ZAMBIA QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY (ZAQA)

RESEARCH REPORT

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE ZAMBIA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT IN ZAMBIA

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Authors:

This report was researched and authored by Overson Shumba, Marian Mtonga & Jacqueline B. Mulenga.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Zambia Qualifications Authority.

Contents

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABE	Association of Business Executives
ABMA	Association of Business Managers and Administrators
ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
AQVN	African Qualifications Verification Network
DEBS	District Education Board Secretary
CATS	Credit Accumulation and Transfer System
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Professional Training
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFAO	Corporation for Africa and Overseas Mobility Zambia
CGMA	Chartered Global Management Accountants
CIMA	Chartered Institute Management Accountants
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ETF	European Training Foundation
EIZ	Engineering Institution of Zambia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GRZ	Government of Republic of Zambia
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HPCZ	Health Professions Council of Zambia
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IEC	Information Education Communications
ILO	International Labour Office
MCZ	Medical Council of Zambia
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MoTS	Ministry of Technology and Science
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre

NIPA	National Institute of Public Administration
NISIR	National Institute of Scientific and Industrial Research
NMCZ	Nursing and Midwifery Council of Zambia
NOKUT	Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NPT	Normalisation Process Theory
PEO	Provincial Education Officer
QMIS	Qualifications Management Information System
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SADC TCCA	Southern Africa Development Community Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation
SADCQF	Southern Africa Development Community Qualifications Framework
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SOE	State Owned Enterprise
TAZAMA	Tanzania Zambia Mafuta
TAZARA	Tanzania Zambia Railway Authority
TCZ	Teaching Council of Zambia
TEVETA	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority
TVET	Technical Vocational Education Training
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNLAS	University of Lusaka
UNZA	University of Zambia
UQP	UNESCO Qualifications Passport
ZACCI	The Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry
ZAMISE	Zambia Institute of Special Education

ZANEC	Zambia National Education Coalition
ZAQA	Zambia Qualifications Authority
ZCAS	Zambia Institute of Chartered Accountants
ZCCM	Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines
ZCILT	Zambia Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport
ZCSA	Zambia Compulsory Standards Agency
ZIALE	Zambia Institute of Advanced Legal Education
ZISC	Zambia State Insurance Company
ZFE	Zambia Federation of Employers
ZICA	Zambia Institute of Chartered Accountants
ZIHRM	Zambia Institute of Human Resources Management
ZIM	Zambia Institute of Marketing
ZIPS	Zambia Institute of Purchasing and Supply
ZQF	Zambia Qualifications Framework

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The research team expresses their gratitude to the different stakeholders that took part in the study; their insights and perceptions were useful in studying the impact of the ZQF in education, training and employment in Zambia. Gratitude is also extended to stakeholders that provided contacts for the participants to be engaged; without such contacts, it would not have been possible to reach such participants.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE ZAMBIA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT IN ZAMBIA

ABSTRACT

This study used a mixed methodology approach that triangulated secondary data from desk reviews and the QMIS and primary data from a survey employing a Google survey questionnaire, interviews, and focus group discussions. The results demonstrate that the education and training system has substantively transitioned from the pre-ZQF era when it was characterized by fragmentation and the absence of a unifying qualifications framework. The past six years has seen the implementation of the ZQF and the institutionalization of principles and practices that it promotes. The study also finds and reports that the past six years were marked by enactment and amendment of laws and statutory instruments, sensitization and engagement of stakeholders, development and deployment of standards and guidelines, and operational activities of the Appropriate Authorities enabling the institutionalization of the ZQF. In this study, the stakeholders positively perceive the institutions implementing the ZQF and yearn for them to engage and sensitize them more.

Overall, the study demonstrates emerging impact including the transformed policy and legal landscape, availability of QMIS and statistics on accreditation, registration and evaluation of qualifications, positive perception of stakeholders, availability and use of standards and guidelines for quality assurance, implementation of RPL and CATS policies, availability and use of national occupational standards, and increasing standardisation with the uptake of ZQF principles (level descriptors, credits and notional hours).

1. INTRODUCTION

The Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA), established through Act No. 13 of 2011, as per mandate has developed and is implementing the Zambia Qualifications Framework (ZQF). The ZQF serves the purpose to classify, accredit, publish and articulate quality assured national

qualifications. ZAQA is governed by a Board. Section 11 (f) of the Act No. 13 of 2011 stipulates one function of the Board as follows:

> *(f) Conduct or commission investigations on issues of importance to the development and implementation of the Framework, **including periodic studies of the impact of the Framework on education, training and employment**.*

This is the first impact study that ZAQA commissioned in 2024. The study focused on the impact of the Zambia Qualifications Framework on education, training and employment in Zambia for the past six years. This was to be achieved in two stages:

(i) Provide the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF, and

(ii) Measure the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study focused on four research questions.

