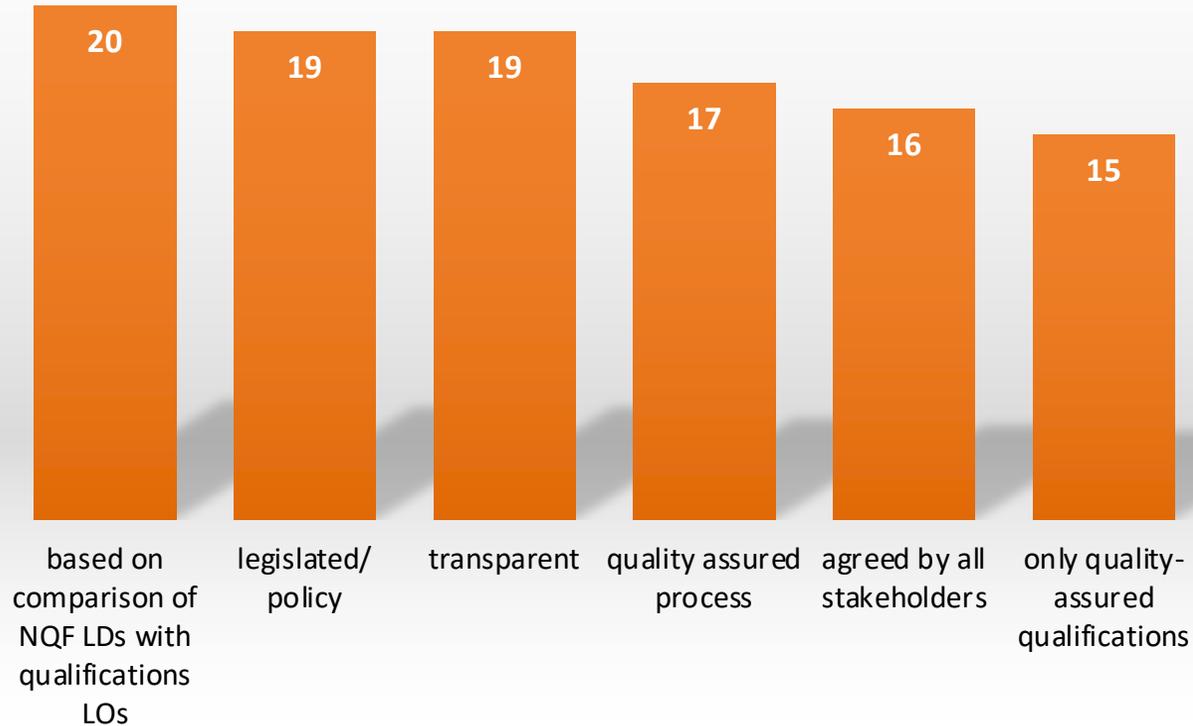
- Scope of NQF/NQS
- Process of classifying qualification in NQF/ NQS

