



# CONFERENCE REPORT OF THE AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK



*Funded by the HAQAA2 initiative*



THE AFRICA-EU PARTNERSHIP  
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## **Introduction**

The National Council of Quality Assessment in Higher Education held the African Quality Assurance Network Conference from 25 to 28 October 2022 at the VIP Hotel in Maputo, under the Post COVID-19 Motto: Emerging Developments in Quality Assurance in Africa - "Towards strengthening synergies between quality assurance agencies and the accelerating regional integration". The conference was attended by 115 individuals, including heads of higher education institutions, AfriQAN members, officials in charge of higher education at the African Union Commission and UNESCO, regional bodies (CAMES, SARUA, IUCEA), regional networks (RAFANAQ, EAQAN, SAQAN, ANQAHE, LUSOQAN project), quality assurance bodies of higher education institutions, academic staff, researchers and technical-administrative staff of universities, professional organizations, student associations, CNAQ partners and stakeholders in higher education in Africa and other regions of the world.

The overall aim of the conference was to provide a forum and platform for the different African networks and initiatives to share their experiences and debate continental harmonization in the quality assurance sector. Specifically it aimed to document and discuss developments in quality assurance in all African regions, including common challenges and good practices, provide a platform for the dissemination of quality assurance initiatives within the framework of HAQAA 2, strengthen synergies between Quality Assurance Agencies in different regions and language lines, strengthen and support collaboration between quality assurance networks and revisit AfriQAN's vision and mission and define future the roadmap.

The methodology used consisted of lectures and discussions on different quality assurance topics, AfriQAN's general assembly and consultation workshop on the creation of a Pan-African agency and Academic Credit Transfer System, quality assurance meetings in Portuguese-speaking African countries.

Several topics were presented and discussed, including Post-Covid 19 era: Emerging developments in quality assurance, regional quality assurance projects and initiatives, enhancing synergies between quality assurance initiatives in Africa: the role of regional networks, presentation of the Pan-African Accreditation and Quality Assurance Agency, Towards the implementation of the African Credit Transfer System: Implications for Quality Assurance agencies and professionals, Adherence to ASG-QA in African higher education systems: dissemination Results of the HAQAA2 project by regional networks (EAQAN, CNAQ, RAFANAQ), Higher education in Africa: The role and impact of data management, AfriQAN feasibility study report and debate on AfriQAN's place in the future, WORKSHOP: Consultation on the creation of a pan-African quality assurance agency for Africa (PAQAAN) and academic credit transfer system in Africa and Presentation of the Lusophone Quality Assurance Agencies on quality assurance.

## **Development**

In her opening remarks, Prof. Maria Luísa Chicote, the President of CNAQ, acknowledged all the participants for attending the conference and said that the aim was to bring together the different players and highlight the commitment to foster quality education that can make a concrete contribution to speed up regional integration. Prof. Chicote emphasized that one of the Conference central points was to consult Mozambique Higher Education Leaders and Managers on the possibility of creating an Africa Continental Quality Assurance Agency.

Daniel Daniel Nivagara, Mozambique's Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, in his opening speech, emphasized that the motto chosen for the Conference was essential to us, as he hoped that strengthening the synergies between the participating agencies would enable a unified forward-facing to be built between the nations so that together they could overcome the challenges emerging from the global crises and always guarantee quality education. He stressed that the government's commitment to quality is explicit in the Higher

Education Strategic Plan 2012-2020 and in the Government of Mozambique Five-Year Programme (2020-2024).

The Minister said that the significant presence of HEIs at the event showed that internationalization is a priority for the Mozambican government and, in particular, for the Mozambican HEIs. The commitment of the country is therefore focused on strengthening all kinds of initiatives aimed at making higher education a real platform for regional integration and internationalization. He also mentioned the awareness that regional and international integration involves overcoming various challenges. Finally, he recommended that the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa reflect deeply on the urgency of creating a specific platform to help in the harmonization of procedures between the PALOP countries, like other regional organizations and blocs, whose networks have been duly launched and are in operation.

On the topic "**The Post-Covid 19 Era: Emerging Developments in Quality Assurance**", presented by Prof. Juma Shabani and moderated by Prof Olusola Oyewole, argued about the implications, the main challenges and the opportunities of COVID 19 in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and brought examples from countries such as Nigeria, Burundi and Senegal in the implementation of a mixed teaching system using ICTs.

