

**African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF)
ACQF Capacity Development Programme (2020-2021)**
Learning and developing a common understanding of qualifications frameworks



1. Introduction and context of the ACQF peer learning activities

Rationale and objectives of the ACQF Capacity Development Programme (ACQF CDP)

The ACQF development project organises a capacity development programme on core themes of qualifications frameworks and systems. The purpose is to boost engagement of African Union member states and stakeholders and develop knowledge and a common understanding of key concepts, objectives, types and operational instruments of national and regional qualifications frameworks (NQFs and RQFs). An ACQF Experts Network will pool together the trained participants and contribute to sustainability of the future ACQF in action.

The programme for 2020-2021 will be delivered in two phases:

Phase 1: July, September, October 2020 – The series up to seven webinars entirely devoted to peer learning follows on and brings to a higher level the earlier peer learning sessions delivered during the inaugural ACQF workshop (September 2019) and webinars (May 2020). Phase 1 lays the foundation for the advanced training programme of Phase 2 (2021), by developing knowledge and a common language on key themes and questions of qualifications frameworks, as listed below.

Phase 2: In 2021, the advanced programme will develop in-depth knowledge and engage in practical application. The programme will combine training sessions and e-learning. The ACQF e-learning platform will include the needed resources to support further development and application.

Main participants: institutions from African Union member states involved in the ACQF development activities, experts, practitioners and international guest experts.

The first peer learning webinar gathered participants,

Main themes planned for the peer learning webinars in phase 1 (July to October 2020)

1. National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) and National Qualifications Systems (NQSs): Main concepts through case studies; context, objectives, rationale and types of qualifications frameworks; new dimensions and developments related with digitalisation, lifelong and life-wide learning; and added value of NQFs for education and training systems and individuals.
2. Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQF): Objectives, interplay and governance, referencing / alignment, triggers and success factors, main benefits.
3. Developing and implementing an NQF: Common dimensions, different paths.
4. Learning outcomes: Common language of education and the labour market; uses, types, some common guidelines. Role of learning outcomes in NQFs.
5. Levels and level descriptors: Meaning, uses, links with design of qualifications and curriculum.
6. Managing and making the information on qualifications and NQFs more transparent: Registers, databases, catalogues; interconnected qualifications databases; qualifications.
7. Quality assurance: Indispensable foundation of NQFs.
8. Governance of qualifications frameworks: Types and models. Participation, regulation, roles and responsibilities.
9. Review and monitoring of qualifications frameworks.

Participants will make sense of the learning path and preliminary achievement through a self-assessment exercise, and case study.

2. Learnings from Webinars

In his welcoming remarks on 2nd July 2020, the chairperson representing the African Union Commission (AUC), Mr Chigozie Emmanuel Okonkwo, recalled the importance of capacity development in the ACQF-development process, and welcomed the start of this programme of peer learning, an effective modality to build trust and mutual understanding between countries, systems and people.

The webinar facilitator recalled the main objectives of the ACQF-development project (2019-2022), the vision for the ACQF as a sustainable policy instrument contributing to Agenda 2063, especially CESA 16-25, PAQAF and to the African Continental Free Trade Area. Underscored that the ACQF has an inclusive scope (all sub-sectors and levels of qualifications), is open to innovation and new technologies, and to learn from African and international good practice. Learning with peers who represent the institutions leading or coordinating national and regional qualifications frameworks offers ACQF stakeholders the multiple benefits of interacting with those practically and directly involved (i.e. top ranking officials, department leaders and heads of sectors) and having in-depth knowledge built through years of work on qualifications frameworks policies, their implementation and review. The mix of African and international NQF experiences is scheduled for the first 4 webinars (from 2/09 to 24/09), while in the later part of the programme (until 29/10/2020) the peer-sharing programme will be focused on the diverse African NQF experiences.

