African Continental Qualifications Framework ACQF
MAPPING STUDY

Regional Report
Working Paper

ECOWAS

SIFA
Skills for Youth Employability Programme

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This report concludes the mapping study of qualifications frameworks in Africa, elaborated in 2020 in the context of the project AU-EU Skills for Youth Employability/Skills Initiative for Africa, Technical Cooperation – Developing the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).

The reports of this collection are:

- **Reports on countries' qualifications frameworks**: Angola, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Togo
- **Reports on qualifications frameworks of Regional Economic Communities**: East African Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC)

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Acronyms

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CAMES	Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur/African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education
EAC	East African Community
ECOWAS	Economic Community of Western African States
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
LMIS	Labour Market Information Systems
LO	Learning Outcome
NBTE	National Board for Technical Education
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSQ	National Skills Qualifications
NTA	National Training Authority
NVQF	National Vocational Qualifications Framework
REC	Regional Economic Community
RPL	recognition of prior learning
RQF	Regional qualifications framework
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STC-EST	Specialized Technical Committee On Education, Science And Technology
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation

Introduction to the ACQF Mapping Study

Policy context of this mapping study

This regional report forms an integral part of the *Mapping Study on the state-of-play and dynamics of qualifications frameworks in Africa*, which lays the updated evidence foundation for development of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). The purpose of this report is to provide an updated overview - not an evaluation - of policies, practices and instruments related with qualifications frameworks in Africa.

The African Union Commission (AUC) initiated the ACQF development process in September 2019, working in partnership with the European Union (EU), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) over a period of 2.5 years (2019-2022). The ACQF-development activities are part of the African Union (AU)-EU project Skills for Youth Employability, which supports a holistic process building on evidence and analysis; AUC political leadership and consultation of African stakeholders (national, regional and continental); and awareness raising and capacity development of African stakeholders.

The main planned output of the project by mid-2022 is the ACQF policy and technical document and action plan, technically validated for decision making by the relevant organs of the AU.

The intermediate project outputs planned for 2019-2022 are:

- ACQF Mapping study (by mid-2020);
- ACQF Feasibility study (by mid-2021).

Other key activities include:

- Stakeholder consultation workshops throughout the process (2019-2022);
- Awareness raising and capacity development actions (2020-2022);
- Website to support ACQF development and information sharing;
- ACQF related policy and technical information for Specialized Technical Committee On Education, Science And Technology (STC-EST) meetings.

ACQF Mapping Study: brief overview of the scope and methodology

The ACQF mapping study aims to chart a comprehensive, specific and updated analysis of where Africa stands in respect to qualifications frameworks development, establishment, operationalisation and revision. The scope of the study is wide in terms of explored thematic domains; and inclusive, as it considers the broad range of countries' dynamics and progression stages in developing and establishing qualifications frameworks.

The mapping study builds on a combination of sources of information and data:

a) Desk research: collection and analysis of sources, including policy-legislative framework; methodology sources; qualifications websites, registers and catalogues; statistical data; analyses and studies.

b) Online survey: conducted between beginning of November 2019 and mid-January 2020; a second round was conducted in May 2020. Responses were received from 33 countries.

c) Technical visits to a group of ten countries and three Regional Economic Communities (RECs): carried out by a team of experts, in the period from mid-December 2019 to mid-March 2020.

Countries included in the technical visits: Angola, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, Togo and South Africa. Cabo Verde was included in March 2020, but due to the Coronavirus Pandemic the research did not include a country visit, and was based on online meetings, a presentation of the NQF and extensive desk research. Three Regional Economic Communities (RECs) contacted: EAC, ECOWAS and SADC.

Main reports of the mapping study

- Final comprehensive report, encompassing the full set of findings from the continental stocktaking and the thematic analyses on qualifications frameworks developments in Africa. Finalisation: September 2020;

- Synthetic report and infographics focused on key findings. Period: September 2020.

Thematic analyses contributing to the comprehensive mapping study

- Report of continental-wide survey on developments of qualifications frameworks encompassing all AU Member States (AU MS) and RECs;

- Report of analysis of qualifications;

- Country reports (11 countries) and REC reports (3 RECs).

Acknowledgements

1. Snapshot of qualifications framework developments in ECOWAS

The **ECOWAS Regional Qualifications Framework** (RQF) has not been approved, despite preparatory work done in 2012 and the endorsement by the Ministers of Education (2012) of the guidelines and roadmap annexed to the UNESCO-ECOWAS-UNDP (2013) report.

The ECOWAS RQF will be able to draw on the work underway in member states, notably **Nigeria, The Gambia, Ghana, Cape Verde and Senegal**. At present, Nigeria, The Gambia, Ghana, Cape Verde and Senegal in the ECOWAS region have NQF levels described: Nigeria with 6 levels (up to post-graduate qualifications), The Gambia with 5 (including a fundamental level), and Senegal with 5 levels (up to Engineering Level), Cape Verde with 8 (from basic education diploma to doctorate degree), and Ghana with 8 levels (National TVET Qualifications Framework). In addition, over the past years, many countries in the ECOWAS sub-region have developed policies and strategies aimed at strengthening their Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and skills development programmes.