#### **Implications of COVID 19 on HEIs:**

- Closure of HEIs, laboratory practices, and fieldwork;
- Interruption of HEI evaluations;
- Adoption of new teaching and learning paradigms (online and hybrid teaching);

#### **Challenges:**

- Need for ICT training;
- The Cost of connectivity and broadening of broadband;

- Internal and external quality control mechanisms not aligned with hybrid teaching and learning methods; and
- Extending quality assurance standards to ICT infrastructure and staff capacity in the use of e-learning and videoconferencing platforms.

**Opportunities:**

- Promotion of internationalization;
- Access to national/regional/international experts for the teaching/learning/research process, accreditation and quality control; and
- More investment in ICT infrastructure.
- Regarding the emerging development in quality assurance, the need to strengthen synergies between quality assurance agencies (QAAs) and accelerate regional integration was emphasized. In the case of Nigeria, the National Open University pioneering training and development in the use of e-learning and videoconferencing platforms was seen as a success.

**Recommendations:**

- Encourage African countries to have distance learning institutes;
- Increase and improve skills in the use of ICTs in the teaching and learning process; and
- African HEIs should come up with solutions to the problems troubling African HEIs.



In the topic "**Harmonization of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in African Higher Education (HAQAA) 2**" presented by Apiyo Okwiri and moderated by Prof. Maria Luísa Chicote, the presenter began by contextualizing that in recent years *OBREAL Global* has transformed itself from an association that promotes cooperation between the European Union and Latin America in higher education and research to an association with a broader mandate and wider membership, aimed at strengthening cooperation within and between regions.

#### **Some of her observations are:**

- The quality assurance mechanisms that African initiatives are developing are not rankings;
- African HEIs have weaknesses in providing statistical data;
- Academic credits are important for measuring learning, but in Africa they are not standardized, making student mobility difficult;
- There is a discrepancy in quality assurance standards in Africa; and
- There is a lack of consultation with employers when designing curricula.

#### **Recommendations**

- African HEIs are invited to access these mechanisms (AQAN);
- Encourage HEIs to have reliable statistical data; and
- All African HEIs should be concerned about the quality of graduates.

On the topic of **regional quality assurance projects and initiatives**, under the moderation of Litsabako Ntoi, presentations have been made at the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES), an institution made up of 17 countries, with the aim of establishing permanent scientific and cultural cooperation between members and standardizing the ways in which emerging African universities are run.

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The Inter-University Council for Eastern Africa (IUCEA) initiative, with a mission aimed at promoting the strategic and sustainable development of strong higher education systems and of research to support the socio-economic development and regional integration of Eastern Africa, through academic co-operation between universities encouraging the students' mobility and researchers within the region.

The Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) is a higher education association that promotes regional impact through networking, collaboration and partnership through projects and investment in lifelong learning and continuing professional development.

### **Remarks**

- Existence of quality assurance mechanisms in different regions of African continent; and
- Existence of coordination between different actors in quality agencies.



## **Recommendations**

- Ensure the development of a comprehensive electronic network linked to universities member, for the usage in supporting and promoting new teaching and learning methods, greater dissemination of information;
- Collaboration in higher education should be a focus of university leadership as well as its members;
- Develop a collaborative platform to respond to the current and future HEIs complexities;
- Encourage and develop mutually beneficial collaboration between member universities, governments and other organizations, both public and private; and
- Improve co-operation between different regional and international networks.

Regarding **regional quality assurance network initiatives**, moderated by Prof Carlos Mataruca, it has mentioned about

- African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN);
- Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE);
- East African Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN);
- Réseau Africain Francophone des Agences Nationales d'Assurance Qualité (RAFANAQ);
- Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN)

## **Remarks**

- There is great concern about promoting quality in the countries that are members of the regional quality assurance networks in Africa;
- Quality education must be linked to sustainability issue;
- Lack of funding for regional quality assurance network initiatives.

## **Recommendations**

- Incorporate cultural diversities to improve quality assurance in Africa;
- The issue of culture should be analyzed taking into account the influence of African culture on quality assurance control practices;
- Harmonize quality assurance systems at the regional level; and
- Create mechanisms to be self-sustaining.

On the second day of the conference, 26 October 2022, six (6) topics were presented and discussed.

The topic **strengthening synergies between quality assurance initiatives in Africa: the role of regional networks** was presented by Prof Lamine Gueye and moderated by Dr Noel Saliu. The presenter said that there was a need to work together on this issue, in order to guarantee institutional, national, regional, and African synergy, by sharing good practices and harmonizing quality standards.



