

African Academic Credit System (ACTS)

Report of the Policy Country Visit to MOZAMBIQUE

(Maputo, 29th July 2024)

Date: Monday 29th July 2024 - 09.00 – 14.00

Location: Conselho Nacional de Avaliacao de Qualidade do Ensino Superior (CNAQ) office in Universidade Eduardo Mondlane - 3453 Avenida Julius Nyerere, Maputo, Mozambique

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 Mozambique and SADC.

2. Meetings held and attendants:

- *Courtesy meeting* with His Excellency Vice Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education
 - ACTS Expert Team
 - CNAQ Director for Promotion of the implementation of the National Credit System, the National Quality Assurance System and the National Qualifications Framework
 - Vice-Rector of Eduardo Mondlane University
- *Consultation Workshop on ACTS*, with 32 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 CNAQ
 - Representatives of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education
 - Representative of the National Institute for Certification and Recognition (INECE)
 - Representatives of public and private higher education institutions (Vice-Rectors for Academic Affairs, Academic Directors and Coordinators of curriculum development within the institutions)
 - Representatives of the professional boards (engineers, nurses and medicine)

3. Objectives of the meetings:

- 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

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

4.1. Courtesy Meeting

The courtesy meeting with His Excellency Vice Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education preceded the meeting with other actors, with the aim of presenting the Members of the ACTS Technical Team and the objectives of the visit to Mozambique.

The Vice Minister welcomed the Team and expressed Mozambique's interest in participating in regional, African and global initiatives for the harmonization of higher education, as a way to strengthen internal processes with a view to improving the quality of Mozambican higher education.

He used some current examples of difficulties in the recognition of studies and diplomas acquired by Mozambicans in some countries, as well as the mobility of some Mozambicans out of the country, to confirm the importance of ACTS as a mechanism that could help address current challenges related to mobility and recognition of studies and academic degrees.

At the end of the meeting, he said that Mozambique is interested in participating in the implementation of ACTS and thanked the initiative for including the country in the visit, welcoming the fact that Maputo was the first place to be visited for the validation and enrichment of the Mapping Report on credit systems in African countries.

4.2. Consultation workshop

The opening ceremony of the consultation workshop was Chaired by His Excellency Edson Macuacua, Vice Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education.

In his opening remarks, His Excellency the Vice Minister reaffirmed Mozambique's political commitment to continue to enhance the implementation of the Higher Education Law operationalized by various standards, mechanisms and tools focused on expanding access to relevant and quality higher education.

Speaking specifically about ACTS, he referred to the Mozambican political expectation that this mechanism will help accelerate ongoing national efforts to consolidate the implementation of the National Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (SNATCA), established in 2010 and revised through the Decree 72/2023, of 18 December.

The contribution of ACTS to the consolidation of the SNATCA can be made through the establishment of shared concept of academic credits and common references for the accumulation and transfer of academic credits, including the training of the actors involved in qualifications recognition, and curriculum development, especially in higher education institutions.

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 Mozambique.

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

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

The data on Mozambique reflect reality on HE.

However, the participants raised some questions and attempts to answer about the ACTS, 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 challenges of implementing SNATCA

SNATCA has existed since 2010 and legally, it is in the full implementation phase. However, there are still technical challenges for its effective implementation in higher education institutions (HEIs), as can be seen below:

- Although there is SNATCA, inter-institutional mobility does not consider the equivalence of credits accumulated at the home institution, but rather the equivalence of the course contents. It is believed that the ongoing process of designing specific subject area harmonised qualifications for registration purposes could contribute to a greater appreciation of credits as a reference factor for inter-institutional mobility.
- There is an urgent need to establish a platform for registering qualifications, which includes information on credits. In this sense, the National Qualifications Framework will work as an instrument to boost an increasingly better implementation of the credit system.
- There are several factors that slow down the effective implementation of SNATCA:
 - Technical capacity of the actors involved in the definition of internal policies on curriculum design, evaluation and academic staff working time in HEIs;
 - All programs designed by HEIs include information on credits as it is a formal obligation (*administratively defined time*). However, most institutions continue to draw up their curriculum on the basis of the academic calendar (750 to 800 hours per semester, which implies 35 to 40 hours per week) and not on the student's workload, which should take into account as a starting point for defining the necessary study time the following: the entry profile, the skills to be developed to achieve the exit profile and the learning results;
 - Internal assessment policies that do not focus on competences and learning outcomes, but rather on the number of assessments carried out and the grade obtained by the student, in a context where lecturers still need to develop a better understanding of the meaning of assessment in the context of competence-based teaching-learning; and
 - The teaching work culture based on the workload (hours of contact with the student), which creates negligence in the designing of consistent guidelines for independent study, which would allow the rational definition of the independent learning time needed.
- A guideline for the implementation of SNATCA is needed, respecting the specificities of different subject areas, to promote a shared understanding of the reasons that determine the greatest volume of work for areas such as medicine, engineering, etc.
- It is necessary to deepen the internal debate, in the institutions and at the national level, on academic mobility and credit transfer, as a starting point for the operationalization of the credit transfer agreements provided for in the SNATCA.
- In the process of curriculum review and design of new courses, students must be heard to inform about the time they really need to achieve the learning foreseen in the curricular plans.
- As happened when SNATCA was introduced, the training of the actors from HEIs involved in the curricular review and in the design of new programs should be resumed, in order to deepen the implementation of SNATCA.

- Professional boards and associations, as well as employers should be involved in discussions on academic credits, design of qualifications and design of curricula.

Participants consider that addressing the current challenges of SNATCA implementation is a necessary condition for successful country participation in the implementation of ACTS.

iii. **About the relevance of the implementation of ACTS in Mozambique**

- The participants consider the implementation of ACTS in Mozambique to be pertinent because they believe that it can contribute to strengthen the confidence on the Mozambican higher education, thus facilitating academic mobility to and from the country through:
 - A more systematic approach to the challenges of implementing SNATCA described above;
 - Promoting an increasing transparency of the processes of accumulation and transfer of credits.
- The implementation of ACTS may favour the development of national technical capacity for the implementation of SNATCA. In fact, within the scope of the implementation 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.
- Because the country has implemented SNATCA since 2010 and has carried out several capacity building actions, participants believe that there are experts who can make a valuable contribution to the process of implementing ACTS, in the national context, in the SADC region and at the continental level.
- The following factors can facilitate the operationalization of ACTS:
 - The existence of a script for academic credit transfer;
 - The wide dissemination of ACTS, promoting greater ownership by countries and regions in Africa;
 - Conferences, workshops and round tables (panel discussions and exchange of experiences) involving African countries and countries from other continents, promoting the understanding that credit accumulation and transfer is a universal issue, especially when addressing academic mobility, recognition and portability of qualifications;
 - Joint training and capacity building actions.
- The linguistic diversity of African countries was identified as a challenge that must be addressed with great attention to break down the communication barriers between the actors involved in the implementation of ACTS.

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

The will of most participants was that all Mozambican HEIs participate in the implementation of ACTS under the HAQAA 3 Project. However, understanding that this is a pilot phase, they suggested the following profile indicators of the HEIs to be considered in the selection:

- ✓ Institutions with digitized academic management systems, including the ease of access to information about the courses/qualifications they offer.
To better consider this criterion, "digitalisation measurement" mechanisms should be put in place, which allow for a better determination of when an institution can be considered to be digitalised and set some levels of digitalisation.
- ✓ To be implementing the credit system, as prescribed in the SNATCA.
- ✓ Have accredited programs.
- ✓ Have an internal Quality Policy and mechanisms for its implementation.

At the national level, it is urgent that a platform (repository) be created where all institutions can deposit their guiding instruments for the design of qualifications and can register their qualifications, highlighting the operationalization of SNATCA, QUANQES as a sub-framework of the NQF, and SINAQES, as a prerequisite for success in the implementation of ACTS.

4.3. Opinion of the ACTS Technical Team on Mozambique's participation in the implementation phase

In the opinion of the ACTS Technical Team, Mozambique 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 Minister who supervises higher education.

The possibilities of materializing political commitment are supported by:

- Enthusiasm shown by the relevant institutions in the governance of the national higher education system, and particularly the credit system. 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 SNATCA.
- The technical competence demonstrated by the participants, in clearly pointing out the advances and challenges of the implementation of the SNATCA, as well as the national and internal preparation of the HEIs for an effective implementation of the ACTS.
- The clarity with which the participants pointed to the factors that determine the implementation of ACTS, suggesting actions and products that should be developed.