



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CDP) 2021

THEMATIC CDP BRIEFS **6.1**

Quality Assurance for Technical Vocational-Education and Training (TVET)

OVERVIEW OF APPROACHES OF REGIONAL / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

AFRICAN CONTINENTAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (ACQF)

Capacity development programme (CDP) 2021



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Quality Assurance for Technical Vocational-Education and Training (TVET)

This thematic brief provides a brief mapping of the main features and components of Quality Assurance frameworks for TVET proposed by different regional and international organisations.

The mapped cases are from: African Union’s CESA 2025 and Plan of Action TVET 2028; European Union’s EQAVET; UNESCO’s quality assurance for TVET qualifications in the Asia-Pacific; Quality assurance guidelines of SADCQF; ETF’s approach to quality assurance of TVET and Toolkit Getting organised for better qualifications.

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QUALITY ASSURANCE IN TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING



1.1 Quality as strategy

1. Which VET for which objectives

Improving and sustaining quality is a priority of VET policies and reforms across countries, in Africa and elsewhere. The definition and scope of “quality” of VET varies. In some countries, quality is seen from a narrower perspective of relevance to labour market needs. In other countries quality has a wider definition, as it also includes the ability of the VET system to prepare learners for today’s and future career and personal development needs, and to contribute to the wider objectives of societies, notably social inclusion, and the ability to embrace transition (digital, green, social) and the transformation of learning, work, and skills.

To meet this range of objectives and needs, VET should be attractive, relevant for changing labour market needs, inclusive, future-oriented, enabler of lifelong learning, people-centred, contextualized in national and regional characteristics and based on data and review.

2. What matters most for users is the quality of the outcome

For both employers and learners, quality VET is ultimately reflected in the transparency and credibility of the outcome, i.e the qualification - the sum-up of the knowledge and skills assessed against given standards.

3. Quality VET and national qualifications frameworks

VET should be linked with the overall education and training system. In many countries this integration is enhanced and made more transparent via national qualifications frameworks. Not surprisingly, it is widely accepted that principles and implementation of national qualifications frameworks go hand-in-hand with quality assurance mechanisms, and only quality assured qualifications are given NQF levels and included in NQF registers and databases.

4. Quality is about inputs, processes, outputs, and system

Quality VET is a function of the interaction between inputs, processes, and outputs; it is about the features and functioning of the VET system, the participation of relevant stakeholders at key junctions and its alignment with the wider national qualifications system.

5. Quality of VET is everybody’s responsibility

Achieving quality improvement and a culture of quality in VET requires strategic vision, and a constant engagement at all levels – macro, meso and micro - from higher levels of government to teachers, trainers and assessors at VET centres, in-company training and structures working on validation and certification of competences from non-formal and informal learning.

6. Quality assurance adapts

Approaches to quality assurance in education and training sub-sectors differ, both within and across countries. Education and training systems evolve and if quality assurance is to be 'fit for purpose', it must evolve too. Changing societies and economies, support for lifelong learning and the internationalisation of education and training are important drivers of quality assurance reform (ETF, 2015).

1.2 Quality assurance

Quality must be assured and maintained. Achieving and sustaining quality in VET requires putting in place a set of processes, procedures, tools and capacities, and monitor them to ensure that the outcomes of VET meet the expectations in terms of the defined objectives.

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.

Concepts and approaches to define and build VET quality assurance systems have been developed, implemented, and reviewed in different contexts and countries. Besides national quality assurance systems, a few VET quality assurance frameworks of wider (regional or international) scope and applicability have been developed and supported by multilateral bodies and organisations. Chapter 2 of this thematic brief explores six such cases.



MAPPING OF REGIONAL / INTERNATIONAL QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORKS

A synthetic mapping of VET quality assurance policies and frameworks promoted and supported at regional / international level highlights key features and approaches.

A selection of such regional / international quality assurance frameworks concerning VET includes initiatives of the African Union, European Union, UNESCO, Southern African Development Community (SADC) and European Training Foundation (ETF).

- **Case 1:** In the context of the **African Union policies**, quality of education and training is an important priority. Quality of education and training and quality assurance are integrated in several strategic objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (**CESA 2016-2025**).
- **Case 2:** The African Union's **Plan of Action for the African Decade for Technical, Professional, Entrepreneurial Training and Youth** (2019-2028) sets nine focus areas for action, of which the second is focused on "Improving quality and relevance of TVET in Africa for an ever-changing world of work".
- **Case 3:** The EU has promoted and supported a common approach for all member states - the European Quality Assurance in VET (**EQAVET**) implementing the **Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 18/06/2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET** based on a policy framework, with guidelines, indicators, and cooperation through a dedicated network.

- **Case 4:** UNESCO (2017) developed **Guidelines for quality assurance of TVET qualifications in the Asia-Pacific**.
- **Case 5:** The policy and technical document of SADC Qualifications Framework (**SADCQF, 2017**) specifies sixteen principles of quality assurance for the government and relevant institutions in every member state. Quality assurance and verification are important objectives of SADCQF, working in complementarity with **SADC Qualifications Verification Network**, and Southern African Quality Assurance Network.
- **Case 6:** The European Training Foundation (ETF, 2017), proposed its approach in two publications: a) **Promoting Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training** and b) the Toolkit

These regional / international strategic orientations and reference frameworks on quality assurance of education and training, and especially those focused on VET and qualifications have high value for any country and institution working to introduce, review and consolidate quality assurance mechanisms or systems for VET. They build on international good practice, on the credibility of the organisations promoting and supporting them and are contextualised to realities and priorities of different regions.