Classification in NQF/ NQS applied consistently

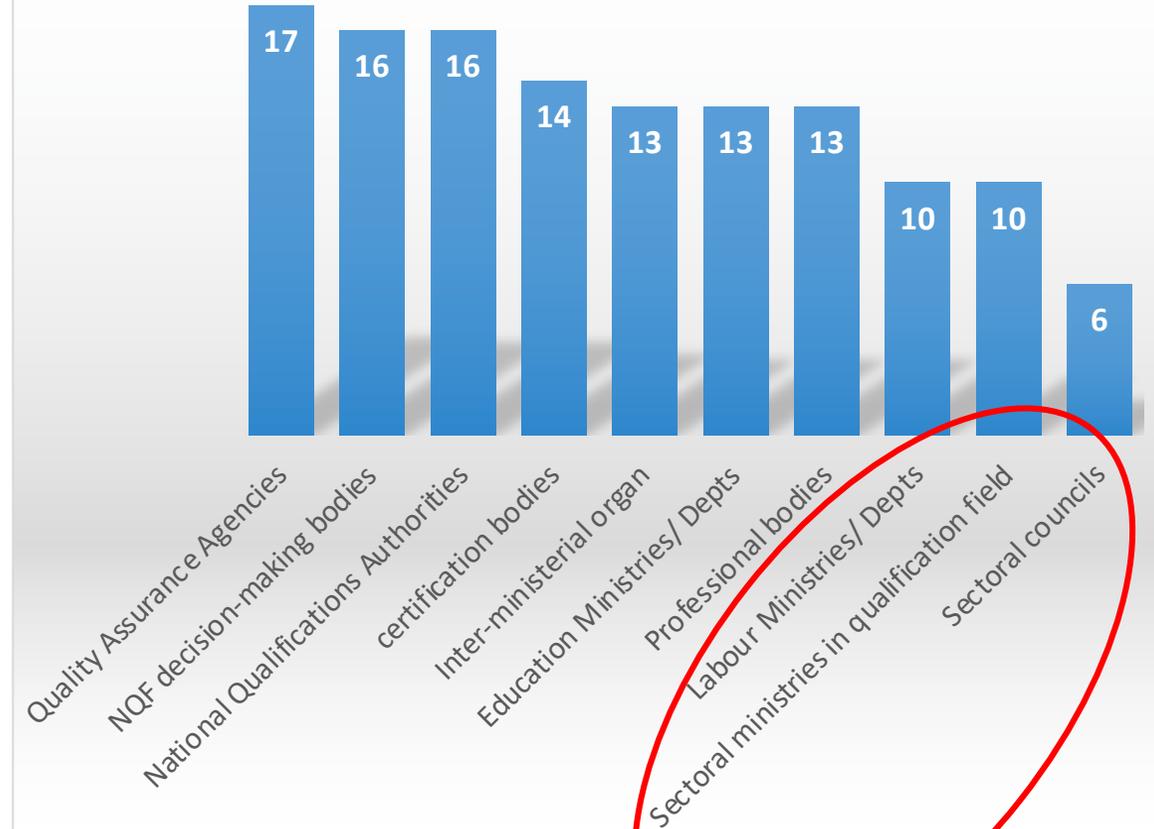


Some survey results (contd.)