(i) What was the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF (prior to 2017)?

(ii) What is the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation? i.e., 2018-2023?

(iii) How do stakeholders understand the ZQF and its impacts?

(iv) What are the perceptions of stakeholders on the impact of ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation, i.e., 2018-2023?

3. INTERPRETATION OF THE CONSTRUCT

The construct "impact of the ZQF" is challenging to study as seen in the literature on national qualifications frameworks (Allais, 2010; Allais, 2011; Morrison, 2020; Raffe, 2013; SAQA, 2015). For this study, "Impact of the ZQF" was interpreted in relation to changes in the policy and legal frameworks for education and training, adoption of ZQF principles, standards and guidelines in institutions, stakeholders understanding and perceptions of the ZQF, and the

demand for the services that ZAQA provides. Impacts associated with national curriculum frameworks include achieving standardization, transparency, flexibility, life-long learning, employability, and international comparability. It was important to know if stakeholders perceived these impacts and if the principles and constructs on the ZQF circulating in the system was embedded in practice. Appreciating that institutionalizing the ZQF entails embedding its principles in the regular work of education and training institutions is the ultimate result, the research team opted for the normalization process theory to guide the study.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

This study is informed by two theories, the human capital theory (HCT) and the normalisation process theory (NPT). With HCT education is viewed as a driver of economic growth by developing the human capital and thus is a theory that rationalises the development of NQFs. On the other hand the normalisation process theory focusses on how new practices and organizational changes get implemented (bringing a practice or practices into action), embedded (practices routinely incorporated in everyday work) and integrated and sustained within a system (May, et al, 2009). For this to happen there is need for stakeholder buy-in to fully engage cognitively and practically with implementation of an innovation as shown in a clinical care practice (Sivakumar, Pan, Choi, Wang, & Yu, 2022) and implementing e-health systems (Hogan-Murphy, Stewart, Tonna, Strath, & Cunningham, 2020). This buy-in is acknowledged in the ZAQA annual reports as important in the implementation of the various practices and innovations motivated by the ZQF. This buy-in is impacted by awareness, familiarity, perceptions, and understanding among different stakeholders. The normalisation process theory proposes four main constructs: coherence (sense making), cognitive participation (engagement), collective action (enactment) and reflexive monitoring (appraisal) that must be actualised when executing an intervention. As evidence of impact, it was anticipated that participants in the study would provide insights into how they make sense, engage, and implement the ZQF driven principles, standards and guidelines.

5. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

A mixed-methodology approach was used. The research approach triangulates results of desk review, analysis of secondary data, and a survey to collect primary data. This has worked well in studies that have explored impact of NQFs (Allais, 2011; Morrison, 2020; Raffe, 2013; SAQA, 2015). Strategic plans and annual reports provided and/or on the websites of ZAQA and the three sub-framework authorities i.e., ECZ, TEVETA and HEA were used for the desk review. A stakeholder map helped the research team to identify key stakeholders for inclusion in the impact study and to decide on the sampling plan.

6. ACHIEVED SAMPLE

Primary data collection involved the administration of questionnaire survey and conducting interviews. For the questionnaire survey, a total of 227 Google forms were received. A total of 212 were from education and training institutions; these were registered from 103 students, 80 teaching staff or trainers, and 29 administrative and management staff. From the employer/employee survey, 15 participants responded. Five professional bodies were selected to make submissions. The number responding to the survey was below what the researchers had expected considering the wide distribution of the survey. For example, out of the 412 registered TEVET institutions country wide, 25% (n = 103) were randomly selected proportionate to their number in each province. Under the higher education sub-framework, 9 public universities and 36 out of 52 private universities, 10 out of 46 private colleges and 10 private university colleges were included.

The interviews were conducted in two cycles corresponding to the main data collection phase and to a second phase that entailed collecting supplementary data. A total of 62 interviews and 4 focus group discussions were achieved. The interviews were carried out with a variety of stakeholders including students, lecturers/trainers, vice chancellor, deans, principals, quality assurance managers, registrars, unions, a director general, and teachers, some officers in government departments. Supplementary data were needed to take into account stakeholders in the general education framework like teachers and officers involved in administration of

standards and quality assurance. Further, the research team needed to explore the impact that had been experienced in those institutions that facilitated qualifications by foreign awarding bodies such as ABE, ABMA, ACCA, and others.