2.1 Case 1 and 2: African Union context

POLICY / FRAMEWORK / APPROACH	MAIN OBJECTIVES, FEATURES	OBSERVATIONS
<p>African Union</p>	<p>CESA-25 mission: Reorient Africa’s education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation and creativity required to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development at the national, sub-regional and continental levels.</p> <p>The African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA) are validated and published, but concern exclusively higher education.</p>	
<p>CESA 2016-2025</p>	<p>Quality assurance is addressed in an integrated manner, not as a specific theme or domain of work.</p> <p>Strategic Objective 1: revitalise teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels. Action area c) mentions quality and relevant teaching and learning materials; and d) is more specific “Enhance quality assurance and assessment mechanisms for learning outcomes”</p> <p>Strategic Objective 4: Ensure the acquisition of requisite knowledge and skills as well as improved completion rates at all levels and groups (...). Action area e) mentions: establish and strengthen quality assurance mechanisms and monitoring and evaluation systems.</p>	<p>Complementary, detailed information is not included.</p>
<p>Plan of Action for the African Decade for Technical, Professional, Entrepreneurial Training and Youth</p>	<p>Focus Area 2: Improving Quality and Relevance of TVET in Africa for an Ever-Changing World of Work. Intervention areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Building outcome/competency-based TVET systems in partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders. ➤ Harmonized qualifications and accreditation systems at regional and continental level. ➤ Establishing mechanisms for TVET engagement in the transformational sectors. ➤ Capacity building of educators with relevant modern and practical competencies. ➤ Improve infrastructure, equipment, e-technology. ➤ Internal quality enhancement at TVET providers 	<p>Supported by a Matrix of activities (2019-2028)</p>

2.2 Case 3: European Union - EQAVET

Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 18/06/2009 on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET¹ was implemented via the EQAVET network, with support from the European

Commission and EU funding. EQAVET is a community of practice that promotes European collaboration in developing and improving quality assurance in VET.

In 2009, the European Council and the European Parliament passed the Recommendation establishing a European Quality

1 RECOMENDAÇÃO DO PARLAMENTO EUROPEU E DO CONSELHO de 18 de Junho de 2009 sobre a criação de um Quadro de Referência Europeu de Garantia da Qualidade para o Ensino e a Formação Profissionais

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Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQARF), which comprises principles, criteria and a set of quality indicators, commonly implemented by the EU Member States.

The EQARF encourages an iterative learning process ideally suited to reinforcing a quality culture. The Recommendation encourages Member States to align their VET quality assurance approach with the EQARF for transparency and trust-building purposes. The 10 EQARF indicators serve as a useful tool for indicator development and international comparison purposes. They have to be adapted to nationally determined objectives in a manner that ensures ease of understanding, collection, storage, analysis and usage to guarantee their relevance, validity and reliability. The indicators are related to context, input, process, output and outcome.

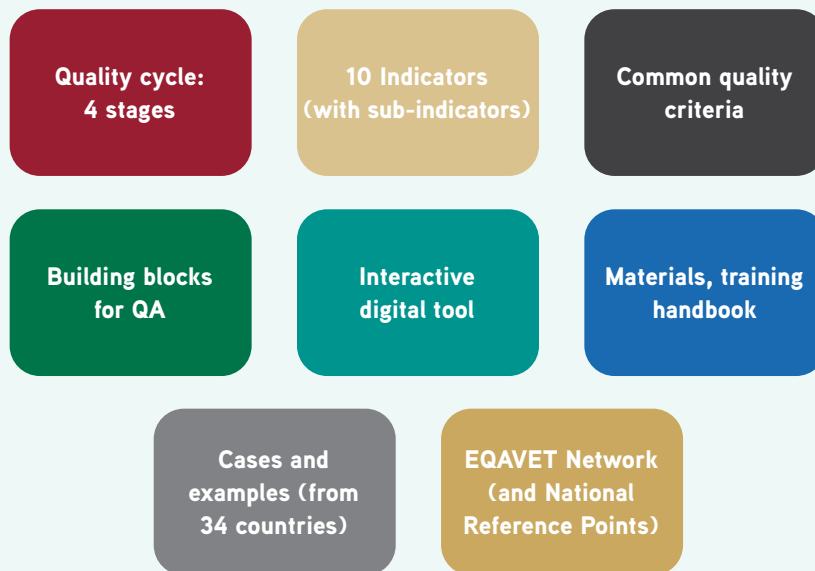
The EQAVET network, including its network of NRPs, supports the operationalisation and implementation of EU policy on quality assurance in VET, comprising the EQARF. User-friendly instruments and guidance are accessible on the [EQAVET website](#).

Research undertaken by EQAVET indicates that in the EU the common actions for the effective implementation of a VET quality assurance strategy are as follows:

- Key institutions (notably the relevant ministries) drive the development process.
- The main stakeholders are engaged and assume ownership as relevant and appropriate.
- A negotiated and agreed strategy and/or policy document on QA in VET is published.
- National-level quality standards for VET providers are established.
- Measures to evaluate and review are in place and results are made public.

The quality assurance package developed under EQARF and by the EQAVET network to support and guide countries and institutions developing, establishing, monitoring or improving their QA systems is composed of a set of elements.