He made the following remarks:

- The need of synergies in Africa between the networks;
- The need of credit system harmonization;
- The need to pool resources in order to make effective initiatives and projects by identifying roles and responsibilities in the quality assurance system (AU, AfriQAN, regional quality assurance networks, regional higher education bodies, economic communities, national agencies, HEIs) for greater synergy and quality assurance actions; and
- Dependency on a unique donor for funding.

## **Recommendations**

- Establish regional quality assurance networks between countries with a linguistic or cultural background;
- Make use of synergies between the networks so that higher education in Africa is attractive;
- Develop a credit system that can guarantee greater flexibility and transparency between member countries, thus ensuring the mobility of students and teachers; and
- Seek other sources of funding in a solid way and not in isolation.

### **The Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (PAQAA)**

presentation by Prof Ana Maria Nhampule aimed at raising awareness of the proposal for its creation, the importance of joining and to gather input for its enrichment. She pointed out that the PAQAA is part of the African Union broader agenda aimed at harmonizing the quality assurance mechanisms and harmonization of ES in Africa, guaranteeing the quality of education and the contribution of knowledge to Africa development.

According to the presenter, the implementation of the project will follow three phases:

The first phase comprises the following actions:

- ES-orientated intervention on the quality assurance aspects of the PAQAA action lines; and
- Capacity building related to African quality assurance standards, facilitating collaboration.

The second phase has the function of registering or keeping information regarding the African continent agencies, taking as a reference the African quality assurance standards of ES.

The third phase, comprising the accreditation of Pan-African institutions, will precede the fourth phase, in which the agency will incorporate all the action lines linking to PAQAF, which includes the African Continental Qualifications Framework, the African Credit System, and other initiatives geared towards quality assurance in HE, the Addis Ababa convention geared towards the issue of recognizing HE qualifications.

The Pan-African agency did not replace the existing national and regional agencies, therefore it must act as a driving force for the development of all agencies, develop synergies to guarantee the quality of HE in Africa, guarantee the competitiveness of African HE with other education systems. With regard to the sustainability of the agency, the proposed funding models include contributions from states member, intermittent funding from donors, services fees rendered and membership fees.

The interventions showed that there is a need of clarifying the role of AfriQAN and PAQAA and how PAQAA can impact on HEIs. In this way, it was make clear that PAQAA is an integral part of PAQAF, a Pan-African quality assurance and accreditation agency for African quality assurance agencies and HEIs, created by the heads of state of the African Union countries, which should serve as the guardian of PAQAF's lines of action and tools. On the other hand, AfriQAN is an association that includes members and associates, the members are the national quality assurance agencies and the associates are the African HEIs. It was set up by the Union of African Universities to provide assistance to institutions concerned with quality assurance in higher education in Africa, as a space for exchanging synergies.

The interventions made show

- The need for the participants to deepen their understanding of the role of AfriQan and the PAQAA;
- The need of increasing transparency in African quality assurance in ES;
- The need of in staff mobility in HE.
- Dissemination of the proposal among HEIs;
- Deepen the statutes of the PAQAA;
- Send contributions on the PAQAA proposal within 7 days, visit the website: [haqaa2obsglob.org.consultation/paqaa/](http://haqaa2obsglob.org.consultation/paqaa/)

On the topic: **Towards the implementation of the national academic credit transfer system: implications for quality assurance agencies and professionals**, presented by Prof. Damtew Teferra and Prof Pablo Beneitone and moderated by Prof Apiyo Okwiri, it was discussed that the African credit transfer system is a relevant tool for the mutual recognition of ES courses, and that there are two pillars for achieving recognition: learning outcomes and workload.

The challenge is to harmonize and implement the initiative, and there is a need of transparency among countries considering that they are at different levels of the credit systems implementation, as well as thinking from the point of view of the students, how much time is needed for them to develop the expected competences.

### **Remarks**

- Disparity in the equivalence of the number of hours per academic credit in African countries;
- Some African countries consider a bachelor's degree, but in the case of Mozambique the first level is a licentiate degree;
- Need to harmonize curricula and equivalence systems;
- There are countries with no credit system;

- Discrepancy in the total number of study hours per learning cycle in the different African countries;
- In Europe a credit varies from 25 to 30 hours and in Africa 22.5 to 30.8 hours.