In the same way that a **common approach** will be needed to harmonise learning outcomes descriptions, the development of qualifications in general and NQFs and RQFs in particular requires a common approach. Recent studies (CEDEFOP, 2017 and 2019) indicate that many countries are now involved in some way in designing or implementing qualifications frameworks. Whether the emphasis is on increasing the relevance and flexibility of education and training programmes, easing recognition of prior learning, enhancing lifelong learning, improving the transparency of qualifications systems, creating possibilities for credit accumulation and transfer, or developing quality assurance systems, governments are increasingly turning to qualifications frameworks as a policy tool for reform" (UNESCO, ECOWAS & UNDP, 2013: 33).

In line with the ECOWAS harmonisation policy, Ministers of Higher Education of Member States met in December 2019 to validate the experts' work on the *Framework for Recognition and Equivalence of Certificates in the ECOWAS Region* based on the *ECOWAS Convention for the Recognition and Equivalence of Certificates* adopted in 2003. They also adopted the draft *ECOWAS Benchmarks for the Harmonisation of University Education*. Both documents and other supporting documents await approval form the ECOWAS Parliament, Council of Ministers and finally Heads of Governments of the ECOWAS Region.

Since qualifications and their classifications are related to societal values and occupational roles and are responsive to labour market imperatives both at national and regional levels, many trade-offs are expected to occur between ECOWAS and member states to arrive at common understandings with the harmonisation process in view. Although it is difficult to discuss such a relationship, it seems most likely that the future ECOWAS RQF will relate to current **sub-regional and regional instruments** like the West African Examinations Council (WAEC)[1], West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)[2] and Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur/ African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) for their qualifications regulatory instruments and quality assurance initiatives.

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[1] Africa's foremost examining body, providing qualitative and reliable educational assessment, encouraging academic and moral excellence, and promoting sustainable human resource development and international co-operation.

[2] UEMOA in French

2. Introduction and context to ECOWAS REC

The United Nations defines Western Africa as the 16 countries of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo. The Region covers an area of 5,112,903 km2 (1,974,103 sq. mi).

The main regional organization is ECOWAS (Economic Community of West Africa), established in 1975. Today's ECOWAS does not include Mauritania. According to World Bank data (WDI, 2018), over the past three decades, West Africa's population has more than doubled, from 165 million in 1987 to 368 million in 2017. It is estimated 381,981,000 in 2018 (female: 189,672,000; male: 192,309,000) (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), 2019; Wikipedia contributors, 2020) .

3. Mapping of education and training system

3.1 Formal and non-formal education sectors

Since September, 2017, experts from the education sectors in ECOWAS Member States have been working on strategies and policies towards harmonising the educational systems and the equivalence of certificates in a bid to increase human capital in the region[3] through the validation of non-formal and informal learning. These policies could be organised to improve individual employability, with the recognition being therefore related to the competences expected by employers. Formal and non-formal education and training offerings could also assist individuals to achieve qualifications at all levels. The principle of modularistion of training and examinations will enable the identification of which modules are appropriate at the member state and regional levels as well as which are needed (UNESCO, ECOWAS, UNDP, 2013).

3.2 Economic Context

In the ECOWAS region, the economy is based on agriculture, oil production and services. The informal sector and traditional agriculture, which by and large employ most of the labour in sub-Saharan Africa – up to 95% in the Republic of Benin and 90% in Senegal. The workforce is made up of mostly youth with no or little TVET experience. Taking Nigeria as an example, the socio-economic GDP growth per annum per capita in 2018 was 2.1%; the unemployment rate was 17.0% in 2017; and the literacy rate among youth (people aged 15-24), both male and female, was 75% in 2018 (UIS, 2020)[4].

3.3 Education Context

ECOWAS as a regional economic community (REC) integrates its educational actions into the African Union (AU) major education policies such as the c ECOWAS as a regional economic community (REC) integrates its educational actions into the African Union (AU) major education policies such as the

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[3] See: www.ecowas.int
[4] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (uis.unesco.org) on 21.05.2020

current *Continental Education Strategy for Africa* (CESA, 2016-2025), and the *Continental Strategy for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to Foster Youth Employment[5]*.

Education challenges in the ECOWAS Region persist in the areas of gender equality, supply of qualified teachers, availability of quality education statistics and quality management, reduction in the out-of-school population, eliminating school dropouts and improving access to higher education levels. Faced with country-by-country education policies and practices, regional undertakings are being focused on harmonising them.

As reported in the ECOWAS 2016 Annual Report (2016: 97-98), in the area of Education, Culture, Science and Technology:

> *…a framework for the harmonization of basic education was developed with the ultimate goal of ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education and learning in the ECOWAS Region. The framework focussed on: Policies, Strategies and Planning; Curriculum enrichment; Vigorous promotion of Cross Border Languages; Vigorous promotion of Second International Languages (English, French and Portuguese) and Capacity Building for Quality Enhancement in Education. The framework also covers empowerment of the out-of-school populations, addressing learning crisis through periodic Monitoring of Learning Achievements (MLA), mobilizing internal and external resources, and implementation of the ECOWAS Convention on mutual recognition of certificates.*

In addition, the abovementioned report indicates that:

> *ECOWAS Commission developed a revitalization strategy for TVET that focusses on key strategic issues. These include Policies and Action Plans, Structure, Existing TVET Legislations and Legal Frameworks, Funding, Staffing, Qualifications Frameworks, Career Guidance and Counselling, Curriculum Employability, Access and Participation, Linkages between Formal, Non formal and Informal sub-sectors, Management Information Systems, Open and Distance e-Learning (ODeL), Entrepreneurship; Assessment, Validation and Certification, Participation of the Private Sector and other Non-State Actors, Skills Development Initiatives for out-of-school youths, persons with disability and other disadvantaged groups, and Gender Mainstreaming.* (ECOWAS, 2016: 98)

In December 2018, ECOWAS validated a draft framework on the recognition and equivalence of Higher Education degrees, and the West African regional office of the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) based in Abuja, Nigeria, launched a quality assurance project.

