

## **The Critical role of Registering and Assuring the Quality of Qualifications in Kenya**

The Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA) is established under the Kenya National qualifications framework (KNQF) act of 2014; and is the Custodian of Kenyan qualifications. The Authority's work is to define the various qualifications offered in the country and the inter-relationships between them. It also regulates the volume of learning, learning outcomes and admission requirements for all qualifications in Kenya. The work of the Authority cuts across the Basic, TVET and University sectors; and includes accrediting, and registering Qualifications awarding Institutions (QAIs), Professional bodies, External Quality assurance agencies, as well as local and foreign assessment and examination bodies (and the qualifications that they award and/or regulate) into the KNQF. Through this process, the Authority registers qualifications into the KNQF, and thereby makes them national qualifications that are internationally recognized and respected.

The KNQF is a learning outcome-based qualifications framework, comprising of all educational and training sectors and all forms of learning; formal, non-formal and informal learning. The KNQF comprises of levels, each being identified by a unique set of Level Descriptors. At each level, the Level Descriptors describe the *Knowledge, Skills and Competencies* that need to be acquired by the learners completing that level of learning.

The KNQA's main work is to create a one stop registers for all accredited institutions, qualifications and learners in the country. In carrying out its work, the Authority works to (1) Secure qualifications standards in the country, (2) Promote Quality in National Assessments and qualifications, (3) Promote public confidence in National qualifications, (4) Promote awareness of the benefits of registered and quality assured qualifications in the country and to ( 5) Ensure that registered qualifications are offered in an efficient and effective manner.

We regulate qualifications within the context of the Kenya government policy, the KNQF act and KNQF regulations, 2018. We are part of the bigger Government agenda to reform education and training in Kenya; to bring better coordination and harmony in this vital sector. Currently we are engaged with the government's far reaching reforms in the technical and vocational training sector, specifically with the introduction of the Competence based training system and improved student mobility across the various levels of our education system.

KNQA has described 10 levels for the education system in Kenya. At each level, the authority has prescribed the desired learning outcomes (in terms of skills, knowledge and competencies) that learners must have; when leaving that level. All qualifications in the country that meet similar training outcomes are classified and registered at the same levels. Working with stakeholders in the education sector, the Authority has recently developed and gazetted new admission requirements for all levels of the Kenyan education system. This has brought in consistency and better linkages between the various levels of our education and training system.

The Authority has developed and is now implementing new standards, guidelines and policies in the assessment and quality assurance of qualifications. We are also working with stakeholders to create a national credit accumulation and transfer system (dubbed the Kenya Credit Accumulation and Transfer system, KCATs) to support student mobility across different levels. We anticipate changes in the qualifications market given the scale of reforms within the sector, and the persistent demands by industry for qualifications that meet their requirements. Our aim is to create and award qualifications in the country that meet industry needs. And, to help achieve this the KNQA Board consists of representatives from the Federation of Kenya employers, central organization of trade unions and the Ministry of labour among others.

The work we do at KNQA directly has an impact on every learner in Kenya, who studies at any level of our education system. We do not underestimate the importance of the maintenance of standards, the safe and efficient delivery of assessments and examinations and public confidence in the system, for both these students and those who rely on the qualifications they achieve. At the heart of our work is validity – our primary focus that qualifications are good quality, their standards are maintained, and they accurately indicate what individuals know and can do. Quality assured qualifications play an important role in the lives of young people in their progression to higher education or work.

**Dr Juma Mukhwana** is the Director General and CEO of the Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA); Email [knqa.go.ke@gmail.com](mailto:knqa.go.ke@gmail.com)