Process of classification in NQF/NQS



Bodies involved in classification process

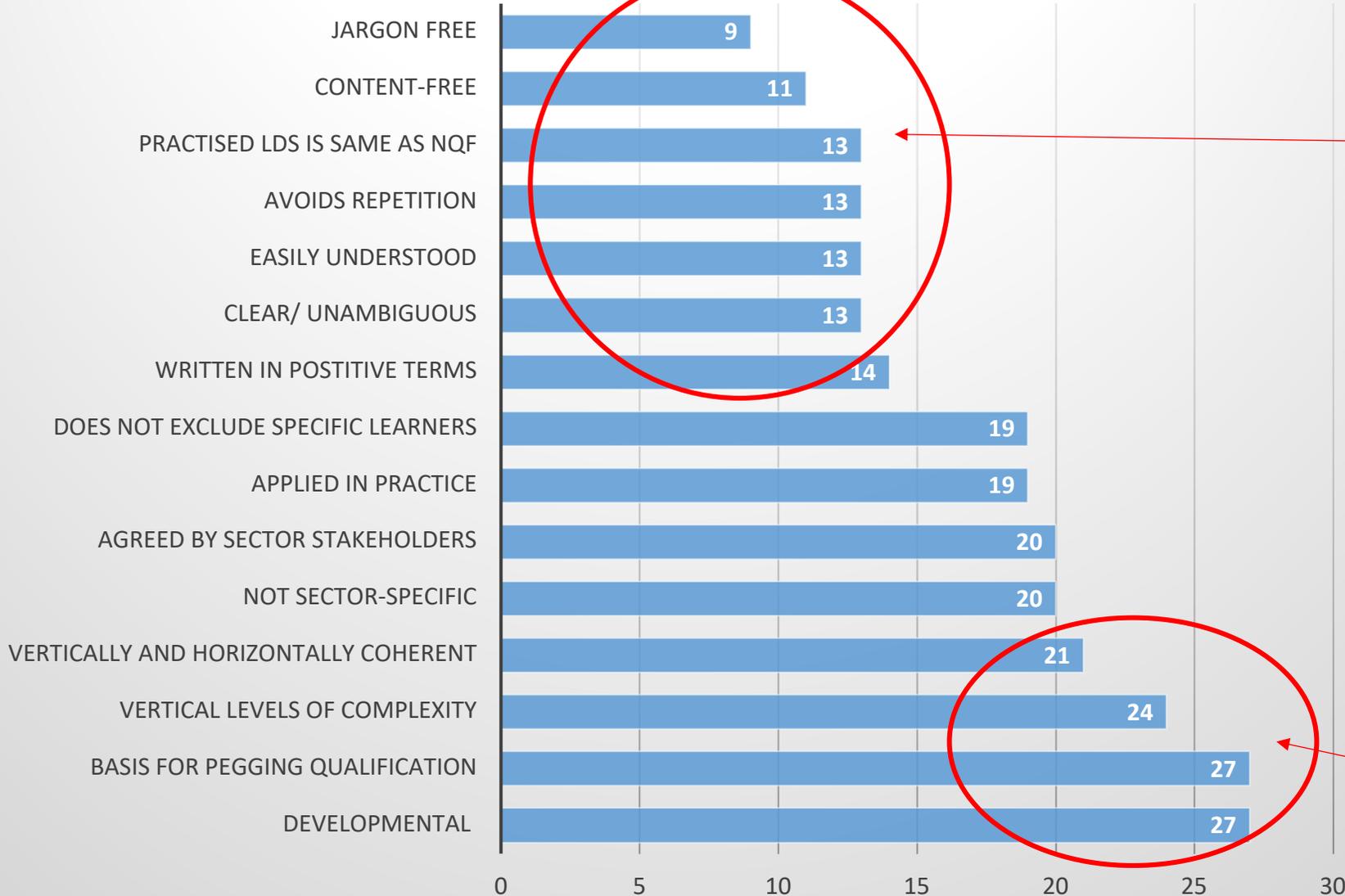


Least involvement

- Labour and sectoral bodies

Some survey results (contd.)

Features of level descriptors



Minority

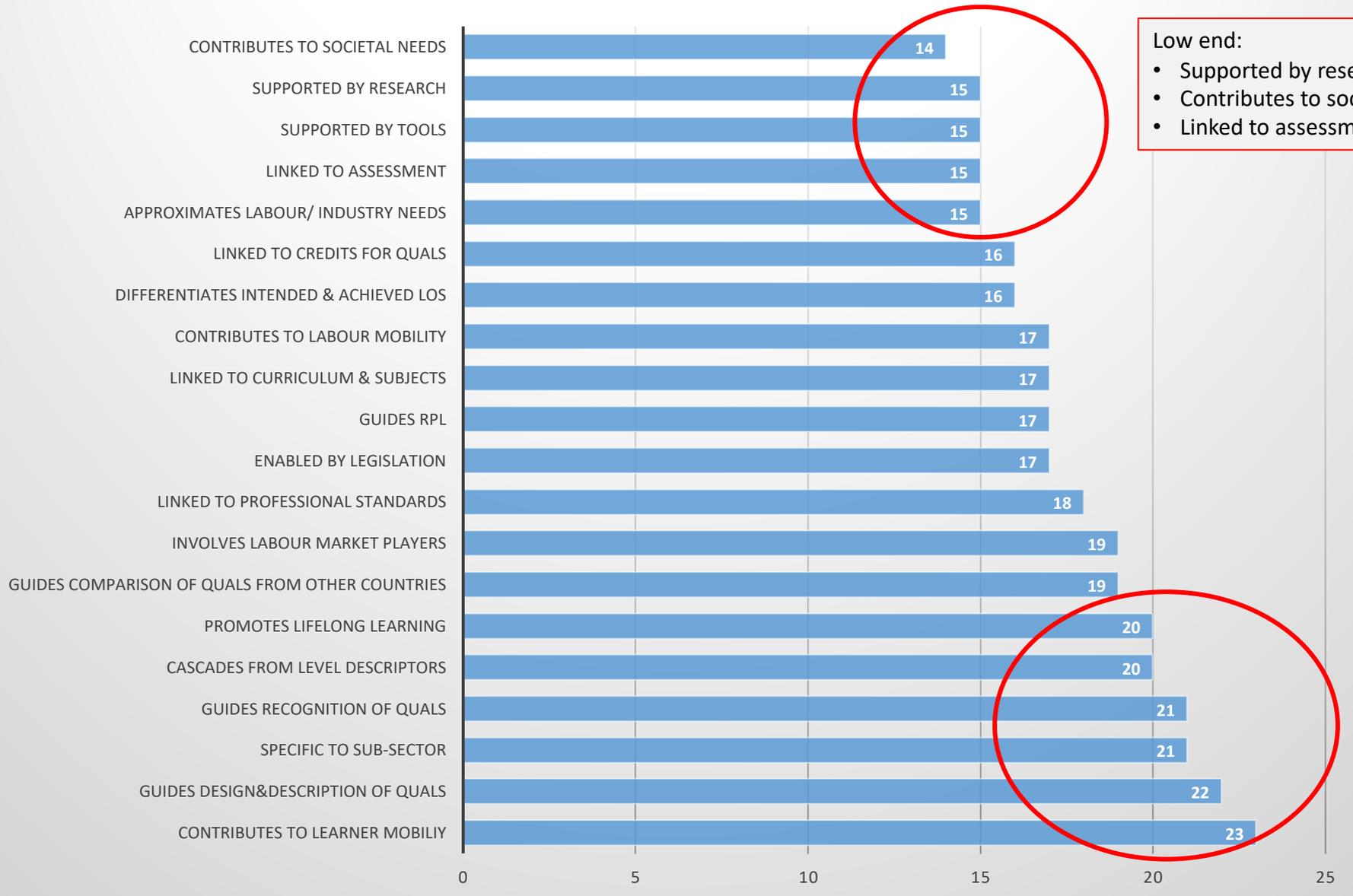
- Mostly clarity/ language aspects
- Also at the low end: the LDS used in practice are the same as those of the NQF