### **Recommendation**

- Harmonize the academic credit system in Africa, thus enabling staff mobility;
- Ensure the compatibility of total number of study hours per learning cycle in the different African countries,
- Adhere to the academic credit transfer system;
- Sign agreements between African countries in order to design curricula;
- Check in different countries that already have a credit system, which challenges are in implementing credit systems; and
- Conducting student surveys to find out about the academic credit transfer system.

The topic **Adherence to ASG-QA in African higher education systems: results of HAQAA2 project dissemination by regional networks (EAQAN, CNAQ, RAFANAQ)**, presented by Sarah Lang, referred to the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA) as a set of standards and guidelines for internal and external quality assurance in higher education and agencies, designed to support agencies in improving and developing systems.

The aim of the ASG-QA is to find a common framework that allows different actors and relevant parties to support quality from a harmonized perspective, but also to implement African policies such as the Addis Ababa convention, and the collaboration of different actors that emanates from the practice of agencies within HEIs is important.

The ASG-QA is not prescriptive and is applicable to all HEIs in the ES regardless their nature. The project has two components, namely mapping and report production.



In terms of mapping, the aim is to verify practices within the agencies concerning the ASG-QA, share ownership of the ASG-QA within networks, create dialogue and evaluate its implementation, and this information can be used by the agencies in the framework of their creation and revision.

As for the production of activity reports, these are produced at various levels, national, regional, network and global linguistic, for the implementation of the ASG-QA and they are disseminated through meetings organized by the countries.

### **Remarks**

- Resistance from national quality assurance agencies;
- Tension between national and regional agency staff;
- Some guidelines cannot be adapted to the African context; and

- Quality assurance agencies are at different chronological stages.

### **Recommendations**

- Quality assurance agencies should provide examples of good practice;
- Preserve diversity, but safeguard comparability; and
- Sensitize quality assurance agencies and HEIs in relation to ASG-QA.

In relation to the topic **Higher Education in Africa: The role and impact of data management**, presented by Nodumo Dhlamini and moderated by Prof. Jorge Fringe, the aim was to raise awareness of the importance of reliable statistical data for quality assurance. It was pointed out that this is necessary for designing educational policies, monitoring and evaluating secondary and higher education programs, in order to have the comparable data needed to implement mobility, in addition to responding to the demands of the Higher Education financing systems.

### **Remarks**

- Challenges in sharing data between the institutions involved;
- Lack of a data collection culture and limitations in recording data; and
- Lack of a common mechanism for collecting static data.

### **Recommendations**

- Training HEIs and quality assurance agencies on data collection;
- Creation of indicators that define the information to be collected; and
- Need to produce aggregated data for each country.





The third day of the conference was divided into two (2) parts: the first was dedicated to **the AfriQAN General Assembly**, and the second to the **consultation workshop on the creation of a PAN-AFRICAN quality assurance agency in Africa (PAQAAN) and an academic credit transfer system in Africa.**

The first session focused on the following agenda:

- Report on AfriQAN's activities;
- AfriQAN's constitutional amendment proposal; and
- Presentation of AfriQAN's activity plan.

With regard to the report on AfriQAN's activities, presented by AfriQAN President Professor Maria Luísa Chicote, the aim of the report was to present the status of AfriQAN's activities, as well as to ascertain to what level it is linked to the agenda that runs until 2023 and to invite the HEIs and quality assurance agencies to join the network. She mentioned the benefits, forms and requirements of membership, referring to the:

- Participation in AfriQAN decision-making and workshops;
- Access to quality assurance news;
- Participation in AfriQAN's employees exchange programme; and
- Prerogative of support in institutional evaluation.

As for the forms and requirements of membership, she said that there are members and associates. Members are national, sub-regional and regional organisations responsible for quality assurance in higher education in Africa and other organisations that meet the conditions for membership, as decided by the General Assembly, and that are legally recognised by their country of origin. Associates are African HEIs committed to improving the quality of education and in good standing in quality assurance systems. Membership requirements are applied for via the link provided by the network and payment of fees depending on the nature of membership.

### **Remarks**

- AfriQAN has not yet achieved its results because it does not yet encompass all African countries;
- Some African countries are unaware of AfriQAN's mission and objectives;
- The quality assurance agencies are new, in the implementation phase, but this factor cannot be an impediment to AfriQAN membership;
- AfriQAN does not have its own bank account, it uses using the account of the Association of African Universities (AAU).