3.4   Training main features

(i)   ECOWAS TVET and Higher Education strategies

At the ECOWAS regional level, general education and TVET policies are being put in place. Higher Education and TVET seem to be gaining more and more attention. Two approaches can be taken into consideration in order to achieve a regional framework: one is the regional harmonisation of the current systems of qualifications, based on a common design of the related curricula; and the second has to do with the description and classification of vocational skills to permit comparability with other

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[5] https://au.int/en/documents/20181022/continental-strategy-technical-and-vocational-educational-and-training-tvet

countries' qualifications for the mobility of individuals. Regarding regional perspectives, the Kaduna experience (Nigeria), headed by the TVET agency called the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) aims to establish a network of regional TVET Centres of Excellence for sharing curriculum and information, as well as teaching and learning materials and more. The initiative could see the development of a Regional Vocational Qualifications Framework (RVQF) through the exchange of experts and information among the ECOWAS Member States.

> (ii) Joint initiatives like those of UNESCO-ECOWAS or other partners pushing for the development of NQFs and gradually building towards a RQF

At the 2009 ECOWAS Education Ministers Conference that took place in Abuja, the ministers advocated for the setting up of partnerships with national and international stakeholders. Additionally, the Ministers clearly identified two actions which will help to achieve the harmonisation of TVET at national and regional levels, namely: creating labour market information systems (LMIS); and establishing NQFs which will lead to the development of RQFs (UNESCO-ECOWAS, 2013). The Ministerial Meeting of October 2012 in Abudja approved the proposal for an ECOWAS RQF and the Roadmap (Unesco, 2013), henceforth building up its legal framework. Follow-up actions will culminate in the Ministers adopting the Report of Experts on (i) Benchmarks, (ii) Framework and (iii) Roadmap in December 2019.

In 2013, UNESCO, in partnership with ECOWAS Commission, UNDP and other international partners, initiated a discussion on the relevance and feasibility of developing national and regional qualifications frameworks in ECOWAS region. Based on the Abuja Process which was initiated in 2009 by the ECOWAS Commission, UNESCO and the UNDP set up the Inter Agency Task Team (IATT) for the Revitalisation of TVET in the ECOWAS Sub-Region in 2009; a road map was developed and key areas of action were defined. The road map indicated that establishment of NQFs at national levels and a RQF at a regional level could be done at the same time.

4. Scope and structure of the RQF

4.1   Scope

Mapping findings reveal the existence of five member states in the ECOWAS region that have developed or are in the process of developing an NQF or NVQF. They are Nigeria, The Gambia, Senegal, Ghana and Cape Verde. In addition, over the past years, many countries in the ECOWAS sub-region have developed policies and strategies aimed at strengthening their TVET institutions and skills development programmes. The acquisition of employable skills, particularly by youth, is seen as a pre-requisite for entry into gainful employment and achievement of sustainable livelihoods. At the national level, a skilled workforce is an important driver of economic growth. TVET has therefore assumed some prominence on the human resource and economic development agenda in many countries in the region and in Africa as a whole. Below are some of the variables that are drawn from a report (UNESCO, 2013) which may be a useful tool in designing a regional qualifications structure.

The essential aim of developing a qualifications structure is to promote lifelong learning, quality assurance and recognition. For lifelong learning, the following are key aims of the said structure:
- improving understanding of learning routes and qualifications and how they relate to each other;
- improving access to education and training opportunities;

- creating incentives for participation in education and training;
- making progression routes easier and clearer/improving learner and career mobility;
- increasing and improving credit transfer between qualifications; and
- increasing the scope for recognition of prior learning (RPL) (Tuck, 2007).

And for quality assurance, the following are key:
- ensuring that qualifications are relevant to perceived social and economic needs;
- ensuring that education and training standards are defined by agreed learning outcomes and applied consistently;
- ensuring that education and training providers meet certain quality standards; and
- securing international recognition for national qualifications (Tuck, 2007)

4.2   NQF levels

At present, Nigeria, The Gambia, Senegal, Ghana and Cape Verde in the ECOWAS region have NQF levels described: Nigeria with 6 levels (up to post-graduate qualifications), The Gambia 5 (including a fundamental level), Ghana and Cape Verde 8 levels (up to doctorate degree) and Senegal 5 levels (up to Engineering Level).

4.3   Level descriptors

In the absence of an ECOWAS RQF, we can analyse trends and new approaches in developing NQFs in the four countries out of the five mentioned above as shown in Table 2. As indicated above, the Gambian Skills Qualifications Framework (GSQF) comprises 5 levels of qualifications, the Nigerian Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) includes 6 levels of qualifications and is monitored by the NBTE, an agency under the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria, and the Senegal National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) holds 5 levels of qualifications. Ghana's national technical and vocational education and training qualifications framework (NTVETQF) came into effect on 3 September 2012 under the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) Act. The eight-level framework is tailored to the present realities of the Ghanaian education system and labour force.