Majority:

- Logic (vertical and horizontal)
- Basis for pegging qualification on NQF

Some survey results (contd.)

Features of learning outcomes



Low end:

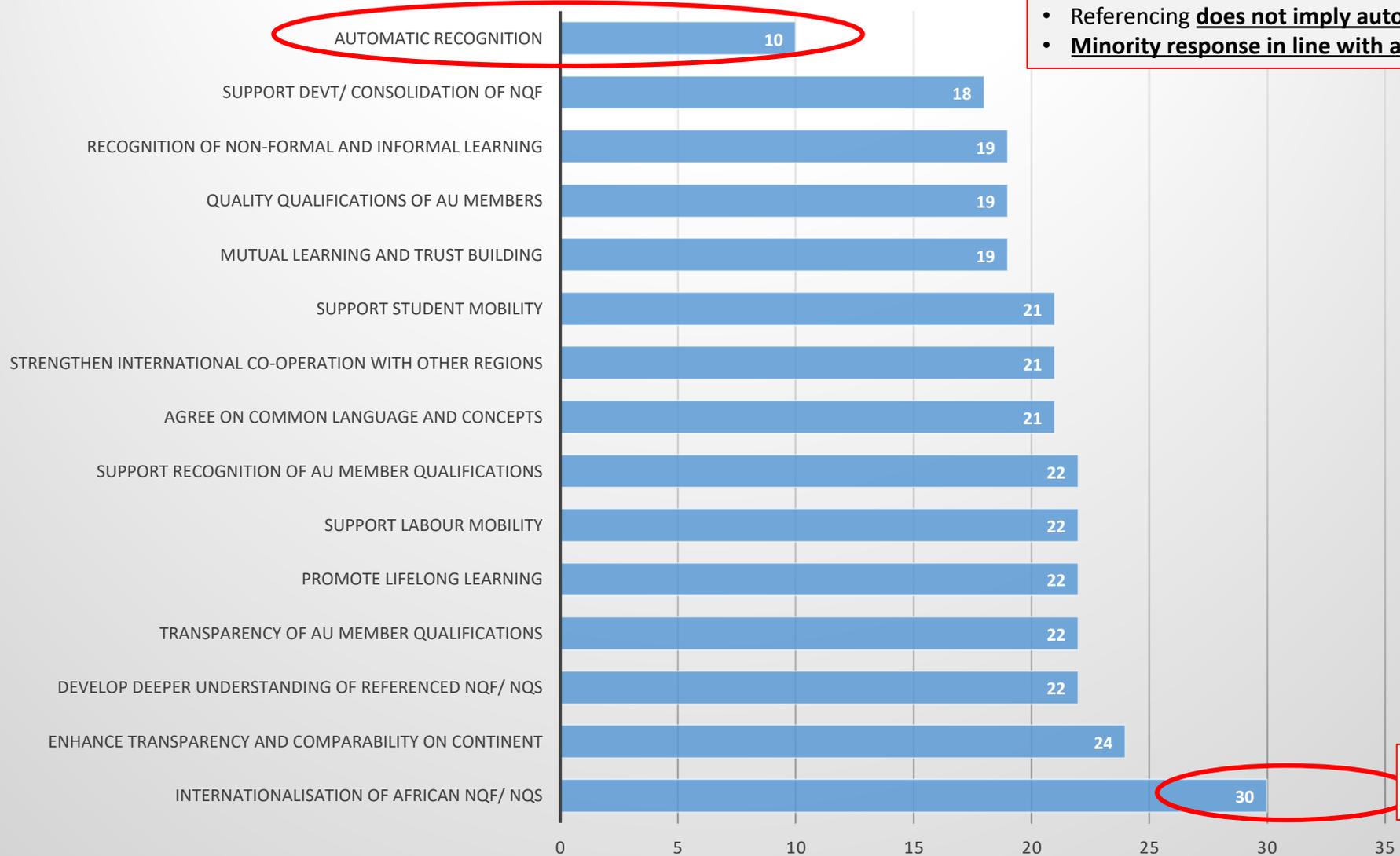
- Supported by research and tools
- Contributes to societal/ labour/ industry needs
- Linked to assessment