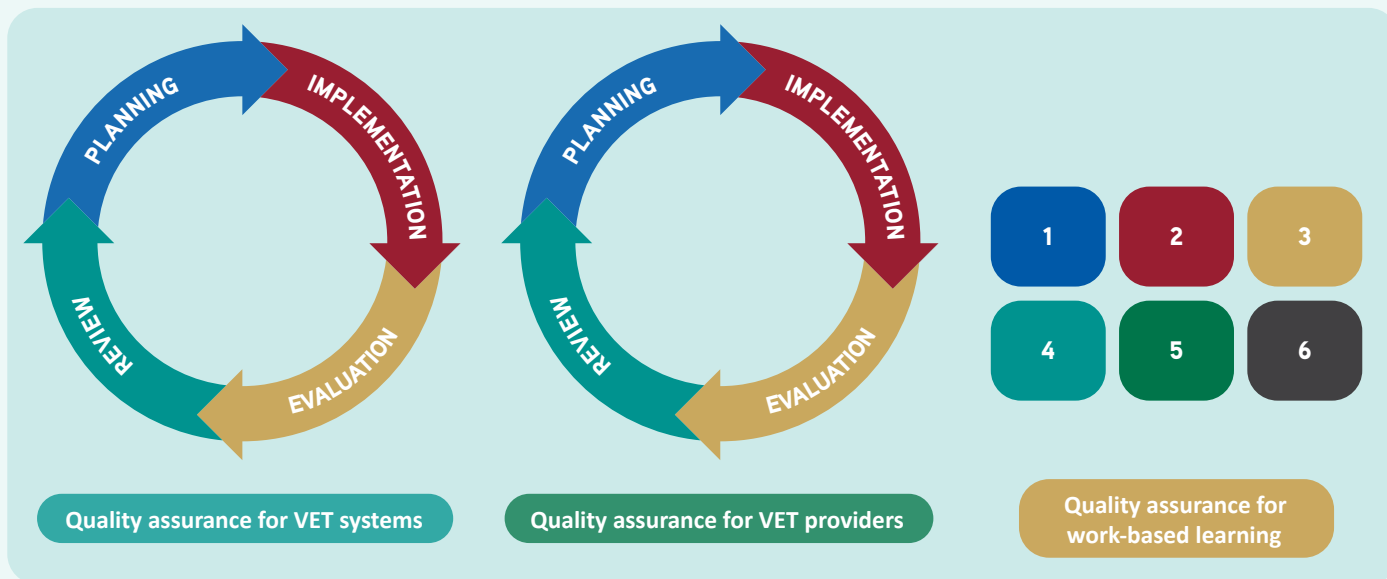
FIGURE 1: EQAVET - a set of components and tools



The EQAVET website offers an [interactive tool](#) tailored for users from each of three main VET contexts:

- For QA of **VET systems**
- For QA of **VET providers**
- For QA of **Work-based learning**: added more recently in view of the growth of this approach to VET

FIGURE 2: Three contexts of EQAVET



The interactive tool includes a function tailored for alignment of an existing QA system to EQAVET.

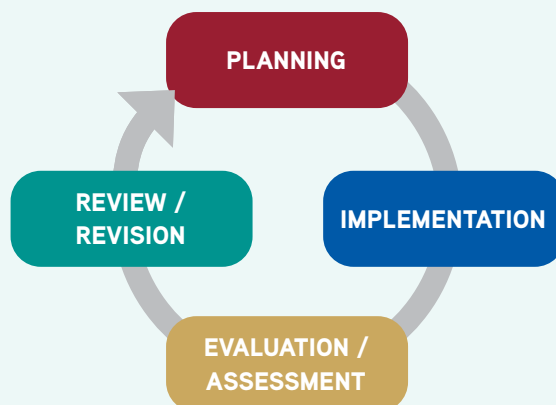
In this brief overview are highlighted the key components of the EQAVET system: quality cycle, 10 EQAVET indicators, common quality criteria and building blocks.

A. Quality Cycle

Four stages: Planning, implementation, evaluation (assessment) and review (revision) of VET

Developing a quality assurance system is complex and takes time. The four stages of the quality assurance cycle are interrelated and need to be addressed holistically. EQARF outlines a quality assurance and improvement cycle along the four stages, supported by **common quality criteria, indicative descriptors and indicators**.

FIGURE 3: QA cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation and review



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B. EQAVET 10 Indicators

INDICATOR	SUB-INDICATOR	TYPE OF INDICATOR
1. Relevance of quality assurance systems for VET providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Share of VET providers applying internal QA systems defined by Law at own initiative ➤ Share of accredited VET providers 	Context / input indicator
2. Investment in training of teachers and trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Share of VET teachers and trainers participating in further training ➤ Amount of funds invested in the further training of VET teachers and trainers 	Input / process indicators
3. Participation rate in VET programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Participation rate in VET programmes 	Input / process indicators
4. Completion rate in VET programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Completion rate in VET programmes 	Process / input/output indicators
5. Placement rate in VET programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Destination of VET learners at designated point in time after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria 	Outcome indicator
6. Utilisation of acquired skills at the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information on occupation obtained by individuals after completion of training, according to the type of programme and the individual criteria ➤ Satisfaction rate of individuals and employers with acquired skills / competences 	Outcome indicator (mix of qualitative and quantitative data)
7. Unemployment rate according to individual criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unemployment rate (age group 15-74) 	Context indicator
8. Prevalence of vulnerable groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Percentage of participants in VET classified as disadvantaged groups (in a defined region) according to age and gender ➤ Success rate of disadvantaged groups (from VET) according to age and gender 	Context indicator
9. Mechanisms to identify training needs in the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information on mechanisms set up to identify changing demands at different levels ➤ Evidence of their effectiveness 	Context / input indicator (qualitative information)
10. Schemes used to promote better access to VET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Information on existing schemes at different levels ➤ Evidence of their effectiveness 	Process indicator (qualitative information)

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C. Common quality criteria

The **Recommendation** setting the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (2009) indicates (Annex 1) the set of common quality criteria, explained by indicative descriptors for two levels (VET system and VET providers).