This report examines four countries (Nigeria, The Gambia, Senegal and Ghana). Cape Verde's NQF and National Qualifications System is analysed in the dedicated country report of the ACQF Mapping Study collection, and can be accessed here. It is worth mentioning that Cape Verde's NQF has eight levels that have been defined by descriptors, combining three domains of learning, knowledge, skills, and responsibility and autonomy, and is also inclusive and comprehensive, covering qualifications from basic, secondary and higher education as well processes of validation, recognition and certification of competences obtained via non-formal and informal learning.

The language, nomenclature and engineering of level descriptors differ from one country to the other. In Nigeria, vocational and general education are organised in separate and distinctive tracks, awarding academic and technological qualifications. Skills qualifications do not emanate from learning level descriptors, defining instead competency levels to be demonstrated in the workplace. Whereas in Senegal, The Gambia and Ghana skilled learning levels are described in a similar way, learning domains are variably dealt with. The Ghanaian National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications Framework (NTVETQF) is structured to accommodate academic knowledge and occupational skills acquisition. While the hierarchy of levels differs across the countries, the use of the concepts of knowledge, skills and competence in the level descriptors aligns with international trends pointed out by Keevy and Chakroun (2015): "The prominence of the term 'skill' in international

education and training discourse reflects trends in linking education and training systems with the labour market, and the policy focus on employability (Keevy & Chakroun 2015: 41).

Whereas Nigeria and Ghana distinguish academic qualifications and technological qualifications in their National Skills Qualifications (NSQ) levels (cf. Ghana's case in Table 1), the question arises as to which pathway the ECOWAS RQF levels will follow: a skill-oriented one or a blended academic-technological one.

Table 1: Ghana: Qualification levels, status and certifying institutions

Level	Qualification	Status	Certifying institutions
8	Doctor of technology	Formal	-
7	Master of technology	Formal	-
6	Bachelor of technology	Formal	Polytechnics
5	Higher national diploma	Formal	Polytechnics
4	Certificate II	Formal	GES-TVET Inst.*
3	Certificate I	Formal	GES-TVET Inst.*
2	Proficiency II	Informal/Non-formal	NVTI / Informal trade associations
1	Proficiency I	Informal/Non-formal	NVTI / Informal trade associations

Source: Cedefop (2017)

Table 2: Trends and approaches in developing NQFs in the ECOWAS Region[6]

THE GAMBIA		NIGERIA				SENEGAL			GHANA		
									Level descriptors		
Level	Level descriptors	Level	Academic qualifications	Technological	National Skills Qualifications	Level	Level descriptors	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications	Level	Knowledge(i.e., enables learners to…)	Skills and attitudes
IV	Competence to perform management and analytical skills and / or specialist skills associated with jobs that are non-routine e.g. middle manager / professional worker.	1	Pre-vocational: Junior School Certificate 3	Labour Trade Certificate 3	NSQ Level 1 / NVC 1	V	Corresponds to the qualification necessary for the exercise of a worker's professional activity, demonstrating skills	CAP: Skilled Worker Certificate	1	-	Requires basic skills of trade and craft and the ability to perform routine and predictable tasksAre repetitive and familiar Requires close supervisionRequires practical and oral tests for qualification
III	Competence to perform tasks associated with skilled jobs of routine and complex nature sometimes with supervisory functions, e.g. team leader.	2		Labour Trade Certificate 2	NSQ Level 2 / NVC 2	IV	Corresponds to a qualification as a technician which involves work carried out independently or involving supervisory and coordination responsibilities, requiring knowledge and understanding	BEP: Certificate of Vocational Education	2	Demonstrate basic numeracy, literary andIT skills: for example, carry out limited range of simple tasks of data processing	Confirms competence in the handling of hand tools and machinery componentsRequires performance of varied activities that are routine, predictable and non-complex in natureRequires limited supervision …
II	Competence to perform routine and some non-routine tasks under minimum guidance and supervision, e.g. skilled worker.	3	Senior School Certificate	National Technical Certificate/ National Business Certificate / Labour Trade Certificate 1	NSQ Level 3 / NVC 3	III	Corresponds to a qualification of higher technician with knowledge and capacities of higher level requiring the use of complex	BT: Technician Certificate	3	Demonstrate a broad knowledge base incorporating some technical conceptsDemonstrate basic numeracy,	Requires a wide range of technical skillsAre applied in a variety of familiar and complex contexts with minimum supervisionRequir

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[6] Detailed information on the NQF of Cape Verde, including on the descriptors of the 8 levels is available in the ACQF Mapping Study Country Report Cape Verde (Castel-Branco, June 2020)

THE GAMBIA		NIGERIA				SENEGAL			GHANA		
									Level descriptors		
Level	Level descriptors	Level	Academic qualifications	Technological	National Skills Qualifications	Level	Level descriptors	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications	Level	Knowledge(i.e., enables learners to…)	Skills and attitudes
							scientific tools, and supervisory skills			literacy and IT skills	es collaboration with others in a team
I	Competence to perform a limited range of work activities whilst working under supervision e.g. trained worker.	4		National Diploma (ND)/ Advanced National Technical Certificate (ANTC) /Advanced National Business Certificate (ANBC)	NSQ Level 4 / National Innovation Diploma	II	Corresponds to the qualifications of personnel occupying jobs normally requiring training of a level comparable to that of Bachelor or Master's Degree, demonstrating responsibility and autonomy	BTS/DUT: Higher Technician Certificate /University Technology Diploma	4	Demonstrate specialised knowledge base with substantial depth in area(s) of studyAnalyse and interpret a range of data and be able to determine and communicate appropriate methods and procedures and outcomes accurately and reliably to deal with a wide range of problems	Requires specialised knowledge of skill competence in different tasks in varied contextsRequires wide and specialised technical and/or supervisory skills which are employed in different contextsRequires the ability to adapt and apply knowledge and skills to specific contexts in a broad range of work activitiesRequires minimum supervision
Found ation level	Initial skills - basic skills in English communication, life skills, numeracy and non-occupational work skills with literacy in mother tongue as an option.	5	Bachelor's Degree	Higher National Diploma /Degree	NSQ Level 5	I	Corresponds to qualifications of personnel occupying jobs normally requiring training at a level higher than the Master's level and	Engineering Diploma	5	Demonstrate considerable theoretical knowledge and solid practical skills in area(s) of studyIntegrate, contextualise	Requires a wide range of highly specialised technical and/or management and/or conceptual or creative skillsRequires