### **Recommendations**

- AfriQAN should support the African Union in establishing African networks;
- A monitoring framework should be established to accommodate the progress of the HE system with a view to benefiting the target groups;
- A working group needs to be set up to draw up a 3-year activity plan to be presented in December;
- Accession of HEIs and quality assurance agencies from African countries to AfriQAN;
- It is suggested that AfriQAN's constitution be revisited;

- Information on AfriQAN should be disseminated to African HEIs with a view to their membership;
- It is imperative to open an AfriQAN account.

With regard to AfriQAN's proposed constitutional amendment, at the 1st AfriQAN General Assembly, it was proposed that the subscription for members of quality assurance agencies be increased from 1000\$ to 2000\$ and for HEIs from 500\$ to 1000\$. This proposed amendment has not been approved and needs to be agreed at the next Assembly.

In the absence of the President and Vice-President, a member of the Executive Board, with the approval of the majority of the General Assembly, must chair the meeting.

Referring to Art. 9 - The Network Secretariat will be based at the Association of African Universities (AAU) in Accra, Ghana and the permanent executive body headed by the AfriQAN Coordinator.

Regarding the presentation of the AfriQAN's activity plan, it was emphasised that the activities depend on the funds contributed by its members, but few of the 25 associated members contribute.

In 2021/2022, the activities carried out were aimed at increasing the network's visibility, given that it had no funds. These activities include:

- Carrying out the AfriQAN feasibility study (funded by UNESCO);
- Participation in HAQAA meetings in Côte d'Ivoire;
- Virtual participation in quality control training organised by the AAU in Zanzibar;
- Participation in the ACQF workshop in South Africa;
- Participation in the EAQAN forum in Tanzania;
- Participation in the PAQAA consultative meeting in Addis Ababa;
- Organising the AfriQAN conference in Maputo;

- Website update process.

The AfriQAN's activity plan for 2022/2023 includes activities such as: Dialogue and awareness-raising sessions to get more members; strengthening collaboration with other quality assurance networks; The AfriQAN Workshops co-organised with other regional networks (RAFANAQ, EAQAN); Staff Exchange; Participation in quality assurance events; Improving the AfriQAN Visibility, Communication and Publicity Strategy; Events with key partners; The AfriQAN General Assembly and Executive Board Meeting and Creating a database of quality assurance experts in Africa.

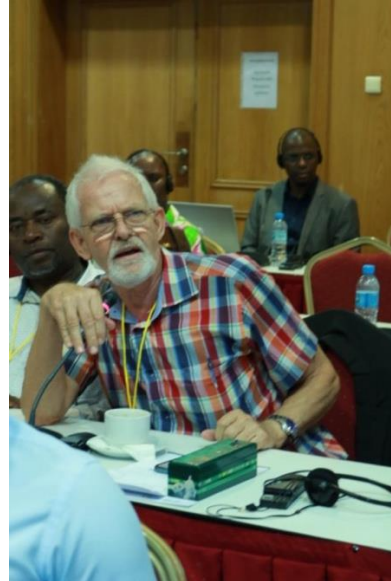
It was decided that the next AfriQAN meeting would be held in Tanzania in 2023.

### **Recommendations**

- Share the timetable of activities in order to understand the subsequent actions by the secretariat;
- Revitalise the AfriQAN's constitution;
- Raise awareness among the members of the need to pay membership fees.

The Consultation Workshop on the creation of a Pan-African Quality Assurance Agency for Africa (PAQAA) and an academic credit transfer system in Africa was divided into 4 sessions.

**The first session**, entitled **A proposal for a credit system for Africa**, moderated by Sarah Lang and presented by Professors Ana Maria Nhampule and Olusola Oyewole, highlighted the concept of academic credits, their importance and the implications of the absence of an African credit transfer system.



The concept presented brought a new approach to respecting differences, based on different learning paces, translated into the word *typical*. Its importance lies in the possibility of accumulating learning activities to achieve the desired learning outcomes; increasing the comparability of learning experiences and making it possible to recognise learning outcomes from one institution to another.

The absence of the African credit transfer system was presented as having several implications such as a lack of clarity which leads to a lack of trust between HEIs, making student mobility difficult; teacher-centered learning which limits learning and innovation and does not take into account new ways of learning; and difficulty in implementing the Addis Ababa Convention.