Overall, results should be taken with limitation of the sample size in mind. Sample size for the electronic questionnaire might have been affected by the ongoing national electricity load management and poor connectivity could have been a factor. As found out in the course of interviews, some target survey participants lacked knowledge of the ZQF and may have chosen not to respond. Logistical challenges made it necessary to opt for telephonic interviews. Some stakeholders preferred face-to-face interaction and some were not available for inclusion in the study.

7. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

This synthesis is structured around the four questions of the study.

7.1 What was the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF (prior to 2017)?

The desk review on the pre-ZQF period revealed that the education and training sector was growing and diversifying in types of institutions and in qualifications awarded. With liberalisation of the sector, there was rapid appearance of the private institutions which, some of the stakeholders in this study say, prioritized profit over standards and thus a decline in relevance and credibility of qualifications. The absence of an overarching quality assurance mechanisms and a national qualifications framework was felt more in the higher education sub-sector was fragmented and operating in an environment with a fragmented policy and legal framework (HEA, 2021). This had an impact on the image of certain qualifications as not meeting the needs of Zambian society and industry, and not meeting standards of qualifications in other jurisdictions. Professional qualifications were awarded using standards and quality assurance mechanisms set by their independent Boards. In the absence of a coordinated structure for qualifications, holders of TVET and professional qualifications had no pathway into degree programmes.

Two subsectors, the general education and technical vocational education, had authorities regulating activities under their mandates. Respectively, the ECZ (established by the 1983 Act) regulated general education examinations and certification, and TEVETA (established by the 1998 Act) regulated curriculum, examinations and certification. The policy and legal landscape changed considerably enabling the establishment of an authority for the higher education subsector, the HEA and the national qualifications authority, ZAQA

7.2 What is the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation? i.e., 2018-2023?

The impact of developing and implementing the ZQF has been to unify education and training in the country and to set out transparent and distinguishable level of qualifications, the learning outcomes or level descriptors, and the minimum notional hours and credits for courses and learning programmes. There are multiple impacts observed that may be attributed to operationalization of the ZQF:

i. Regional and internationally benchmarked qualifications framework enabling validation and evaluation of foreign qualifications.

ii. Formulation and enactment of legal provisions enabling a more effective implementation and harmonized institutionalization of the framework through delineation of roles.

iii. Development of standards and guidelines and stakeholder engagements for transparent and effective implementation and institutionalization of quality assurance, especially in the higher education sub-sector.

iv. Strides towards institutionalizing ZQF principles in education and training institutions and the accreditation of learning programmes.

v. Non-recognition and discontinuation of learning programmes that do not meet the ZQF standards; this leads to safeguarding and cost saving for learners and the economy.

7.3 How do stakeholders understand the ZQF and its impacts?

Most stakeholders in the survey did not have a clear understanding and thus found it difficult to describe the ZQF. However many understood what they wanted it to contribute in terms of benefits, i.e., raising the quality of standards and the reputation of qualifications. Stakeholders

perceived the ZQF to be contributing towards standardization and transparency in the qualifications for each level of education and training, ensuring international comparability, and towards increasing relevance of qualifications for the labour market. Their understanding was that ZAQA could make this possible with increased stakeholder engagement and sensitization on ZAQA's services and the ZQF.

7.4 What are the perceptions of stakeholders on the impact of ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation, i.e., 2018-2023?

Different stakeholders identified with benefits that could accrue with the implementation of the ZQF. While they were not fully conversant with it, the stakeholders in education and training perceived that with more engagement with ZAQA, their role in implementing its principles and internal quality assurance could be enhanced. By and large stakeholders perceived that their quality assurance was being enhanced, education and training institutions were using standards and guidelines, and that learning programme accreditation by the Authorities was increasing.

The few employers and employees in the study perceived that the ZQF enabled them to hire the right employees with the right skills and competencies. Students and teaching staff on the other hand perceived the ZQF as having impacted transparency, standards and relevance while management of education and training institutions showed an understanding of the ZQF having impacted other aspects such as recognition of prior learning as well as transfer of credits. They perceived that the ZQF was enhancing their work, e.g., internal quality assurance mechanisms. They perceived inadequacies in ZAQA's engagement with institutions and its coordination, harmonization, and the delineation of its roles and those of the sub-framework authorities. Some stakeholders perceived the need to review ZQF to accommodate some sub-qualifications such as Advanced levels, honours degrees, and the specialized Masters in medicine.