Cases and experiences shared at the ACQF peer learning Webinars 2020

African experiences:

RQF: SADCQF; EAQFHE;

NQF: Kenya, Mozambique, Mauritius, Lesotho, Angola, Ghana, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Cape Verde, South Africa and Sierra Leone. Three countries had shared their NQF experience in the Webinars of 11 and 12 May 2020: Rwanda, Seychelles, Tunisia.

International experiences:

Meta-frameworks: European Qualifications Framework (EQF), ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework (ASEAN QRF), Arab Qualifications Framework.

NQFs: France, Ireland, Portugal, Slovenia and Bahrain.

Participants:

- African Union countries: Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea Equatorial, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.
- Organisations:
 - Regional: ACA, AfECN, AFTRA, AASU, CAMES, ECCAS, ECOWAS, OATUU;
 - National: ANAQ-Sup and UCAD Senegal; ANEAQ and OdB Morocco; ANEP and CNAQ Mozambique; Kenya National Qualifications Authority; Mauritius Qualifications Authority; Ministry of Tertiary Education Botswana; Ministry of Higher Education Cameroon; Ministry of Youth, Sports and Employment Chad; Ministry of Higher Education Ivory Coast; Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Sports Guinea Equatorial; Ministry of Higher Education Republic of Congo; Ministry of Education Somalia; Ministry of Employment and VET Tunisia; NAQAAE Egypt; National Agency of Quality Assurance of Higher and University Education RD Congo; National Universities Commission Nigeria; South African Qualifications Authority; Seychelles Qualifications Authority; UTG-PNFQ Angola;
 - International: ANQAHE; ASEAN QRF Committee; ETF; European Commission, GFA, GIZ; NCP (CPI) Slovenia; QQI Ireland; UNESCO.

a) Thematic materials

Complementary Web-resources shared with participants related with the qualifications authorities and institutions presenting their cases:

- Kenya NQA Website: <http://www.knqa.go.ke/>
- Slovenian Qualifications Framework: <https://www.nok.si/en>
- European Qualifications Framework (EQF): <https://europa.eu/europass/en/european-qualifications-framework-eqf> and New Europass platform: <https://europa.eu/europass/en>
- Mozambique: websites of [CNAQ](#) (coordinates Qualifications Framework for Higher Education; and [ANEP](#) (in charge of implementation of Qualifications Framework for TVET and related online database of qualifications – [National Catalogue of Professional Qualifications](#)).
- Ireland National Framework of Qualifications: <https://www.gqi.ie/> and new Irish Register of Qualifications (<https://irq.ie/search/qualifications>), which went live on 16/07/2020: <https://www.gqi.ie/News/Pages/New-database-of-quality-assured-education-and-training-qualifications-goes-live-.aspx> -
- ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework: <https://asean.org/asean-economic-community/sectoral-bodies-under-the-purview-of-aem/services/asean-qualifications-reference-framework/>

b) Thematic sharing

Qualifications:

- Means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards. *Source of this definition:* [European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\) Recommendation of 22/05/2017, annex I.](#)
- The formal result of an evaluation and validation process obtained when the learning results are achieved according to previously defined requirements. *Source of this definition:* [Decree No 30/2010 establishing the NQF for Higher Education, Mozambique. In: Coletânea de Legislação do Ensino Superior, 2012.](#)
- A registered national qualification consisting of a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning and which has been assessed in terms of exit level outcomes, registered on the NQF and certified and awarded by a recognised body. *Source of this definition:* [SAQA, Standard glossary of terms.](#)

National Qualifications Framework (NQF):

- Means a policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society. *Source of this definition:* [European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\) Recommendation of 22/05/2017, annex I.](#)

Regional Qualifications Framework:

- A broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. A means of enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country. *Source of this definition:* [ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework, A Practical Guide and All you Need to Know. Page 33.](#)

National Qualifications System

- This includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalising national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, quality assurance processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems may be more or less integrated and coherent. One





feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications. *Source of this definition:* OECD. 2006. *Qualifications Systems: Bridges to Lifelong Learning*. Paris: OECD. <http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/qualificationssystemsbridgestolifelonglearning.htm>