THE GAMBIA		NIGERIA				SENEGAL			GHANA		
Level	**Level descriptors**	**Level**	**Academic qualifications**	**Technological**	**National Skills Qualifications**	**Level**	**Level descriptors**	**Illustrative Examples of Qualifications**	Level descriptors		
									Level	**Knowledge(i.e., enables learners to...)**	**Skills and attitudes**
							demonstrating responsibility and autonomy			and apply knowledge to a range of complex technical or professional activitiesHave a command of planning, analytical, supervisory and management functions under minimum direction	qualities and transferable skills necessary for formal and self-employmentInvolves some level of organisational ability, resource management and personal responsibility
		6	Master's Degree / Doctorate	Master's or Doctorate in Technology	NSQ Level 6				6	Demonstrate high level of conceptual knowledge in a broad range of complex and changing contextsDemonstrate basic research skillsUndertake tasks involving high level organisational ability, resource management and personal responsibilityDemonstrate a significant degree of strategic thinking and	Applies methods, techniques and modes of practice learned and reviewed, to consolidate, extend and apply knowledge and understanding to initiate and carry out projectsPromotes further training, development of existing skills and acquisition of new competences that enable responsibility within organisations in self-employmentRequ

| THE GAMBIA | | NIGERIA | | | | SENEGAL | | | GHANA | | |
| | | | | | | | | | Level descriptors | | |
Level	Level descriptors	Level	Academic qualifications	Technological	National Skills Qualifications	Level	Level descriptors	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications	Level	Knowledge(i.e., enables learners to…)	Skills and attitudes
										judgmentHave a high level of supervisory and management capabilities	ires qualities and transfer of skills necessary for formal and self-employment
									7	Have a systematic understanding of knowledge and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights in academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practicePossess comprehensive understanding of relevant techniques in research or advanced scholarshipDemonstrate originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding	Involves the resolution of complex issues and makes sound judgments in the absence of complex data, and communicates these conclusions to both specialists and non-specialist audiences Possesses self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and acts independently in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent levelContinues to advance knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level

THE GAMBIA		NIGERIA				SENEGAL			GHANA		
									Level descriptors		
Level	Level descriptors	Level	Academic qualifications	Technological	National Skills Qualifications	Level	Level descriptors	Illustrative Examples of Qualifications	Level	Knowledge(i.e., enables learners to…)	Skills and attitudes
									8	Create new knowledge through research that extends the disciplinePossess substantial acquired knowledge that is at the forefront of technology or area of professional practiceAbility to conceptualise, design andimplement a project to generate new knowledge, or applications …	Makes informed judgments on complex issues in the area of technology or professional practice often in the absence of complete data and is able to communicate ideas andconclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialists in the disciplineExhibits qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and initiative in complex and unpredictable situations.

Source: Author's analysis

4.4   Use of Learning Outcomes

As revealed by Table 2, one of the key variables when developing or establishing learning outcomes (LO) is the competences that underpin level descriptors. LO content derives from standards of occupations in The Gambia, Ghana and Senegal, and competences refer to the different cognitive, practical and attitude components required for actual occupational positions and roles. Therefore, LOs correspond to the combination of those components expected at the end of a learning process assuming the competences. Nevertheless, while LOs are explicitly associated with competency levels in the formulation of level descriptors in The Gambia, Ghana and Senegal, Nigeria's referencing of academic and technological qualifications seems to go beyond and describes broader competency profiles. The manner in which Los are used to describe knowledge, skills and competences needs to be reviewed to encompass the various learning domains that are expected, especially when it comes to describing their acquisition levels.

Learning outcomes-based descriptions of a qualification are not easy to do because generally the learning process (curriculum) is immediately elaborated after the work analysis and the provision of occupational standards. The qualification process is the last step of a learning process and consists more of an assessment of the appropriation of the notions taught than an assessment of the use of those notions in action. The latter corresponds more to what is expected for the assessment of competences. Therefore, writing qualifications in terms of LOs is often a very important step to take in enabling the establishment or development of an NQF (Werquin, 2007).

4.5   Definition of qualifications

The GSQF (2006) defines a qualification in these terms:

> *A qualification is a proven ability to perform an occupation at a particular level. It consists of a suite of occupational and key skill standards – often known as unit standards. The standards are formally assessed by an accredited assessor, usually by on-the-job observation and questioning. Qualifications represent the results of learning, regardless of whether learning has been in formal or informal contexts. Qualifications are awarded following formal assessment that the required competencies have been attained, not that they have been taught.* (The Gambia National Training Authority (NTA), 2006: 7)

A qualification can be defined as

> *a formal certificate issued by an official agency in recognition that an individual has been assessed as achieving learning outcomes or competencies to standards specified for the qualification title, usually a type of certificate, diploma or degree. Learning and assessment for a qualification can take place through workplace experience and/or a programme of study."* (Bateman & Coles, 2013: 23).