8. ASSESSMENT OF THE RESULTS AGAINST OBJECTIVES OF ZQF

The results were assessed against the four objectives of the ZQF. These objectives are the following:

(a) Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;

b) Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;

(c) Enhance the quality of education and training; and

(d) Promote education, training and employment opportunities.

With respect to the first objective, the ZQF has created a single integrated national framework for learning achievements by unifying the three education and training sub-sectors. With respect to the second objective, the ZQF is enabling access and mobility. However, it requires a review to ensure that all qualifications and sub-qualifications can be placed on the framework. This is the case for A-levels, honours degrees, and higher degrees for specialists in the medical field. The review needs to take into account the reviewed National Education Curriculum Framework (MoE, 2023) and the various amendments to the laws governing the education and training sectors[1].

Both internal and external quality assurance guidelines and standards are being implemented enhancing quality through accreditation of learning programmes and their registration. This reflects progress towards attainment of objective 3. With respect to objective 3, the ZQF is benchmarked against regional and international frameworks and thus promoting international comparability. In this study, it was observed that qualifications obtained from awarding bodies in all continents were being presented to be validated, accredited and evaluated by ZAQA. This points to the acceptance of Zambian qualifications for education and training in those countries.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, while stakeholders perceive benefits of implementing the ZQF favourably, the results point to the fact that, for many stakeholders, the structure and scope of the ZQF is not easy to describe. Regardless, those in education and training institutions believed that they can have a role in implementing the principles required for quality transformation to increase the relevance and repute of qualifications. The following recommendations arise from their acknowledgement of the institutionalization of ZAQA and the ZQF and need to enhance its impact.

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[1] The National Policy on Education is pending approval by Cabinet.

1) Increased stakeholder engagement to improve understanding of the ZQF structure and purpose, and to increase understanding of level descriptors, employability attributes, national occupational standards, and the concepts of RPL, inclusivity, and lifelong learning.

2) Improved synergies in the implementation of the ZQF between ZAQA and sub framework authorities, and other stakeholders such as education and training institutions, professional bodies, government ministries, and the industry players.

3) Increased accessibility and visibility of ZAQA to stakeholders across the country.

4) Increased information and communication concerning accreditation of learning programmes, and registration of learner achievement records.

5) Revision the ZQF to accommodate (a) the revised National Education Curriculum Framework that introduces Advanced Level to the general education and general and honours degrees in the higher education sector, and (b) the introduction of technical universities and colleges into the higher education sub framework.

10. CONCLUSION

The ZQF is a unified national qualifications framework that is contributing towards improving transparency and comparability of qualifications. The stakeholders participating in this study appear to recognize this and other benefits of the ZQF. While many participants are not sufficiently familiar with the ZQF they showed a welcoming attitude towards its implementation at the same time expecting greater sensitization and engagement. This is particularly important given the dynamic nature of the ZQF. Noteworthy is the review of the ZQF level descriptors to incorporate employability attributes and the integration of national occupational standards.

It is important for stakeholders to understand the ZQF associated concepts and principles if they are to be effectively embedded into regular work, e.g., the design, delivery and quality assurance of learning programmes. Stakeholders in this study express positive expectations

regarding the ZQF but lack fuller awareness and understanding of it. It is recommended that, stakeholder sensitisation and engagements and resources needed must thus be prioritised to ensure that stakeholders attain the coherence or full understanding, they need to be able to collectively and effectively institutionalise the principles that ZQF promotes. The transformative impact of the ZQF may then be fully realised.

REPORT ON THE FIRST IMPACT STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ZAMBIA QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

1. INTRODUCTION

The Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA), established through Act No. 13 of 2011, as per mandate has developed and is implementing the Zambia Qualifications Framework (ZQF). The ZQF serves the purpose to classify, accredit, publish and articulate quality assured national qualifications. ZAQA is governed by a Board. Section 11 (f) of the ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 stipulates one function of the Board as follows:

> *(f) Conduct or commission investigations on issues of importance to the development and implementation of the Framework,* ***including periodic studies of the impact of the Framework on education, training and employment.***

In order to meet this requirement, ZAQA commissioned this impact study. This report presents the design, methodology and results of the first impact study of implementing the ZQF on education, training and employment in 2024. This study analysed secondary data from desk reviews and from the database, QMIS. Primary data were collected from questionnaire surveys, focus group discussions, meetings, and interviews.

2. INTEPRETATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The terms of reference required the researchers to plan and conduct a study on the impact of the Zambia Qualifications Framework on education, training and employment in Zambia. This was to be done in two stages: (i) provide the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF, and (ii) measure the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation. This entailed that the study would establish a retrospective baseline of the pre-ZQF period (i.e., prior to 2017) against which impact could be assessed. This baseline was established through desk review of official policy documents and of technical reports. Workshop reports, strategic plans, and annual reports published by ZAQA and the three sub framework authorities; ECZ, TEVETA and HEA were

reviewed. The impact of the ZQF was assessed for the period 2018-2023. This coincides with the period in which education and training was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study heavily relied on desk review of technical documents, analysis of data in the database and register of qualifications, and a descriptive survey that employed questionnaires, structured and semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. The survey reached a wide range of stakeholders in all ten provinces across the country. The impact study required the mapping, identification and engagement of appropriate stakeholders. The stakeholder mapping is presented in a later section of the report.

Finally, in interpreting the terms of reference, an effort was made to interpret the construct under study, i.e., "impact of the ZQF". This is challenging to study as seen in the literature on national qualifications frameworks (Allais, 2010; Morrison, 2020; Raffe, 2013; SAQA, 2015). For this study, "Impact of the ZQF" was interpreted in relation to the attainment of the multiple purposes it serves as provided for under the ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 and in terms of what difference it has made as expressed by stakeholders. Impact was assessed in terms of, for example, influence the ZQF has had on the following: the legal frameworks for education and training, policy and criteria tools and their adoption, uptake of ZQF principles, and understanding and perceptions of the stakeholders on the purposes and structure of the ZQF, and the services that ZAQA provides. This is consistent with the indicators to assess the impact of a national qualifications framework on what and whom (Raffe, 2013).

3. PURPOSE OF THE IMPACT STUDY

The purpose of this study was two-fold: (i) to profile the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF (prior to 2017) and (ii) to explore the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation. i.e., 2018-2023. The study also explained the processes by which knowledge about the ZQF has circulated in the system as well as processes by which ZAQA and the ZQF have created impacts. The purpose was focused further by the following objectives and research questions.

3.1 Objectives of the study

(i) Map, identify and engage appropriate stakeholders to participate in the study.

(ii) Provide the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF, and

(iii) Measure the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation.

3.2 Research questions

(i) What was the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF (prior to 2017)?

(ii) What is the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation? i.e., 2018-2023?

(iii) How do stakeholders understand the ZQF and its impacts?

(iv) What are the perceptions of stakeholders on the impact of ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation, i.e., 2018-2023?

4. BACKGROUND ON NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS
4.1 Brief literature on NQFs

The development and implementation of national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) has been quite rapid since the 1990s (Chakroun, 2010). A global national qualifications framework inventory has been documented (ETF, CEDEFOP & UNESCO UIL, 2013). Globally, "only five first-generation frameworks had begun to be implemented by the mid-1990s, and a further 10 frameworks were in development or implementation in the mid-2000" (Raffe, 2013; p. 143 citing Tuck, 2007). By 2010 at least 70 countries were developing or planning their NQFs. Their importance lies in that they serve as instruments to improve transparency and comparability of qualifications by proving clear and consistent description of qualifications at each level of the education and training system (Tuck, 2007; Chakroun, 2010). In the SADC, nine countries i.e., 60% of countries in the bloc, are implementing NQFs (Castel-Branco & Mavimbela, 2022). Zambia developed and implements a comprehensive NQF, the Zambia Qualifications Framework (ZQF), integrates and coordinates the qualifications subsystems

entailing general education, Trades and Occupations, and higher education. Its mandates are drawn from the ZAQA Act 13 of 2011.

4.2 The ZAQA Act and the ZQF

The ZAQA Act 2011 prescribes the functions of the Authority, the first of which is to (a) develop, oversee and maintain a national qualifications framework for Zambia. The objectives of the Framework are to—

(a) Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;

b) Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;

(c) Enhance the quality of education and training; and

(d) Promote education, training and employment opportunities.