The ACQF Development Process

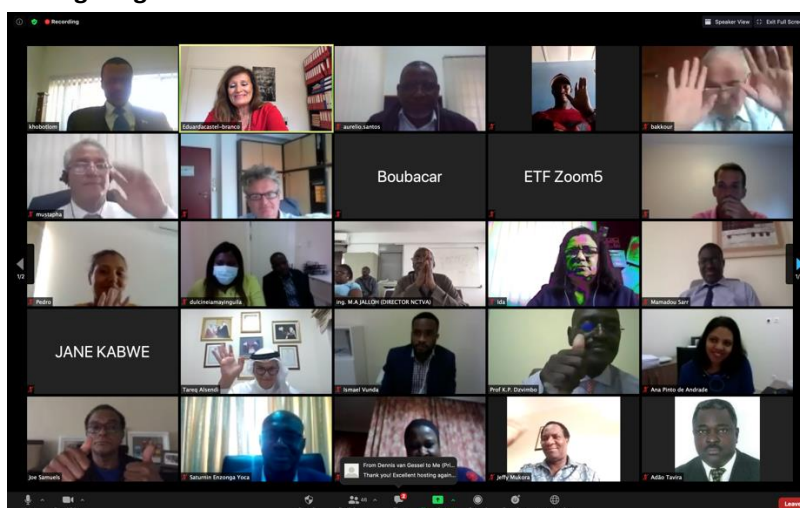
The African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) is a policy initiative of the African Union (AU) underpinned by the AU Agenda 2063.

The ACQF is in development, supported by the Africa-EU Partnership (2019-2022). Developing the ACQF is a holistic process, involving analysis and mapping, stakeholders' consultation, capacity development and networking. The major output of this process will be the ACQF policy and technical document supported by an action plan, ACQF guidelines, website and tools. The ACQF document will be technically validated and submitted to the African Union Commission for decision making.

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.

The ACQF Peer Learning Programme 2020



The ACQF peer learning programme is focused on core themes of qualifications frameworks and systems, and contributes to boost engagement of African Union member states and stakeholders, to develop knowledge and a common understanding of key concepts, objectives, and operational instruments of national and regional qualifications frameworks.

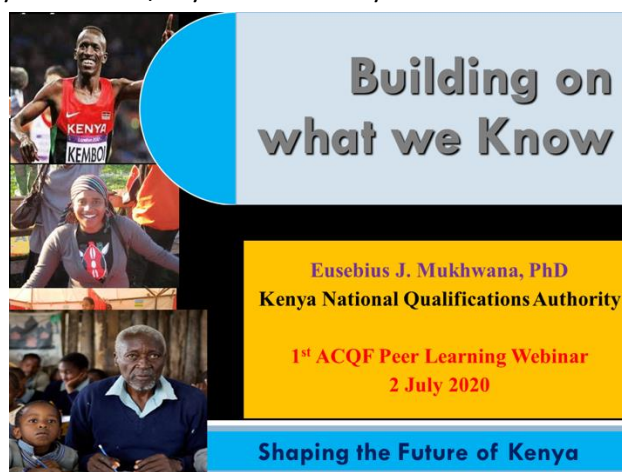
The 7 peer learning webinars covered 22 cases: 17 National and 5 Regional Qualifications Frameworks. The presented Regional Qualifications Frameworks are: the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Qualifications Reference Framework (ASEAN QRF), the Arab Qualifications Framework (ARAB QF), the Southern African Development Community Qualifications Framework (SADCQF) and the East African Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (EAQFHE). The shared NQF experiences, in alphabetic order, are: Angola, Bahrain, Cape Verde, Egypt, France, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Portugal, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.



All experiences were presented by lead managers representing the relevant institutions, according to the governance models in place: National Qualifications Authorities, Quality Assurance Agencies, Higher Education Councils, Coordination Units of the National Qualifications Systems, and steering / coordinating entities of Regional Qualifications Frameworks.