In brief, the common quality criteria are listed herewith, without the respective indicative indicators:

- Planning reflects a strategic vision shared by the relevant stakeholders and includes explicit goals / objectives, actions and indicators
- Implementation plans are devised in consultation with stakeholders and include explicit principles
- Evaluation of outcomes and processes is regularly carried out and supported by measurement
- Review

D. Building blocks for QA

	FOR QA OF VET SYSTEMS 10 BUILDING BLOCKS	FOR QA OF PROVIDERS 6 BUILDING BLOCKS
1	Set clear rules for deciding who offers VET provision	Ensure there is a management culture which is committed to quality assurance
2	Recognise and build on existing internal arrangement Develop approaches which reflect the provider's circumstances	Develop approaches which reflect the provider's circumstances
3	Set clear roles and responsibilities for different parts of the VET system	Develop a culture of self-assessment
4	Identify what information and data should be collected and used in the VET system	Support staff training in relation to quality assurance
5	Define and implement a communications strategy	Use data and feedback to improve VET
6	Pilot initiatives and value success	Ensure VET is based on the involvement of external and internal stakeholders
7	Use feedback to improve VET	
8	Provide clarity over funding	
9	Ensure that QA covers all aspects of VET provision	
10	Ensure that VET is founded on a strong involvement of external and internal partners and relevant stakeholders	

2.3 Case 4: UNESCO (2017): Guidelines for quality assurance of TVET qualifications in the Asia-Pacific

The focus of the Guidelines for Quality Assurance of TVET qualifications in the Asia-Pacific (2017) is on the quality assurance of TVET qualifications, and emphasis is directed to outcomes and the qualifications acquisition processes. The guidelines are structured in 13 Principles. Each Principle is complemented by qualitative and quantitative indicators, which provide orientation on the demonstration of the principles' application.

In the context of TVET, quality assurance generally refers to 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 processes focus on the consistency of the assessment and qualification processes, so that qualifications have currency, and also on ensuring that assessment meets the required standards, raising the likelihood that a qualification is a valid and reliable testament to a learner's knowledge, skills and wider competences. The implementation of systematic quality assurance processes is paramount in any TVET qualifications system.

Quality assurance of TVET qualifications focuses on achieving quality outcomes. It is the responsibility of all key stakeholders, at all levels of the TVET qualifications system: the international, regional, national awarding body and TVET education institution levels. Quite often these various levels are connected and interrelated.

Principles of quality assurance (QA) of TVET qualifications

1. There is a clear vision for how quality assurance of TVET qualifications operates across the TVET qualifications system.
2. Organisations involved in quality assurance of TVET qualifications operate with clear and transparent governance arrangements.
3. Quality assurance of TVET qualifications practice is appropriately financed.
4. Quality assurance of TVET qualifications practice is based on clear and transparent quality standards.
5. Quality assurance of TVET qualifications practice addresses conception and formation of qualifications, assessment, validation, and certification processes.
6. Key stakeholder groups are involved in key aspects of quality assurance practice (e.g., conception and formation of TVET qualifications, assessment, validation, and certification).
7. Economic, social and environmental dimensions are explicit in QA of TVET qualifications practice to: maximize access, social inclusion, pathways, articulation, participation of vulnerable groups, and participant retention and completion rates; and prioritize key industry sectors.
8. Barriers to assessment, including for non- formal and informal learning, are minimised.
9. Professionalization of staff underpins QA of TVET qualifications practices.
10. Continuous improvement underpins QA of TVET qualifications practice; decisions are informed by data and research.
11. Organisations involved in QA of TVET qualifications commit to internal evaluation and cyclical external evaluation, as well as to making public the findings of external evaluations.
12. QA of TVET qualifications practice remains fit for purpose and is sustainable.
13. QA of TVET qualifications practice is enhanced through national and international linkages and cooperation.

The Guidelines elaborate a typology of governance arrangements and stages of implementation of QA, taking account of case studies from the region.

Types of governance arrangements of quality assurance:

1. **Type 1:** All quality assurance of all education and training (including school, TVET and higher education qualifications) is directed by a single body, operating under national legislation or regulations.
2. **Type 2:** All quality assurance of post-compulsory school qualifications (including TVET and higher education qualifications) is directed by a single body, operating under national legislation or regulations.
3. **Type 3:** Quality assurance of TVET qualifications is seen as separate from the quality assurance of other education qualifications, and is directed by a single body, under national legislation or regulations.
4. **Type 4:** The quality assurance of TVET qualifications is carried out by two or more bodies; each body directs operations across their fields of competence.
5. **Unassigned:** Quality assurance processes are under development and it is not yet possible to classify them in terms of the other types.

Quality assurance arrangements can be classified by stages of implementation, as indicated below. In some countries the quality assurance system is long-standing and linked with the national qualifications framework.