A qualification "confers official recognition of value in the labour market and in further education and training" (OECD, 2007: 23). More so, this means that

> *a qualification may be a single module or unit, if that is deemed to be worthy of formal recognition. However, it should be noted that sometimes the term 'qualification' is used to refer only to substantial programmes leading to a well-recognised and historically grounded*

form of certification such as a degree or to a form of certification associated with the capacity to undertake a defined occupational role, in some cases associated with regulations for entry to employment, i.e. a qualification to practice meeting the requirements for practice (Tuck, 2017: 2).

4.6   Development of qualifications

As discussed in Section 1, a common approach will be needed to harmonise LO descriptions, and the *Framework for Recognition and Equivalence of Certificates in the ECOWAS Region* was validated by Ministers of Higher Education of Member States when they met in December 2019. The framework is illustrated below:

Table 3: Framework for Recognition and Equivalence of Certificates in the ECOWAS Region

QUALIFICATION	FRACOPHONE SYSTEM	ANGLOPHONE SYSTEM	LUSOPHONE SYSTEM
PHD	**DOCTORAT UNIQUE/UNIVERSITE (LMD)** PhD IN ALL FIELDS INCLUDING MEDICINE, PHARMACY, DENTISTRY, ETC	PhD IN ALL FIELDS INCLUDING MEDICINE, PHARMACY, DENTISTRY, ETC	DOUTORAMENTO IN ALL FIELDS INCLUDING MEDICINE, PHARMACY, DENTISTRY, ETC
PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION AND NOT PHD	DOCTORAT MEDECINE* DOCTORAT PHARMACIE* DOCTORAT ODONTOSTOMATOLOGIE* DOCTORAT VETERINAIRE*	MEDICAL DOCTORS* VETERINARY DOCTORS* DENTISTS* PHARMACISTS* ETC	MEDICAL DOCTORS* VETERINARY DOCTORS* DENTISTS* PHARMACISTS* ETC
	DOCTORAT DE 3EME CYCLE**		
MASTERS	**MASTERS (LMD)**	MASTERS' IN ALL FIELDS (MA, MSC, LLM, MBA ETC)	MESTRADO IN ALL FIELDS (MA, MSC, LLM, ETC)
	MASTERS' IN ALL FIELDS		
	INGENIEUR/PROFESSIONAL		
	DESS for employment		
	DEA for academic progression and teaching in the University		
BACHELOR	**LICENCE (LMD)**		
	MAITRISE/ DTS/ INGEINIEUR TECHNIQUE	BACHELORS DEGREE IN ALL FIELDS: BA/ BSc, LLB, HND ETC	LICENCIATURA IN ALL FIELDS: BA, BSc, LLB ETC
INTERMEDIATE	DUT/ BTS/ DEUG, DUEL, DUES (2 YEARS)	NATIONAL DIPLOMA, NCE OR ANY EQUIVALENCE (2 YEARS)	BACHARELATO (2 YEARS)
MINIMUM ENTRY REQUIREMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION	BACCALAUREAT (GENERAL/TECHNIQUE/ PROFESSIONNEL)	WAEC/ O-LEVEL/ WASC/ NECO/NABTEB/IJMB	12º ANO - EXAMEN DE LA 12EME ANNEE (Secondary education)
* These Doctorate degrees are professional courses and not equivalent to the PhD. Additional courses need to be taken to obtain academic Doctorates			
** Doctorate de 3eme Cycle has been replaced by Doctorate Unique due to LMD reforms. It is a subject of debate since it is said to be lower than PhD but higher than Masters' Degree. It was therefore agreed that it is not a formal PhD.			

Source: ECOWAS Experts' Meeting Report, Lomé, December 2019

At the same meeting, The Ministers also adopted the draft *ECOWAS Benchmarks for the Harmonisation of University Education,* shown in Table 4.

Table 4: ECOWAS Benchmarks for the Harmonisation of University Education

S/N	AREAS OF HARMONIZATION	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HARMONIZATION
1	Degrees	Bachelor/Licence, Master's and Doctorate
2	Students workload	On hour per week for 15 weeks (One Semester)
3	Credit Units (CU)	Minimum of 28 for Bachelor's
		Minimum of 36 for Masters'
		Minimum of 30 for DoctorateOn
4	Admission Requirements	Bachelor/Licence: WASC with Five credits in subjects relevant to the course or a Baccalauréat
		Master: Bachelor/Licence degree or equivalent from an accredited institution (acceptable grade is to be determined by the receiving country)
		Doctorate: Master's degree or equivalent from an accredited institution (acceptable grade is to be determined by the receiving country e.g. 60% and "Bien" in Anglophone and Francophone, respectively
5	Duration/ number of semesters	Bachelor/Licence: Minimum of 6 semesters and a maximum of 10 semesters. The first degree in Medicine based on six or seven years is MB.BS/Doctor in Medicine
		Masters': Minimum of 4 semesters and a maximum of 6 semesters after the Bachelor's degree
		Doctorate: Minimum of 6 semesters and a maximum of 10 semesters after the Masters' degree
6	Staffing requirements for taught courses	Humanities and Social Sciences : 1 : 20
		Applied Sciences and Engineering : 1 : 15
		Medical Sciences : 1 :10
7	Staff requirements for supervision of students' Thesis/Dissertation	Ratio of Professor to Students depend on the number of Doctorate students and field of study. A professor may supervise up to 10 postgraduate students (Master's and PhD) at a time, provided that the Doctorate students are not more than 3
8	Examinations	Minimum pass score -50%
		Continuous Assessment -30%
		Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of not less than 2.40
9	Grading system	70 & above (Grade A; 5 Points);
		60-69 (Grade B; 4 Points),
		50-59(Grade C; 3 Points),
		Less than 50 (Grade F; 0 Point)

