Recognition and verification of qualifications - lessons from practice in the Covid-19 crisis and beyond. Experiences from Africa and Europe

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Presentation Outline

- About ESHEC
- Foreign qualifications verification and recognition
- Impact of COVID 19
- Interventions
- Way forward
About ESHEC

- The Eswatini Higher Education Council (ESHEC) was established by the Higher Education Act 2013
- The Act was operationalised by the Higher Education Regulations 2015
- The two main mandates:
  
  **Quality Assurance (QA)**

  Development and implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework at post-secondary education

  **Qualifications**

  Development, coordination of implementation of the National Qualifications Framework
What ESHEC aims to achieve?

**Vision**
To be a leader in the regulation and coordination of higher education, nationally and globally

**Mission**
Ensuring a coordinated and efficient higher education through credible QA and Qualifications mechanisms
Functions and Responsibilities of ESHEC

- Accreditation, promotion and coordination of higher education
- Formulate policy on HE
- Promote and audit QA in HEIs
- Advise the Minister of Education and Training on all Higher Education issues
- Develop and implement the NQF
- Coordinate implementation of the Eswatini Qualifications Framework (ESQF)
  - Register qualifications in the NQF
  - Verify foreign and local qualifications
Foreign qualifications verification and recognition

Rationale for Verification

- To build trust
- Quality
- Enhance mobility
Process of verification and recognition of qualifications

Verification of awarding institution

Verification of the awardee

Comparison
Eswatini is a small country with a population of about 1.2 Million, hard hit by Covid 19

Infection cases are very high for the size of the country, over 45,000 to date

Country recently labelled as high risk destination, lost the Prime Minister and two Ministers during the second wave.
Total Coronavirus Deaths in Eswatini

Total Deaths

(Linear Scale)

Total Coronavirus Deaths

Deaths
Daily New Deaths in Eswatini

Daily Deaths

Deaths per Day
Data as of 0:00 GMT+8
Impact of Covid 19 on ESHEC

1. Drop in number of verification applications

![Chart showing number of qualifications verified over time]
Impact of Covid 19 on ESHEC

- Turn around time extended, organisations closed
- Staff working from home and highly inefficient
- Poor network and internet connection
- Morale generally low, people infected or affected
- Shift from face to face delivery of programmes challenged our QA standards, which were designed for quality assuring face to face programmes
Impact of Covid 19 on Higher Education Institutions

- Institutions were closed and teaching and learning was affected
- They were forced to switch from face to face mode of delivery to online which brought about a series of challenges
- Quality was compromised
- Business was affected
Impact on verification clientele

- Drop in the number of verification clients due to lockdowns, as the verification application process was physical.
Interventions

- Verification process has been fully automated
- Sought bigger and better office space to observe all COVID 19 regulations
- Development on QA standards that embrace all modes of delivery
- Creation of experience sharing platforms for HEIs on maintaining and improving quality in the COVID 19 era
Way Forward

- Digitization
- Networking
- Let us have a database of recognised institutions
- Let us have the regional contact booklet
- Subscribe to legitimate verification sites