1. Emerging stage

Initial discussions for a systemic approach are underway. Some quality assurance requirements of TVET qualifications may be documented and implemented, but the approach is ad hoc and not systematic. The approach may not be well understood by key stakeholders. A desire for a systematic approach to quality assurance of TVET qualifications has been voiced by various stakeholders and discussed in policy documents, but no authoritative commitment has been made to a systematic approach.

2. Entry stage

An overarching vision of QA of TVET qualifications has been agreed upon. Commitment to a systematic approach to quality assurance of TVET qualifications has been made by the responsible bodies or assessment providers. This commitment is documented in a policy paper or statement, vision statement, legislation and/or decree. The overarching design of the quality assurance of TVET

qualifications has been documented and has been shared with key stakeholders for feedback and confirmation.

3. Intermediate stage

QA structures and processes have been agreed upon, communicated and are operational. The quality assurance structures and processes of TVET qualifications have been documented, agreed upon and made public. Documentation related to quality assurance of TVET qualifications could include:

- Quality standards
- Quality assurance policies and procedures
- Data standards for the systematic collection of data.

Pilot schemes are in the early stages of implementation. The agreed upon quality assurance structures and processes are being implemented across the scope of QA of TVET qualifications.

4. Advanced stage

QA structures and processes have been established for five years. The quality assurance structures and processes of TVET qualifications have been operational for five years. Implementation includes harmonization⁷ of quality assurance structures and processes, monitoring and continuous improvement, internal evaluation and external evaluation.

5. Mature stage

A review of QA structures and processes is underway. The responsible bodies and/or assessment providers are reviewing the fitness for purposes and sustainability of the quality assurance structures and processes of TVET qualifications. This review is a systemic one at the national or education institution level, and it includes all key stakeholders.

2.4 Case 5: SADCQF, 2017: Quality Assurance Guidelines

SADCQF, 2017: annex 2 of the main SADCQF policy and technical document (2017) is focused on quality assurance guidelines to be implemented by all member states (Government and relevant institutions) in the context of their national qualifications frameworks and systems. The guidelines are based on a wide and comprehensive concept of quality assurance, tackling inputs, processes and outputs, and emphasizing peer-sharing and collaborations, as well as monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. The sixteen quality assurance guidelines are as follows:

1. Participate in initiatives intended to lead to the harmonisation and quality assurance (QA) of education structures, frameworks for content selection and organisation, teacher training and quality, teaching and learning resources, course delivery systems, students' achievement and performance standards, nomenclature and framework of certification and governance and management of institutions. This harmonization should include recognition of the three tier degree structure in higher education – namely, Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees, and the diploma supplement to add labour market value to credentials held,
2. Ensure the planning for and provision of adequate financial resources for the provision of high quality education and training at all levels in the region,
3. Ensure improved designs, scopes, quality and adequacy of programmes, courses and curricula at all levels of education and training and hold those programmes and courses accountable for the results realised by the learners,
4. Ensure ideal standards of infrastructures, facilities, teaching and learning resources and generally conducive environments for the different forms and levels of education and training within the region,
5. Promote quality and relevance of education to the needs and expectations of individual learners, member states, the region and international community as a whole and hence facilitate staff and brain retention as well as competitiveness of qualifications earned in the SADC region,
6. Ensure improved, safe, secure environments for the delivery of education and training through assured high quality, learner friendly infrastructure and facilities including water, sanitation facilities, arrangements for good nutrition and health support, accountable institutional leadership and management, and general cohesion of students and staff,
7. Promote improved and effective teaching and learning across the region through better training, re- training, remuneration and retention schemes for committed teachers and university lecturers, appropriate and relevant curricula, suitable teaching and learning resources, use of learner-centred course delivery methods, appropriate class sizes, sufficient learning time, and student learning support,
8. Ensure periodic reviews and improvement of policies, plans and programmes for training, re-training and induction of education personnel including supporting initiatives for the establishment of a regional centre for professional training of education personnel for the region,

9. Promote and ensure the sharing and exchange of information and best practices on all issues pertaining to education and training for purposes of achieving high standards of achievement and mastery while enabling students in the region to promote interpersonal understanding, peace and conflict resolution and to cope with change, diversity, promoting intra-state and inter-state relationships and enhancing their abilities to learn throughout life,
10. Promote an understanding of quality and the establishment and enhancement of a quality culture as an ideal, and characterising standards of education and training outcomes throughout the SADC Region,
11. Develop, induce and, where necessary, enforce adherence to defined and regionally agreed education quality and performance standards and indicators, learning outcomes and programme monitoring criteria and procedures,
12. Promote and support education quality research and evaluation efforts that lead to improved regional mechanisms and performance,
13. Participate in sponsoring, hosting and or attending periodic regional meetings to facilitate reaffirmed collaboration, sharing information and experiences, solving common problems, considering and adopting new plans, criteria and procedures and removing obstacles to further collaboration, and planning for the future,
14. Foster strategic approaches for stronger partnerships for education development and promotion, maximum use of available facilities and resources in the region, dissemination of information on successful collaboration arrangements and provide on-site technical assistance for QA where it is needed and requested for,
15. Solicit and encourage international organs and institutions to:
 - support regional initiatives for an integrated and harmonised education and training system
 - for the realisation of regional human ideals, ideas and values that build sustainable futures in which individuals and communities develop in unity and in full respect of each other,
 - support cultural and linguistic diversity of the region in building a common education system based on

the richness of those diverse cultures and languages while giving due recognition and focus on the development and use of African languages as a means of delivery and acquisition of education

16. Participate in the development of a database, linkages and networking systems through e-mails, websites, telephone contacts to facilitate prompt advice and information on matters of regional importance in education development and quality assurance.