Source: ECOWAS Experts' Meeting Report, Lome, December 2019

4.7 Access to qualifications, progression, credits

The five countries identified as having established NQFs have outlined their approaches in their policy documents; there is as yet no regional policy regarding assessment of qualifications, progression and credits. National attempts to address the above areas of qualifications systems are captured below.

SENEGAL:

The Directorate of Examinations, Vocational Examinations and Certification, under the Ministry of Vocational Education, Apprenticeship and Crafts and the Academy Inspector (IA) and the Education and Training Inspection are responsible for the quality of TVET programmes, while the Directorate of Examinations, Vocational Examinations and Certification (DECPC) is responsible for the quality of TVET examinations. Specialised inspectors and secondary education inspectors (IEMS), under the direct supervision of the school inspectors (IA), are responsible for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, and the coordination and harmonisation of educational approaches in Senegal.

THE GAMBIA:

The quality of TVET programmes is assured by the Gambia NTA. Training institutions conduct the training and the internal assessment of students who are subjected to a further external assessment by the NTA. Certificates are only awarded when external assessments are attested to by the NTA. All Gambian skills qualifications are issued by the NTA. Other institutions involved in the quality assurance include select public sector institutions such as the National Water and Electricity Company and the Gambia Ports Authority.

NIGERIA:

The NBTE in Nigeria is responsible for assessing qualifications. In addition, The NBTE is also responsible for the development, updating and quality of TVET curricula. In order to introduce new curricula, a draft curriculum has to be prepared by the proposing institution, which could be a TVET institution or any authorised agency within the governance framework of TVET in Nigeria. This is followed by a pre-critique workshop. The NBTE board needs to approve whether the curriculum should be adopted based on the assessment of the proposed draft and the outcomes of the workshop.

GHANA:

The COTVET, a semi-autonomous body under the Ministry of Education, is responsible for coordinating and overseeing TVET and skills development across the formal and informal and public and private sectors. It answers to a 15-member board made up of stakeholders from various sectors, including industry (Cedefop, 2017).

CAPE VERDE:

The System of Credits of Professional Training is based on the attribution of credit points to qualifications of double certification in the NQF, which are integrated in the National Catalogue of Qualifications (CNQ)[7]. The specific regulatory text is in development. Credit accumulation and transfer is permitted to enable mobility, notably in the space of ECOWAS and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Moreover, the credit system will apply to other certified training not integrated in the CNQ but based on valid quality assurance criteria. The credit system in higher education follows the definitions of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. (Castel-Branco, June 2020).

4.8   RQF's relationship with other instruments

 As mentioned in Section 1, it is difficult to discuss such a relationship at this stage but it seems most likely that the future ECOWAS RQF will relate to current sub-regional and regional instruments like the WAEC, the Directive N°03/2007/CM/UEMOA adopting the Bachelor, Master, Doctorate (LMD) System

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[7] Cape Verde database of qualifications

in universities and in higher education institutions within UEMOA[8] (WAEMU) and CAMES for their qualifications regulatory instruments and quality assurance initiatives.

4.8.1   CAMES and future contributions to the ACQF

According to Pr Bertrand Mbatchi, Secretary General of CAMES, in his presentation at an ACQF webinar on 20 May 2020, as a quality assurance and certification body for higher education in Member States, has a mission comprising seven aims relating to harmonising higher education and research policies in the Higher Education Institutions of the CAMES region.

Of the nine CAMES programmes, four are directly related to the qualifications framework:

1. Programme recognition and equivalence of diplomas (PRED);
2. Inter-African Consultative Committees (ICC);
3. Competitive examination;
4. Quality Assurance Programme (QAP).

The quality standards developed by CAMES include standards for: (i) institutional evaluation, (ii) face-to-face training offers, (iii) open and/or distance learning (ODLT), (iv) research programmes; The LMD manual describes the training courses and defines transferable credits in all higher education and research institutions (IESRs) of the member countries.

Moreover, CAMES supports an ongoing project aiming to develop a regional framework of professional qualifications. The scope of this activity comprises the following:

| QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS | • ACADEMIC AND/OR PROFESSIONAL NOMENCLATURE OF CERTIFICATES, DIPLOMAS, TITLES AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIO |
| REGISTERS | • REGISTRATION OR REFERENCING OF CERTIFICATES, DIPLOMAS, TITLES AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS |

Figure 1: Overview of scope of future regional framework of professional qualifications

Source: Adapted from M. SARR's presentation at ACQF webinar on 20 May 2020

4.9   Legal acts directly applying to the RQF and its implementation

This cannot be discussed at the moment due to absence of However, ECOWAS policy milestones aiming at harmonising national frameworks and future countries' endorsements of regional instruments as indicated in Tables 1 and 2 give an indication of the legal landscape in which the RQF will be developed.