High end:

- Learner mobility
- Guides design, description and recognition of qualifications
- Specific to sub-sector
- Cascades from LDs
- Lifelong learning

Some survey results (contd.)

Benefits of referencing



This variable was added to check expectation:

- Referencing **does not imply automatic recognition**
- **Minority response in line with above**

Most popular response:

- Internationalisation

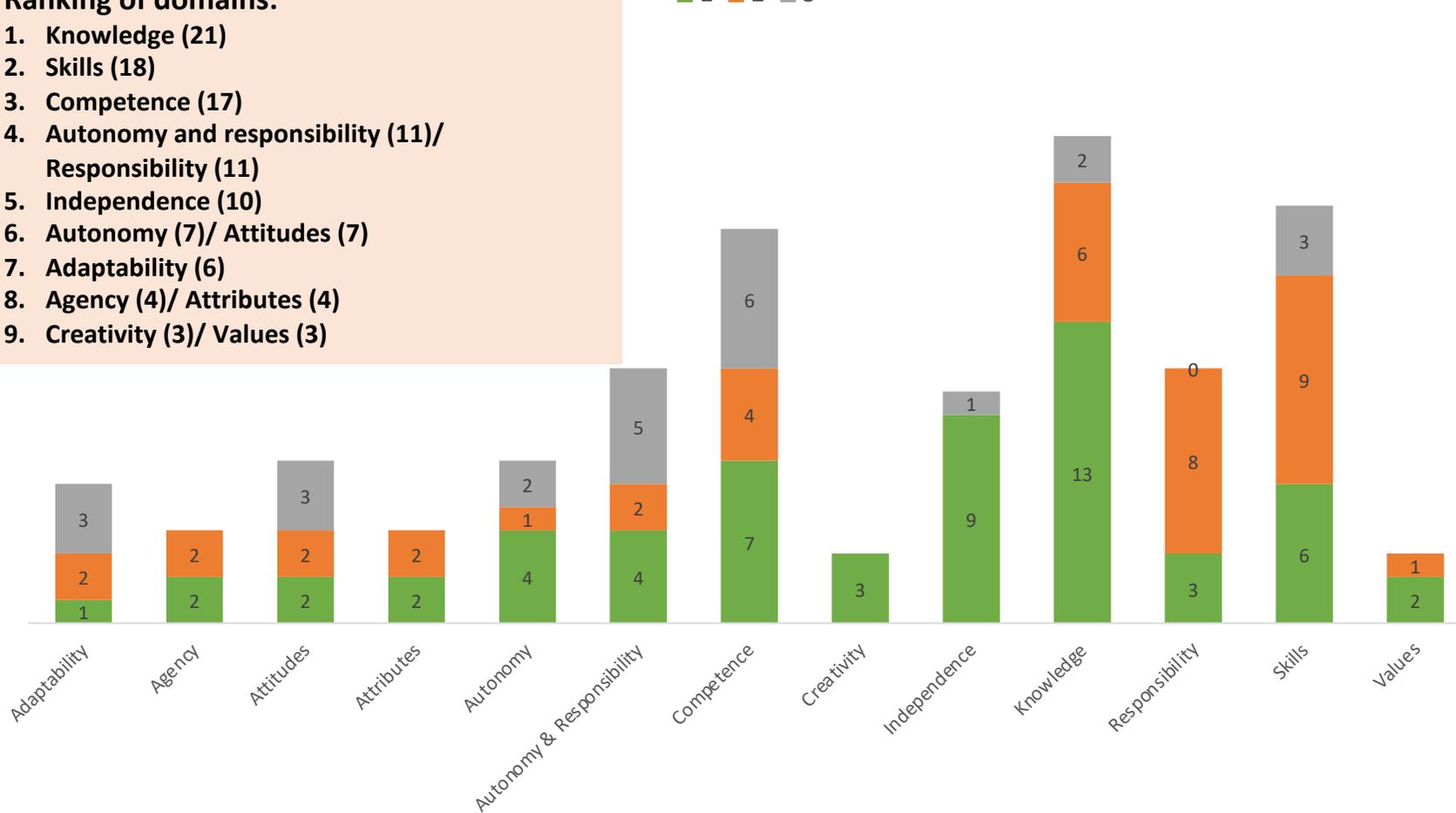
Results of survey (domains and levels)