2.5 Case 6: European Training Foundation – quality assurance approach

ETF is an agency of the European Union. ETF's mission is to help transition and developing countries harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training, and labour market systems, in the context of EU external relations policies.

The ETF approach builds on the EU framework for Quality Assurance in VET (more details in Case 2 of this brief), on lessons from international practice and newest research on quality assurance of qualifications

In 2015 ETF published “**Promoting Quality Assurance in VET – the ETF approach**”. And in 2017, ETF developed the Toolkit “**Getting Organised for Better Qualifications**”, which includes a chapter on quality assurance of qualifications. While the 2015 publication addresses quality assurance from a perspective of the wider VET system, the 2016 Toolkit focuses on quality assurance of qualifications, seen as one of the four components of the qualifications system: legislation, institutions, stakeholders, and quality assurance. The toolkit includes self-assessment tools to guide countries and stakeholders identifying in a structured manner the state-of-play and challenges in each of the indicated four components.

1. Promoting Quality Assurance in VET – the ETF approach

The publication highlights trends and the historical background to quality assurance, clarifies concepts and presents snapshots of quality assurance in VET from ETF partner countries. Bridging the gap between quality assurance in VET and in Higher Education is addressed, in the context of the chapter on European Union's policies and actions underpinning the ETF approach.

Ten key factors for quality assurance in VET reform

- 1. Vision:** Examine the drivers of quality assurance reform in relation to the present context and determine what reform is desirable and achievable in the short- medium- long- term. Consider quality assurance as the means to manage the assessment and improvement of VET system quality systematically. Set goals for holistic reform, bearing in mind that quality assurance is a matter of good governance, effective policy, a pervasive quality culture and having in place, a supportive framework, a workable methodology and efficient measurement tools.
- 2. Leadership:** Drive the development process for VET system quality assurance through policy, with state led/ steered/delegated authorities taking the lead.
- 3. Partnership:** Engage aptly stakeholders from the worlds of work, civil society, other education sectors, information and guidance services and research, as partners in VET quality assurance development, at the different levels and with an appropriate balance between regulation and autonomy.
- 4. Learn:** Be open to international cooperation to gain exposure to new and successful practice that can help to speed up planning for VET quality assurance reform.
- 5. Plan:** Thoroughly evaluate the current quality assurance in VET policy, approach and system. Plan to maintain/ further develop what works well and discard what does not. Research and gather ideas on how the quality assurance in VET policy, approach and system might be improved – consult/discuss widely new ideas, retain ideas that are most likely to work - discard those ideas that are unlikely to work in the present circumstances.
- 6. Strategy:** Make quality assurance explicit in VET policy design and address both system and provision in a complementary way. Base VET quality assurance policy on reliable evidence, with regard to judgements on the performance of VET in relation to its purpose and functions. Apply the revolving quality cycle to policy design: strategic planning of quality assurance measures, for all inter-dependent parts of the VET system/provision to include their implementation, continuous monitoring and evaluation with a view to revision as necessary.
- 7. Trial:** Test quality assurance policy and system reforms extensively and rigorously in strategic and coherent pilot actions and mainstream what proves to work well.
- 8. Improvement:** Plan for effective feedback mechanisms to ensure that quality assurance policy and system reforms implemented are effective, or to flag aspects that need further review and revision.
- 9. Visibility:** Make public quality assurance policy, measures and evaluation results for transparency and accountability purposes.
- 10. Mindset:** Nurture VET quality cultures and develop capabilities for quality assurance at all levels (policy, system, provision). Teachers/trainers and their managers require special attention.

The ETF position is based on three main dimensions:

- A. Principles**
- B. Approach**
- C. Actions**

A. Principles

Quality assurance: the composite measures established to verify that processes and procedures are in place, which, when effective, ensure the quality and quality improvement of VET, so that they meet the key principles:

- fit for purpose and context with emphasis on relevance and cost-effectiveness
- acknowledge that quality assurance is a dependent variable (on context and other VET policy themes)
- address VET inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes;
- apply the quality cycle: plan, implement, monitor and evaluate, review and renew;
- make visible strengths, weaknesses and improvement successes;

- quality improvement through a pervasive quality culture;
- take into account internationally accepted quality assurance concepts and models

B. Approach

1. Comply with needs as determined by national level VET policy- and decision- makers

Decision-making related to quality assurance policy for VET systems is entirely a matter for national level policy makers and other relevant national stakeholders. Effective quality assurance policy needs a clear vision shared by the main national stakeholders, good governance and strong, strategic leadership to develop and guide necessary reform. National needs steer the ETF actions on VET quality assurance and national stakeholders are in the driver's seat.

2. Focus on the formal VET system but aim to be relevant for all VET

The ETF focuses primarily on public-funded VET provision within the formal education and training system leading to nationally recognised VET qualifications. The rationale for

this is the view that an effective quality assurance approach at the core of the VET system provides a framework, which, when underpinned by clear principles, criteria and indicators and accompanied by ‘doable’ processes and procedures, may be adapted for application in other VET arrangements. Within this context, the ETF is concerned with VET quality at system and provider levels, with the quality of qualifications and provision and with the quality of governance and management. Procedures and processes should apply equally to different parts of the system, including state/market, initial/continuing provision.