### **Remarks**

- There is no any credit transfer system between institutions in Africa;
- Teacher-centered learning is observed in Africa;
- Difficulty in implementing student mobility in Africa;
- In Africa, the academic credit system varies from country to country;

- Failure by some HEIs to fulfil the objectives of the academic credit system;
- In Mozambique, student mobility has not yet been properly implemented, as the HEIs have made it a condition that 50 per cent of the subjects must be taken, regardless of whether they were taken at the institution of origin;
- The system of harmonization of academic credits is pertinent, but it alone does not solve the problems, so there is a need to rethink national policies and teacher training in order to better determine the workload;
- Difficulty in differentiating credits for face-to-face, online and distance learning courses.

### **Recommendations**

- Define the number of credits for each academic level;
- Ensure student-centred learning;
- Guarantee student mobility in accredited courses;
- Define the competences to be acquired by students at each level;
- Draw up immediate, practical actions to harmonize the academic credit system;
- Increasing the dissemination of the need for continental credit, in order to raise awareness among the different authors, particularly HEI leaders;
- Develop training programs to understand the credit system (curricular illiteracy); and
- The need for a harmonized continental academic credit system that balances the different systems across the continent: English-speaking countries, French-speaking countries and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The second session on **Academic credits, student workload and learning outcomes**, moderated by Prof Olusola Oyewole and presented by Profs Stephan Bienefeld and Pablo Beneitone, referred to the importance of curriculum design taking into account the alignment of subjects with expected learning outcomes.

It is understood that workload is an estimate of learning activities such as lectures, seminars, projects, practical work, internships, individual study measured against the time a typical student needs to achieve the defined learning outcomes.

Determining workload and aligning it with academic credits enables comparability and compatibility of study programs and also increases transparency, thus allowing more flexibility and diversity of paths in the learning process and enabling student mobility.

### **Remarks**

- Existence of an academic credit system in African HEIs;
- In many African institutions, academic credit is measured on the basis of the contact time with the lecturer;
- The Academic credit does not have the same value in all countries and regions (the credit systems in Anglophone, Francophone and Portuguese-speaking countries differ).
- There is no credit transfer system between institutions in Africa; and
- The credit measure is not comparable between institutions in Africa.

### **Recommendations**

- There is a need for a common agreement on the definition and value of an academic credit in African higher education systems;
- Create consensus on the workload of a credit unit. The general trend is 60 credits;
- Create consensus on the number of credit units for each year and for different courses, e.g. **degree (licenciatura)**, Master's and Doctorate;
- The need for consensus on the amount of student work over the course of a year, which is between 1,350 and 1,800 hours; and

- There is a need for a harmonized continental system of academic credits that balances the different systems across the continent: English-speaking countries, French-speaking countries and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The third session, on the theme **of National context, with the following sub-themes: "State of the art of academic credit system initiatives at national level and in the Southern African region"** and **"Potential link between ACTS and recognition mechanisms in Mozambique"**, was moderated by Sara Lang and presented by Profs Jefy Mukora, Alexandra Rodrigues and Boaventura Cuambe, mentioned the existence of an academic credit system in Mozambique, called the National System for the Accumulation and Transfer of Academic Credits (SNATCA - NSATAC), supervised by the National Directorate for Higher Education, which also supports HEIs in its implementation.

SNATCA aims to promote transparency and increase flexibility, thus allowing academic mobility to improve the quality of higher education in the country.

The system does not aim to harmonize study programs or unified study plans, but to establish points of reference, convergence and mutual understanding, thus guaranteeing comparability between courses offered at different HEIs, without taking away the identity of the HEIs.

The components of SNATCA are the definition of a credit unit, the total workload in terms of credits, the academic levels and the minimum number of credits accumulated to award a qualification.

However, in the national context there are still some challenges in the implementation of SNATCA in terms of curriculum development, the allocation of the number of credits for subjects and independent study hours, as well as a change in the educational paradigm:



- From teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning, in which teaching is not confined to a physical space, with the lecturer playing a guiding and supportive role in the learning process;
- Learning methodologies that encourage the development not only of specific competences, but also of horizontal skills and competences; and
- Spaces such as the library and laboratories are considered learning spaces.

With regard to the regional and continental national academic credit system (SADC CATS and ACTS), it aims to promote greater communication between African universities, being able to share the learning outcomes of one university and take them to another, thus acting as a coordinator, providing pertinent information regarding the similarities and differences between the national approach and the approaches of other countries, without, however, reducing the scope of the national approach, or diminishing the sovereignty of individual members within the community of countries.

One of the main objectives of SADC CATS and the ACTS proposal is to "*allow national CATS to align or dialogue with each other*".