Each qualifications framework has a story, and a vision for change. Similarities and some differences in respect to stage of development, conceptual-technical design, governance, implementation mechanisms and impact were discussed and the cases compared.

The peer learning journey started on 2/July 2020 with Kenya.



In the July webinars the community of peer learned from the experiences of 4 national qualifications frameworks (Kenya, Slovenia, Mozambique and Ireland) and 2 overarching reference frameworks (EQF and ASEAN QRF).

The speakers were Dr Eusebius Mukhwana, Koen Nomden and Urska Marentic respectively for Kenya, EQF and Slovenia, while Dr Jeffy Mukora, Dr Mega Santoso and Dr John O'Connor presented the cases of Mozambique, the ASEAN QRF and Ireland National Framework of Qualifications.

The webpages for the two July webinars are available on ETF website at the following links:

All presentations and LQF technical documents wait for your visit: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/events/african-continental...>

During the **5th Webinar** we analysed the developments and perspectives of four African National Qualifications Frameworks: Angola, Egypt, Ghana and Zimbabwe. Countries discussed as well how they are adapting to the "new normal" during and beyond Covid-19.

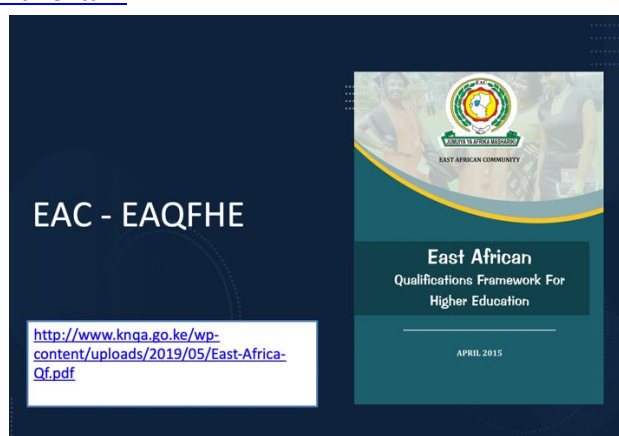
The vision and roadmap of the young Angolan NQF was presented by Ana Cláudia Andrade (UTG-PNFQ); Ghana's NQF experience and new developments was shared by Maxwell Amoako-Kissi (NAB); Prof. Youhansen Eid (NAQAAE) told us about the history of Egypt NQF; and the case of Zimbabwe NQF, adopted in 2018, was narrated by Prof. Kuzvinetsa Dzvimbo (ZIMCHE).

You can find these insightful presentations, and NQF technical documents at the following link: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/events/african-continental...>



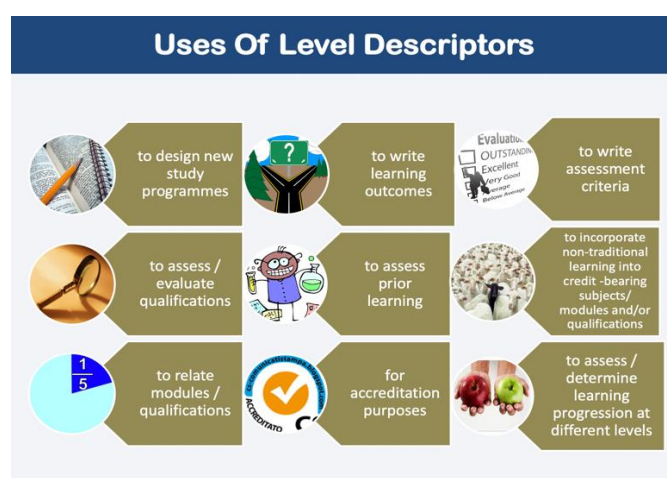
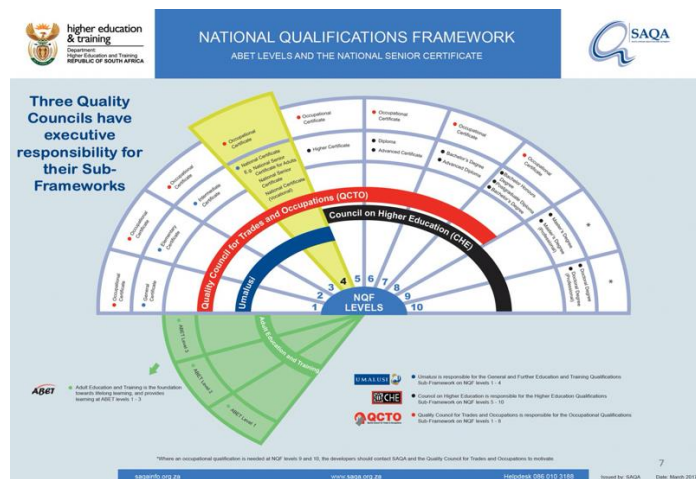
On the 22nd of October, at the **6th Webinar**, we learned about the evolution of NQFs of two countries with significant experience (Zambia and Cabo Verde), and engaged with two regional qualifications frameworks in Africa (Southern African Development Community and East African Community). The speakers were: Mirriam Chiyaba (ZAQA), Amílcar Mendes (UC-SNQ), Coleen Jaftha (for the SADCQQF) and Dr James Jowi (EAC Principal Education Officer, for the EAQFHE)