Ranking domains of learning (3 top ranks - 13 domains)

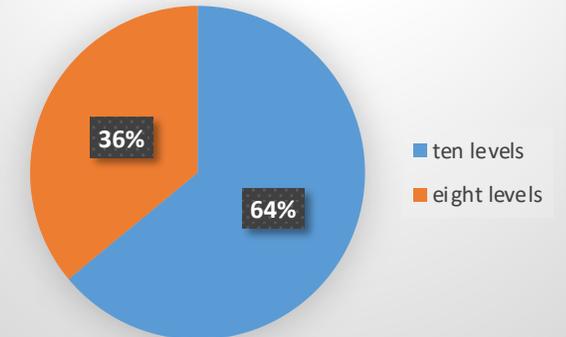
Ranking of domains:

1. Knowledge (21)
2. Skills (18)
3. Competence (17)
4. Autonomy and responsibility (11)/
Responsibility (11)
5. Independence (10)
6. Autonomy (7)/ Attitudes (7)
7. Adaptability (6)
8. Agency (4)/ Attributes (4)
9. Creativity (3)/ Values (3)

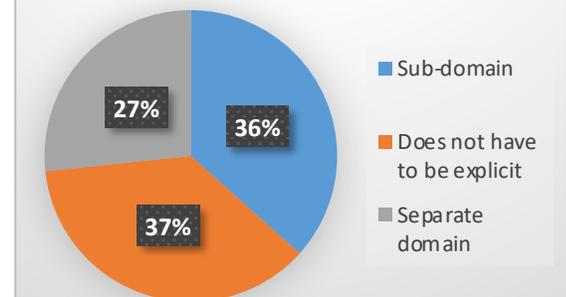
■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3



ACQF levels



Inclusion of innovation



Challenges

Bearing in mind the objectives and vision of the ACQF, and its wide scope:

- What indispensable elements of the conceptual-technical design should be agreed so that the ACQF plays its role and benefits the continent?
- How to develop good definition of levels and descriptors of an inclusive and future oriented RQF (the task of this Guideline)
- Learning outcomes (LO) approach and LO in different contexts of learning (standards-programmes-assessment-certification) and in renewal of qualifications / adaptation to new demands and technologies
- Transparency in management of qualifications: registers, databases
- Quality assurance principles and mechanisms
- Validation of learning, including RPL

Questions, discussions, inputs



Thank you