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[8] http://www.uemoa.int/sites/default/files/bibliotheque/directive_03-2007-cm-uemoa_portant_adoption_lmd.pdf

4.10   Relation with other related legal acts / regulations

This cannot be discussed as there is no RQF as yet.

5. Organising systems: governance, institutions, stakeholders

5.1   Governance, roles, functions – policy, coordination, implementation, monitoring

As indicated above, the build-up process at the regional level has been intensified with regards to political commitment. Experts and Ministries of Higher Education are considering steps towards the development and implementation of a regional RQF body. Governance will entail setting up registers at regional and national levels for ease of reference. Stakeholders' involvement in the building of the RQF will be key in defining its vision, roles and functions, as will countries' networking.

Prospects are good as ECOWAS policy on NQFs and the RQF has been one of the priorities of the ECOWAS Ministers responsible for education since the 2002 Ministerial meeting that took place in Dakar, Senegal 2003, where two documents, the *Protocol on Education and Training* and its annex the *Equivalence of Certificates* were adopted and published. The protocol is in line with the African Union priorities of the First Decade for Education (1997- 2006) which supports programmes on girls' education, TVET, the teaching of science and technology, and distance education of teachers based on new technologies amongst others.

5.2   Key actors and stakeholders: sector councils, world of work, education and training institutions

With regards to key actors and stakeholders in qualifications systems, what needs to be done at the ECOWAS regional level is to ensure cooperation from UNESCO and other development partners that are already playing a key role in setting up the RQF. Besides, organisations representing public authorities, such as ministries and governmental agencies, and also regional authorities, organisations representing industry, including employer and employee representatives, education and training providers and intermediate organisations such as chambers of commerce and craft, or organisations representing a specific economic sector should be active participants in the process. Individual learners, their families and communities should be included. And lastly, international donors such as the GIZ, the EU, the World Bank and non-governmental organisation could also be identified as stakeholders.

The ILO has set out a list of stakeholders in the development of national qualifications frameworks that may serve as a useful guide here. It extends, they note, from the "more obvious stakeholders" to include a call for open public participation in a consultation process that allows any person or organisation to be considered having self-identified as a stakeholder (Tuck, 2007) (ETF, 2014). Part of the list of world of work, sector council and education and training bodies identified are as follows:
- 	Education and training providers;
- 	Educators and teachers and trainers;
- 	Professional bodies;
- 	Awarding bodies and quality assurance agencies;

- Teacher and trainer staff associations (ETF, 2014; Tuck, 2007).

6. Quality assurance of qualifications

6.1 Legal base of the QA framework

There is no QA framework in place.

6.2 Scope of the QA framework

Cannot be discussed at the moment as there is no RQF as yet.

6.3 QA bodies and regulators in RQF implementation

Cannot be discussed at the moment as there is no RQF as yet.

6.4 Participation in international bodies (e.g.: AQVN…)

Reference is often made to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). The ECOWAS as a region has been partnering and participating with UNESCO, the UNDP, EU, AU and other agencies in working to implement an RQF and also NQFs at member state level.

7. RQF implementation

7.1 Inclusion of qualifications in register

Cannot be informed at the moment.

7.2 Funding

Cannot be discussed at the moment

7.3 Monitoring, evaluation and development

Hopefully, the development, implementation and monitoring of the ECOWAS RQF will receive external support from UNESCO, CAMES, EU and other regional bodies such as the SADC that have developed RQFs; many of their member states have NQFs in place.

8. Validation of prior learning, non-formal and informal learning

8.1 Relation of RPL and NQF

Not in place.

8.2 Stage of development of RPL

Not in place.

9. Recognition of foreign qualifications

At the ECOWAS regional level, efforts have been made to validate the ECOWAS Framework on Recognition and Equivalence of Degrees document and its benchmarks. Experts in the region also gathered to brainstorm the way forward with support from UNESCO and the Association of African Universities (AAU). The said framework will offer a grid to analyse and recognise foreign qualifications at regional and national levels, with the collaboration of designated agencies and in alignment with continental instruments like the Addis Ababa Convention, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), etc.

10. Interrelationships with other countries and regions qualification frameworks

RQFs across Africa as a continent and across other continents like Europe and Asia have a symbiotic relationship with regards to regional recognition agreements and qualifications frameworks. However, the emergence of UNESCO in the overall picture of RQFs in the ECOWAS Region is a significant advantage and bodes well for future advancement of the development process. The ECOWAS RQF will also be related to the EU QFs, classified as a blueprint for the upcoming African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF). Moreover, the Addis Ababa Convention (formerly the Arusha Convention) of 2014, will feed into the process.

11. Conclusions and future plans

ECOWAS Member States like Senegal, The Gambia, Cape Verde, Ghana and Nigeria are at different stages in the development of their NQFs. TIn addition, ECOWAS initiatives related to TVET and Higher Education are gradually preparing the ground for an RQF. The future ECOWAS RQF has good prospects. As discussed above, some questions will arise that need to be solved. The first will be to know which pathway the ECOWAS RQF will take in setting level descriptors: a skill-oriented one or a blended academic-technological one. The second question relates to its scope and will entail deciding whether the RQF will be inclusive and comprehensive and cover qualifications from basic, secondary and higher education and training levels, as well deciding on the mechanisms for the validation, recognition and certification of competences obtained via non-formal and informal learning.

The ECOWAS RQF will hopefully learn from the examples of the EQF, SADC RQF and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Qualifications Reference Framework on how they can interrelate.

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