

## African Academic Credit System (ACTS)

### Report of the Policy Country Visit to ANGOLA (Luanda, 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024)

**Date:** Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 – 09.00 – 14.00

**Location:** Instituto Nacional de Avaliação, Acreditação e Reconhecimento de Estudos do Ensino Superior (INAAREES) Avenida Imperial Santana, Quarteirão Maraca, Travessa B3, Distrito Urbano do Kilamba, Município de Belas, Luanda, Angola

#### ACTS Experts who participated of the visit:

- Ana Maria Nhampule (Higher Education Expert of Mozambique)
- Pablo Beneitone (Higher Education Expert of OBREAL)
- Nodumo Dhlamini (AAU)

**List of participants from National Authorities:** see Annex 1

#### 1. Purpose of the site visit

- Validation and enrichment of the data provided by the countries through the responses to the Mapping Study Questionnaire, with a particular focus on data on Angola and SADC.

#### 2. Meeting held and attendants:

- *Consultation Workshop on ACTS*, with 23 participants: the importance of the initiative; validation of the Mapping study; challenges for implementation of ACTS; identification of institutions for ACTS implementation phase.
- Representatives of (Instituto Nacional de Avaliação, Acreditação e Reconhecimento de Estudos do Ensino Superior (INAAREES)
- Representatives of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation
- Representatives of the National Institute for Qualifications
- Representatives of public and private higher education institutions (Rectors, Vice-Rectors for Academic Affairs, Academic Directors and Coordinators of curriculum development within the institutions)
- Representatives of the professional boards (nurses and medicine)

#### 3. Objectives of the consultation workshop:

- Presentation of ACTS initiative and its importance for international mobility and academic recognition.
- Discussion with participants for the identification of the main challenges for the implementation of ACTS at national level.
- Identification of potential institutions for ACTS implementation phase.

#### 4. Main aspects to be retained from the discussion

This document records the main aspects to be retained from the interactions that took place at the consultation workshop, and it presents the opinion of the members of the ACTS Technical Team on the possibilities and challenges of Angola's participation in the implementation phase of ACTS.

The opening ceremony of the consultation workshop was Chaired by Prof. José Luis M. Alexandre, the National Director for Higher Education, on behalf of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation.

In his opening remarks, Prof. José Luis expressed the Angola's political commitment to continue to enhance the implementation of the Higher Education Law that is operationalized by various standards, mechanisms and tools to ensure quality and relevance of Angolan higher education.

Speaking specifically about ACTS, he referred to the Angolan political expectation that this mechanism will help accelerate the ongoing national efforts for the harmonization of curriculum in higher education, coordinated by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation.

He stressed that, despite Angola do not have an independent regulation on credit system, rules for the implementation of competency-based learning and teaching as well as credit accumulation and transfer are established on the General Norms for Curriculum Design of undergraduate Programs (Decree n° 193/18, of 10 August 2018) and on the General Norms for Curriculum Design of Post-graduate Programs (Decree n° 450/22, of 30 September 2022). Thus, the participation of Angola in the implementation of ACTS could accelerate the ongoing process of training and capacity building for higher education institutions (HEI) for the harmonization of their curriculum, including the implementation of credit accumulation and transfer mechanisms.

ACTS implementation process could also contribute for the development of a national policy document on credit system, strengthening the Angolan capacity to harmonize its system with SADC CATS and with the ACTS from the lesson learnt from other countries and experts that a participating in this process.

So that, the focus of the implementation of ACTS in Angola should be the capacity building for those engaged in decision making for policy review on the national credit system and capacity building for HEI for them to review and design curricula that are aligned with the paradigm of competency-based learning and teaching.

Following the program, after the opening ceremony, the ACTS Technical Team made two presentations on:

- a) The HAQAA initiative, with a focus on ACTS: its framework, main objectives and principles;
- b) Preliminary data from the Mapping Study, with a focus on SADC countries and Angola.

After the two presentations, the debates in plenary highlighted the following aspects:

**i. About the preliminary data presented in the Mapping Report**

There are some corrections on the data about Angolan HE that will be sent by the National Directorate of Higher Education to the ACTS Expert Team. But information on credit system it was validated.

Participants raised some questions related to the general issues on the implementation of a harmonized credit system, and attempts to answer, as presented below:

- Although there seems to be a shared concept of credit as a student's workload, data on SADC countries show that there are differences in the value of credit, ranging from 10 hours to 30 hours. As this has influence on the total credits accumulated by students at the end of an academic year, What implications will this difference have in the context of the implementation of ACTS?

- A tentative answer to this question pointed to the possibility of ACTS ensuring the construction of common benchmarks for the implementation of national credit systems, including the establishment of a shared benchmark that allows the comparability of the different national systems.  
In this context, academic mobility will be underpinned by a process of recognition of accumulated credits, in an environment of transparency and mutual trust.