3. Build on existing VET quality assurance policy and measures in partner countries

The ETF position is based on the assumption that quality assurance measures exist in all formal VET systems. Governments, which devolve any degree of responsibility for learning to institutions that are publicly funded, establish mechanisms of ‘checks and balances’ that serve as quality assurance measures, addressing such matters as: qualifications requirements for personnel; inspection of teaching and learning; standards for qualifications, curriculum and examination of learning outcomes; data collection and budgetary audits. Thus, the point of departure for the ETF position is the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of existing measures and what improvements should and could be made. The secondary consideration is to identify and address the need for innovation in VET quality assurance. The emphasis is on a step-by-step renewal of approaches and measures for improvement rather than radical transformation.

C. Actions

ETF supports the partner countries through a range of actions, such as national dialogue on quality assurance, mapping of current VET quality assurance systems, analysing the need for reform in terms of deficits and in response to current needs and challenges, assessing and making use if relevant models to inform the quality assurance in VET reform process. ETF established and supports a network of Quality Assurance experts.

2. Getting Organised for Better Qualifications – a Toolkit

Quality assurance of qualifications rather than quality assurance of the VET system and VET providers is the focus of this chapter of the Toolkit.

We focus on 4 main components of the approach:

- A. Quality qualifications: concepts and characteristics, quality cycle
- B. Minimum criteria for the quality of qualifications
- C. Focus on the quality assurance elements from a qualification system perspective: qualification standards, assessment, and certification.
- D. Qualifications quality chain: the interplay of all phases and outputs towards acquisition of the qualification

The Toolkit compares and distinguishes key characteristics of Quality assurance of providers, compared with Quality assurance of awarding qualifications.

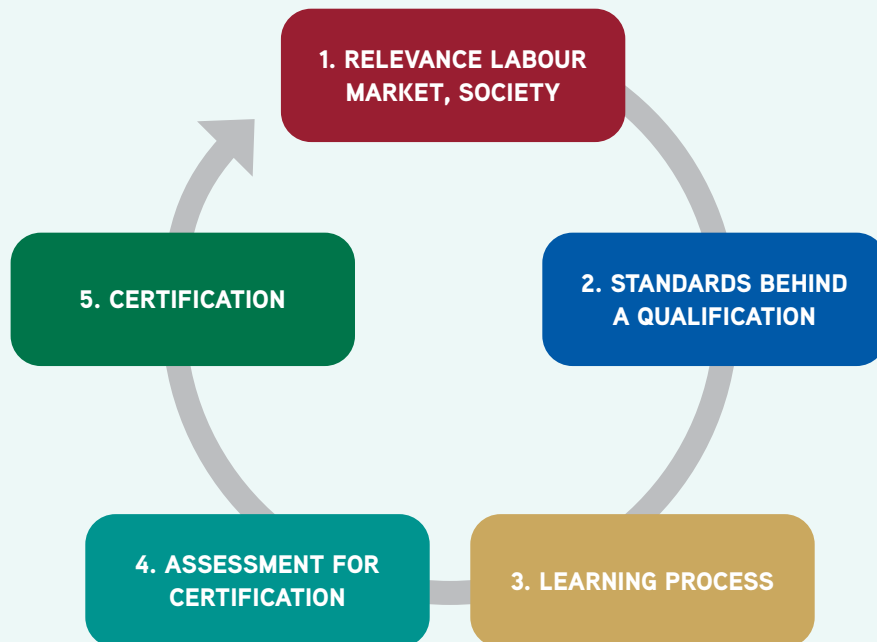
A. Quality qualifications: concepts and characteristics, quality cycle

Comparing key features of QA of providers with QA of qualifications:

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROVIDERS	QUALITY ASSURANCE OF QUALIFICATIONS
QA measures are focused on institutions	QA measures are focused on the candidates
Making sure the providers are capable of delivering training programmes based on educational standards	Making sure standards behind qualifications are relevant, based on identified needs, validated by stakeholders
Providers are focused on delivering outcomes (getting people to a qualification, getting people into employment)	Making sure everybody who is assessed and will be certified meets the learning outcomes in the standard
QA is focused on the planning, implementation, feedback and improvement within institutions combined with external verification	QA is focused on assessment and certification, including the assessors, who issues the certificate and who externally regulates / provides QA of awarding bodies
QA based on the assumption that “good” learning processes lead to good results	QA based on actual measurement of what has been learned by the candidate

B. Minimum criteria for the quality of a qualification

FIGURE 4: Key areas - minimum criteria for the quality of a qualification



How to understand and use the proposed minimum criteria for the quality of qualifications?

1. Relevance for the labour market and individuals

- › Involvement of labour market actors in defining needs for a qualification.
- › Justification that the sector and the occupation has a relevance for a country.

2. Standards behind a qualification

- › All standards are (learning) outcome-based.
- › All standards behind a (VET) qualification should relate to skills and competence requirements for an occupation or a group of occupations.
- › Involvement of labour market actors in defining the standards of a qualification.

3. The learning process

- › The learning outcomes relate to the standards behind a qualification (skills and competence requirements for an occupation or a group of occupations).
- › The learning process has a substantial practical component for students to acquire skills and competences and not only theoretical knowledge.

4. Assessment for certification

- › Assessment is based on the standards behind a qualification (skills and competence requirements for an

occupation or a group of occupations).