Generally speaking, the difference between the national, regional and continental CATS lies in their focus and scope, while the national one focuses on national HEIs with a view to greater transparency in order to promote flexibility, allowing for greater academic mobility, on the other hand, the regional and continental one widens its scope to cover HEIs and quality assurance agencies in the region and the continent, coordinating guidance and providing information that can help quality assurance agencies and HEIs, so that they have comparable data, enabling cooperation and mobility agreements between agencies and HEIs in the region and the continent.

Regarding the link between ACTS and the recognition mechanisms in Mozambique, the country has not yet managed to achieve the three objectives of SNATCA. It has only been possible to achieve the first, which is transparency, as it is one of the requirements for accrediting courses, and even then it has not been enough to enable the second objective, which is flexibility, to be achieved.

In order to achieve flexibility and mobility, the following possible actions have been identified:

- Collaboration between different units within the same institution and different institutions;
- Signing of recognition agreements between the institutions and this is only possible if there is trust between them; and
- Greater interaction between HEIs

Collaboration within the framework of ACTS represents added value for SNATCA, in that it guides and coordinates actions that enable agreements to be signed between national and international HEIs, thus responding to the need for internationalization, through practices such as the exchange of researchers, academic mobility, among others.

The fourth day of the conference was dedicated to the meeting on quality assurance of the Portuguese-speaking African countries, with the aim of working towards the creation of the Quality Assurance Network for Lusophone Countries. The agencies from Angola and Cape Verde were also presented.

The beginning of the day's activities was marked by the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the CNAQ and Cape Verde's ARES.



The meeting was then opened by the AAU Secretary General, who mentioned the aim of the session and pointed out that even though Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe were absent, the countries present (Mozambique, Angola and Cape Verde) had to define actions to start the initiative to create the network.

The Obreal's representative also emphasized the importance of the network initiative moving forward, even if not all the Portuguese-speaking countries were present, later they would see how to fit other countries.

On the other hand, the RAFANAC representative thanked the President of the AfriQAN and the CNAQ, and referred to the importance of meetings of this kind that bring together different linguistic regions to discuss quality assurance issues. He mentioned that the idea of creating a network of Lusophone countries was born in Dakar, when there was talked of cooperation between the different regional networks and it was noted that the network of Lusophone countries was

lacking, and he was pleased to see that the countries were willing to move forward with the idea of setting up a Lusophone countries network.

Therefore, the INAARES-CPLP representative mentioned that Angola, as president of the CPLP and in the specific case of INAARES, has been carrying out activities in favour of the development of QA. He stressed that it was important to see what the different regional networks have been doing for QA, noting that the common denominator is to get these actions to the HEIs, mentioning that partnerships help to disseminate quality.

He also stressed that quality must be guaranteed by the HEIs, pointing out that the PALOPS quality assurance agencies must make use of the added value received at this conference and the issues discussed must reach the HEIs in their respective countries.

He also mentioned that even though Africa is dispersed due to its colonial heritage, it is important to find a common denominator for working on QA and to reflect on the challenges of QA in Lusophone countries.

Finally, the President of the CNAQ once again welcomed the participants to the session and said that it was an important moment for the Lusophone quality assurance agencies.

She then thanked OBREAL for its support, which embraced the idea of creating a Lusophone QA network. As President-in-Office of AfriQAN, she invited the agencies in Cape Verde and Angola to join AfriQAN.



This was followed by a presentation session on the Quality Assurance Agencies, explaining when they were set up, their mission, application and focus, namely:

- INAARES, Angola's Quality Agency;
- ARES, Cape Verde Quality Agency and,
- CNAQ, Mozambique's Quality Agency.

The National Institute for the Evaluation, Accreditation and Recognition of Studies (INAAREES) is a public institution overseen by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, created under Presidential Decree no. 306/20, of 2 December, responsible for creating, disseminating and implementing in Angola a System for the Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions based on self-evaluation, external evaluation and accreditation, as well as the homologation of higher education studies carried out in the country, recognition and issuing of equivalences for degrees and academic titles obtained outside the country.

The Cape Verdean agency is a public institution, created by Decree-Law no. 121/VIII/2016, of 24 March, as the Higher Education Regulatory Agency (ARES),

and endowed with its respective Statute whose purpose is to guarantee the quality of Higher Education (HE) in the country.