All documents, presentations and agenda can be accessed here: <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/events/african-continental...>



To conclude this journey of knowledge and trust building, two emblematic cases were superbly shared at the **7th Peer Learning Webinar**: the South African NQF, one of most experienced and well-known in the world, in implementation for more than two decades; and the NQF of Sierra Leone - currently starting the first steps of development and consultation.

The speakers from SAQA, Dr Julie Reddy and Coleen Jaftha shared a comprehensive and inspiring overview of the 22 years of South African NQF



Ing. Mohammed Jalloh, director of NCTVA (Sierra Leone) led the peers through the story of resilience in the recent turbulent country path, the successive phases of reform education and training, and the recent evolution of the thinking on the NQF that the country needs.

These presentations and complementary technical reports are available for your consultation at <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/events/african-continental...>

Digital Credentials - one of the novel topics presented by Zambia and South Africa. And a special session was conducted by the team Dennis van-Gessel and Ildiko Mazar, representing Europass Digital Credentials. To know more on Europass Digital Credentials and on interconnected qualifications databases of EQF countries, visit: <https://europa.eu/europass/en/what-are-digital-credentials> and <https://europa.eu/europass/en/find-courses?page=752>



To close the Peer Learning Programme, a panel of peers expressed their views on the main learnings from this first programme, and on the relevance of peer-sharing in the ACQF process; and on the importance of cooperation between national and regional qualifications frameworks with the continental, for the agenda of African integration, portability of qualifications and mobility. The presentation with the panel contributions is available in the webpage of the 7th webinar, and a brief synthesis is provided below.

Thank you to all panellists:

Merci à tous les experts du panel de conclusion :

Agradecimentos aos participantes do painel de conclusão:

- Mme Ida Alvarinho, ANEP, Mozambique
- Prof Constant Nkima, ANAQ-ESU, R D Congo
- Dr Al Muktar Bakkour, ANEAQ, Morocco
- Mme Fiona Ernesta, SQF, Seychelles
- Dr Deodonne Kunwufine, MINESEC, Cameroon
- M. Abdoul Lahaté Cissé, ANAQ-Sup, Senegal
- M. Mustapha Hassen, Head of TVET department, Tunisia
- Dr James Jowi, Principal Education Officer, East African Community

Synthesis of the Panel

Today our final panel of eight experts representing countries and REC concluded that NQFs are instruments for RESPECT and for PEACE, as they support dialogue and mutual understanding between countries, systems, people, and create trust in qualifications from all sub-sectors. The education response to the global Pandemic is not only about educational and pedagogic continuity, but about transformation of learning - and NQFs need to be part of this transformation. NQFs - quality assurance - recognition: the indispensable triangle. Further knowledge-sharing, more peer learning webinars at country and continental level, a platform for capacity development of experts throughout the continent and to support countries - were mentioned in the recommendations of all our panellists today. New qualifications frameworks are being developed on the continent, and they deserve and need encouragement and support. Cooperation and linkages between all qualifications frameworks on the continent - national, regional and the continental framework - was considered a fundamental objective for the coming years. And finally: advocacy needs to be reinforced - at all levels - to support this movement towards greater comparability and approximation of qualifications and frameworks. Advocacy, engagement, strategy, resources. Holistic vision. The ACQF process is starting.