- › Assessment has a substantial practical component for students to acquire skills and competences and not only theoretical knowledge.
- › Trained professionals are involved in assessment of skills and competences.

5. Certification

- › A numerical level is allocated to the qualification in order to compare the level with related qualifications from other countries.
- › The certification has national value and is awarded by a competent body (ministry, federation, etc.).
- › The qualification allows for progression to further education or training.

C. Focus on the quality assurance elements from a qualification system perspective: qualification standards, assessment, and certification.

Focus on Certification

The place of certification in the QA of qualifications is not always explicit, holistic and articulated in many qualifications systems.

Certification must be clearly included in QA of qualifications.

Referring to findings and recommendation of study of Cedefop (2015):

- “The process of certification is defined as “the multiple (and sometimes overlapping) processes of assessment and verification of learning that lead to the awarding of a qualification or part thereof. The ultimate goal of a certification process is to ensure that the learner has acquired the required learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competence), which is then certified by the awarding of a qualification” (pg 101).
- “To strengthen trust in certification, results across the system based on the same qualification standards must be comparable. Comparability of results ensures that holders of the same qualification have actually achieved the learning outcomes required for it and therefore qualifications can be trusted.”

ETF toolkit endorses the conclusions of Cedefop (2015) study, in particular the following important **recommendations on certification.**

1. Clearly articulate certification in VET policies.
2. Define and use learning-outcome based standards appropriately.
3. Strengthen involvement of labour market stakeholders in certification and relevant quality assurance processes.
4. Support a common understanding of certification requirements among stakeholders
5. Ensure that assessors are competent and trained.
6. Share responsibility for quality assurance of certification at all levels.
7. Strengthen evaluation and review of certification
8. Consider the possibility of a handbook to apply quality assurance principles in a coherent and holistic way.

D. Qualifications quality chain: the interplay of all phases and outputs towards acquisition of the qualification

Quality assurance for quality qualifications consists of two broad processes:

1. Ensuring that qualifications are relevant and have value;
2. Ensuring that the people who are certificated meet the conditions of the qualification.

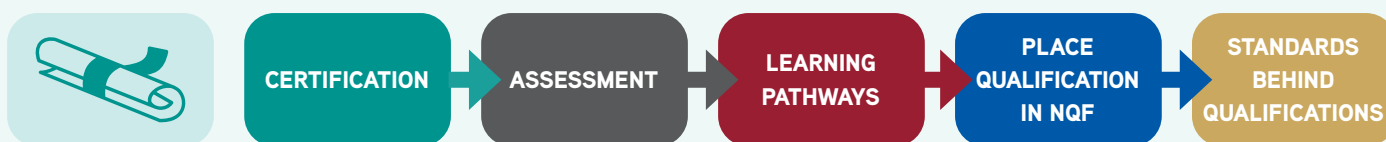
The processes, or steps, in the ‘qualifications quality chain’ target these aspects more closely. When building their legal

and institutional infrastructure, countries must ensure that quality assurance is not addressed separately but should be an integrated part of developing or reforming that infrastructure, so as not to risk it becoming an afterthought.

Using back-chaining, starting with the intended ultimate (awarded qualification), the Toolkit proposes the following chain.

Qualifications quality chain

FIGURE 5: Back-chaining from the final outcome to the start of the process



Recommendations on quality assurance in VET

1. Build a culture of quality – don't rely on quality control.
2. Anticipate the future – how changing occupations will affect qualifications needs
3. Build a systemic and holistic quality assurance approach which combines measures at various levels: policy and governance; qualifications standards; teachers and trainers; provision, assessment, validation, and certification; and eventually, data and knowledge creation.
4. The QA system shall be designed as a component of the overall qualifications system and contribute to the lifelong learning and articulation purposes of the National Qualifications Framework. Quality assurance must contribute to transparency of learning outcomes and to mutual trust between the sub-sectors of education and training, and ultimately to facilitate vertical and horizontal mobility of learners, and to ease recognition of qualifications.
5. Align the national quality assurance framework (all sub-sectors) with other relevant regional frameworks in view of country's international commitments, in particular to quality assurance guidelines of the SADC (notably SADCQF).
6. Quality cycle and stages: in defining and building the quality assurance framework and tools for VET system and VET providers, take account of the specificities of each stage and the articulation between stages. Stages: 1. Plan; 2. Implement; 3. Evaluate / monitor; 4. Review and renew.
7. Indicators: develop a set of indicators to measure and monitor quality and support quality assurance, articulated and coordinated with the main performance indicators of the VET system.
8. Minimum quality criteria: develop a common approach to minimum quality criteria covering the key components of the VET system (formal, non-formal), the qualifications quality chain and the National Qualifications Framework.
9. Capacity development, networking and mutual learning: Establish and support a QA network involving all VET providers and key stakeholders. Supported by online platform, to organise joint activities, disseminate good practice, enhance mutual trust, and strengthen a culture of peer learning.
10. Qualifications standards need to be:
 - Underpinned by reliable evidence defining the skills needs;
 - Based on learning-outcomes;
 - Developed in partnership by state and social-economic partners;
 - Monitored and reviewed regularly;
 - Used to underpin verified programmes, curricula, and contents.
11. For the critical stage of assessment, validation, and certification of qualifications:
 - Clearly integrate certification in VET policies and in QA systems
 - Foster a common understanding of certification among stakeholders and involve them in QA processes;
 - Use appropriate and reliable mechanisms and standards.

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This project is co-funded by the European Union and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development



European Training Foundation