## ii. **About the Angolan challenges to implement credit system and other issues on higher education**

The Angolan general norms for curriculum design of undergraduate and post-graduate programs were established in 2018 and 2022 respectively and include rules for the implementation of competency-based approach in higher education. However, institutions are not following properly those norms as they lack of:

- Technical competencies to better understand the competency-based paradigm in higher education.
- Technical competencies for the implementation of the principles of credit accumulation and transfer that are set up in the norms.
- Institutional procedures for curriculum design based on the student's workload. HEI they continue to draw up their curriculum on the basis of the academic calendar.
- Good understanding of the meaning of assessment in the context of competence-based learning and teaching.
- Internal norms and procedures for internal mobility among different programs and for interinstitutional mobility.
- Interinstitutional mobility procedures and tools that consider the recognition of credits accumulated at the home institution, rather than the equivalence of the course contents. It is believed that the ongoing process of harmonising curriculum of similar subject area could contribute to a greater appreciation of credits as a reference factor for student mobility and recognition of partial and full qualifications.
- Specific tools for the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework that was approved in 2022, by a Presidential Decree n° 210/2022 and includes higher education as a sub framework. The lack includes the absence of level descriptors that could help to determine the learning outcomes for each program.
- Strong participation of professional boards and employers on the definition of programs to ensure that the qualifications offered by HEI are aligned with the needs of the industry. This could create better conditions for internship and for employability of graduates. This could also strengthen trust among industry and HEI.

Participants agreed on the need for:

- ✓ The establishment of a specific policy on National Credit Accumulation and Transfer for higher education, including a Manual for implementation. This could facilitate the better understanding of the paradigm of competency-based learning and teaching and the curriculum design that consider the student outcomes.
- ✓ The policy of credit accumulation and transfer that includes the recognition of microcredits.

- ✓ Sensitization of institutions to avoid the approach of education as business and embark to the approach of education for student learning outcomes.
- ✓ A new policy of student's assessment that value the learning outcomes and competencies acquired rather than memorization.
- ✓ A national policy favourable for partnership among HEI and industries to develop entrepreneurship projects and incubators that could benefit institutions for innovations and fundraising and promoting new jobs for students.
- ✓ Incentives for industries that collaborate for internship of students.
- ✓ Establishment of an entity for the coordination of the National System of Education as its implementation is made by different sectors such as Ministry of Education; Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation; and Ministry of Labour.

### iii. **About the relevance of the implementation of ACTS in Angola**

- The participants consider the implementation of ACTS in Angola to be pertinent because they believe that it can contribute to strengthen the confidence on the Angolan higher education, thus facilitating academic mobility to and from the country through:
  - Capacity building and support to approach to the challenges of implementing a national credit accumulation and transfer system as mentioned above;
  - Policy review that can strengthen the implementation of competency-based approach on curriculum design and implementation in HE;
  - Promoting an increasing transparency of the processes of accumulation and transfer of credits.
- From the implementation process of ACTS the country will find opportunities for interaction and exchange of experiences with other actors of the HEIs and specialists in matters of academic credits.
- The following factors can facilitate the operationalization of ACTS:
  - More promotion of information on the ACTS for all stakeholders in Angola for them to know its importance and to embark on its implementation;
  - The wide dissemination of ACTS, promoting greater ownership by countries and regions in Africa;
  - Guidelines for the implementation of ACTS, to ensure that we talk the same language. And the credit systems they facilitate students mobility, portability of qualifications and recognition.
  - Clarification of the limits, from the national systems to the regional, African continental and global ones. This could avoid the natural tension among different levels.

### iv. **Proposal of the profile of Angolan HEIs to be selected for the implementation of ACTS**

The will of most participants is to see HEIs participate in the implementation of ACTS under the HAQAA 3 Project. So, they suggested the following profile indicators of the HEIs to be considered in the selection:

- ✓ To have democratic structure and democratic process of management in place.
- ✓ To have mission, values and programs in place, that comply with the national policy, norms and strategies for higher education.
- ✓ To be implementing the credit system, as prescribed in the national norms for curriculum development.
- ✓ Have accredited programs.
- ✓ Have participated to the ongoing debates on harmonization in higher education in the national, regional and continental levels.

### 4.1. **Opinion of the ACTS Technical Team on Angola's participation in the implementation phase**

In the opinion of the ACTS Technical Team, Angola offers wide possibilities for participation in the implementation phase of ACTS. There is a political commitment of the country to the operationalization of the African initiative, declared and demonstrated at the highest level, by the representative of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation.

The possibilities of materializing political commitment are supported by:

- Enthusiasm shown by the relevant institutions in the governance of the national higher education system, like INAAREES and the National Institute for Qualifications. Those institutions can play a relevant role in the coordination and management of activities at the national level, with the engagement of the selected HEIs and with wide possibilities of extending the implementation of ACTS to other HEIs, as one of the impact results of the pilot implementation.
- The enthusiasm and interest shown by the HEIs represented at the Meeting, recognizing that the implementation of ACTS can add value to internal processes within the scope of the implementation of the national norms on curriculum design.
- The clarity with which the participants pointed to the factors that determine the implementation of ACTS, suggesting actions and products that should be developed.

As Angola is in an initial stage of implementation of credit system in HE, the implementation of ACTS could add value to the national efforts for policy design and for capacity building.