The National Council for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (CNAQ) is an autonomous institution that implements and supervises the National System for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SINAQES), under the supervision of the Minister who oversees the area of higher education. Created by Decree 64/2007, its mission is to promote the assessment, accreditation, development and registration of higher education qualifications as quality assurance mechanisms in the light of the country's development needs and in line with the quality standards of higher education in the country, the region and the world.

### **Summary of questions/contributions**

The importance of co-operation between agencies in order to exchange experiences was mentioned, and there was a need to understand how the agencies in Angola and Cape Verde deal with the assessment of health courses.

In Mozambique's experience, there are HEIs that intend to implement distance learning health courses, as well as institutes that want to open health courses without having their own spaces for practice (appropriate laboratories), for example the existence of humanistic laboratories, however, the practical component in medical courses cannot be based solely on those carried out in hospitals.

The representative from Cape Verde mentioned that courses in these areas are not accredited if they don't have the conditions required by the indicators, nor are they accredited for distance learning.

In the case of Angola, the President of the Republic issued a decree prohibiting the creation of new medical courses on the condition that existing courses be accredited, because of the high number of failures in the exams for vacancies in the Ministry of Health. In the case of Angola, it was mentioned that because of

the high number of failures in the exams for vacancies in the Ministry of Health, the president issued a decree prohibiting the creation of new medical courses on condition that existing courses were accredited.

Prof. Mataruca then presented the **Project for the Creation of the Lusophone Countries Network (LUSOQAN)**, with the aim of socialising the project with future members and partners, and obtaining input on the next steps.

The LUSOQAN project aims to establish the Lusophone Quality Assurance Network in order to contribute to and support the harmonisation/comparability/recognition of higher education programmes among Portuguese-speaking African countries and the creation of a distinctive, comparable, attractive and globally competitive higher education space through enhanced collaboration.



It was mentioned that it will involve six Portuguese-speaking African countries, namely: Angola; Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and Equatorial Guinea.

At the end of the project, the following results are expected: the committee for the creation of LUSOQAN, the LUSOQAN Statutes, the LUSOQAN executive board and LUSOQAN established.

After the presentation of the project, the plenary session followed, where the following inputs were gathered to enrich the project:

The President of the CNAQ suggested adding the Continental Strategy for Education in Africa and the Addis Ababa Declaration (on the recognition of qualifications, bearing in mind that the Angolan and Cape Verdean agencies are responsible for this) as reference documents.

The representatives from Angola and Cape Verde said that they supported the initiative to create a network of Lusophone countries, and mentioned that the initiative was pertinent, but some aspects have been raised:

- The creation of a network requires legal personality and how it will materialise;
- Need to articulate the name of the network with the scope of action; and
- It is important to combine efforts with CPLP initiatives.

### **Remarks**

São Tomé and Príncipe and Guinea-Bissau do not have quality assurance agencies.

### **Recommendations**

- Establish contacts with Sao Tome and Principe and Guinea Bissau so that they can nominate focal points to take part in the discussions to create the network.
- Formalise the committee with the three countries and then see how to involve other countries - The committee will discuss the creation of the network;
- Draw up a timetable for action;
- Involve legal experts from the agencies in the discussions on setting up the network.



With regard to the focal points, Cape Verde proposed Dr Jorge Dias and Angola agreed to send the proposal.

### **Final remarks**

The AfriQAN conference, as expected, proved to be an ample opportunity for participants to share knowledge and experiences and learn from each other. The presentations and discussions that took place during the conference emphasised, in the face of COVID-19, the need for ICT training, reflection on reducing connectivity costs and extending broadband, and the search for internal and external quality control mechanisms that are not aligned with hybrid teaching and learning methods. There was a need to extend quality assurance standards to ICT infrastructure and staff capacity in the use of e-learning and videoconferencing platforms, to encourage African countries to have distance learning institutes, and to increase and improve skills in the use of ICT in the teaching and learning process. In view of their usefulness, African HEIs are challenged to come up with solutions to the problems that concern society, seeking decisions based on reliable statistical data and focusing on the quality of graduates.

One aspect that stands out is that the collaboration in higher education should be a focus of university leadership as well as its members; the development of a collaborative platform can respond to the current and future complexities of HEIs and incorporate cultural diversities to improve quality assurance in Africa.

An unavoidable aspect is the need to harmonise quality assurance systems at regional level; creating mechanisms to be self-sustaining, establishing regional quality assurance networks between countries with a linguistic or cultural background, based on synergies between the networks so that HE in Africa is attractive.