Synthèse du panel

Aujourd'hui, notre panel de huit experts (représentant des pays et une communauté économique régionale) ont conclu que les Cadres de certifications sont des instruments pour le RESPECT et pour la PAIX, car ils soutiennent le dialogue et la compréhension mutuelle entre les pays, système et personnes, et créent la confiance dans les qualifications (tous sous-secteurs). La réponse éducative à la pandémie mondiale ne concerne pas seulement la continuité pédagogique, mais aussi la transformation de l'éducation et formation - et les cadres de certifications doivent faire partie de cette transformation. CNC - assurance qualité - reconnaissance: le triangle indispensable. D'autres partages d'expérience, plus de webinaires d'apprentissage par les pairs au niveau national et continental, une plate-forme solide pour le développement des capacités des experts à travers le continent et pour soutenir les pays - ont été mentionnés dans les recommandations de tous nos panélistes aujourd'hui. De nouveaux cadres de certifications sont en cours d'élaboration sur le continent, et ils méritent et ont besoin d'encouragement et de soutien. La coopération et les liens entre tous les cadres de certifications du continent - cadres nationaux, régionaux et continental - ont été considérés comme objectif fondamental pour les années à venir. Et enfin : le plaidoyer doit être renforcé - à tous les niveaux - pour soutenir ce mouvement vers une plus grande comparabilité et l'approximation des certifications et des cadres. Plaidoyer, engagement, stratégie, ressources. Vision holistique. Le processus de l'ACQF commence.

Síntese do painel

Hoje, o nosso painel final de oito peritos (representando países e REC) concluiu que os NQF são instrumentos para o RESPEITO e para a PAZ, uma vez que apoiam o diálogo e a compreensão mútua entre países, pessoas e criam confiança nas qualificações (todos subsectores). A resposta educativa à Pandemia global não é apenas sobre continuidade educacional e pedagógica, mas sobre a transformação da aprendizagem - e os NQFs precisam de fazer parte desta transformação. NQFs - garantia de qualidade - reconhecimento: o triângulo indispensável. A partilha de experiência, mais webinars de aprendizagem entre pares a nível nacional e continental, uma plataforma de desenvolvimento de capacidade de especialistas em todo o continente e de apoio aos países, foram mencionados nas recomendações de todos os nossos painelistas de hoje. Estão a ser desenvolvidos novos quadros de qualificações no continente e estes merecem e precisam de incentivo e apoio. A cooperação e as ligações entre todos os quadros de qualificações no continente - nacional, regional e continental - foram consideradas um objetivo fundamental para os próximos anos. E, por último: a advocacia tem de ser reforçada - a todos os níveis - para apoiar este movimento no sentido de uma maior comparabilidade e aproximação das qualificações e dos quadros. Advocacia, envolvimento, estratégia, recursos. Visão holística. O processo ACQF está a começar.

Link to the playlist of the ACQF Peer Learning Webinar recordings: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEKEwOFeOWc6W5fxbX6M8NrO6oA0yH3Ww>

The ACQF activities will continue with more and interesting capacity development and networking actions. From October 2020 the ACQF Task Force starts developing the options for the ACQF as a sustainable policy instrument. We will continue supporting peer-sharing and dissemination.

The **ACQF mapping reports** (countries and RECs) are available for you at this repository: <https://www.nepad.org/skillsportalfor youth/publication/african-continen...>

Contact us, send us your suggestions for peer learning and knowledge-sharing on qualifications frameworks.

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