The ZAQA Act stipulates that the ZQF shall be a single system for recognition of learning achievements. Figure 1 shows the ZQF in 2018 with slight modification to label the sub-frameworks and specifying the Council and Authorities responsible for their quality assurance. It consists of three coordinated qualifications sub-frameworks, for general and further education and training, trades and occupations, and higher education. The quality assurance processes for the general education sub framework are managed by different units in the Ministry of Education. For example, the ECZ regulates examinations and certification, the Directorate of Curriculum regulates curriculum and syllabuses, and the Directorate of Standards, monitors and evaluates standards. The Teaching Council of Zambia regulates the teaching profession. TEVETA regulates trades and occupations while the HEA quality assures higher education.

The ZQF classifies qualifications into ten levels from primary certificate to doctoral level of achievement. For distinction of the levels, level descriptors are defined as learning outcomes that tell the type of knowledge and skills demonstrable at that level. ZAQA (2016) explains that the descriptors are competence based and describe learning outcomes in terms of foundational, practical and reflexive competences.

Sub-frameworks

ZQF Level	General Education	Trades and Occupations	Higher Education
10			Doctorate Degree
9			Master's Degree
8			Post -Graduate Diploma
7			Bachelor's Degree (Honours) Bachelor's Degree (Ordinary)
6		Diploma	
5		Level 5 Certificate	
4		Level 4 Certificate	
3		Level 3 Certificate	
2	B Senior Secondary Education Certificate (Grade 12) A Junior Secondary Education Certificate (Grade 9)		
1	Primary Education Certificate (Grade 7)		
Quality Assurance	Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ)	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA)	Higher Education Authority (HEA)
Qualifications	The Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA Act No.13 of 2011)		

Figure 1. Zambia Qualifications Framework (adapted from Zambia Qualifications Authority-A5 Flier.cdr (zaqa.gov.zm)).

The scope of the ZQF and the aims for its operation fit relative to overall scope of the NQFs in many countries. Overall, an NQF defines a qualifications system and the interrelationships of the qualifications of a country in line with set criteria for levels of learning achieved. The structure and criteria leads to transparency and the awareness of progression from one qualification to another (Tuck, 2007; CEDEFOP, 2017), ease of comparison to and recognition

of qualifications from other jurisdictions (Keevy, 2011), and facilitation of student mobility (EFT, CEDEFOP & UIL, 2013). An NQF has the macro level benefit to bring education and training together into a single unified system (CEDEFOP, 2017) and potential impacts of NQFs to raise relevance and value of qualifications and the human resource that holds them to the labour market (Hanf & Hippach-Schneider, 2005; Allais, 2011).

As noted by Allais (2011) and Keevy (2011) the challenge for education and training systems is how to measure the impact of the NQF and to ascertain the attainment of the objectives. In Zambia, the former CEO of ZAQA (Chiyaba 2011) observed that lack of understanding of the operations of the ZQF and resistance to change by some stakeholders resulted in low quality or input to the process of consultation on the ZQF. The researchers gave some thoughts on what constitutes impacts and how to measure them as well as the process of institutionalization using the normalization process theory (May, et al., 2009; Chambers, et al. (2020), Huddleson, et al. (2020) and Murray, et al., 2010).

5. REFLECTION ON STUDYING IMPACTS OF NQF

Studying the 'impact of NQF' presents considerable difficulties because of the abstractness and dynamic nature of the construct. NQFs can include qualifications for all sub-frameworks or can be developed for one sub-framework. The totality of impact can thus only be seen when studies that explore what happens in each sub framework in detail are carried out. A national qualifications framework is dynamic and continuously develops as it responds to changes in societal contexts including policy and legal frameworks. Reciprocally it influences adaptation and change in policies. Its impacts can be at personal, institutional or can be system level, and can be negative or positive. Awareness of it or of its impacts may vary among stakeholders leading to underestimation of impact. Systemic integration of QF principles may be affected by governance structures and when they were established or started operating. For example, in this study, TEVETA started operating around 2000 and has much experience in regulating the trades and occupations sub sector. On the other hand the Higher Education Act to establish the HEA was enacted in 2013. The ECZ Act was passed in 1983 to establish the ECZ to regulate examinations and qualifications in the general education subsector. In this subsector there are other Departments with roles to quality assure curriculum and standards. The ECZ and TEVETA have well established mechanisms and processes for setting and administering

examinations and for verifying learning achievements. This makes it difficult to ascertain and attribute impacts solely to the implementation of a comprehensive NQF that integrates all the sub-frameworks.

Given these situations, this study conceptualized and narrowed down "Impact of the ZQF" to multiple purposes it serves as provided for under the ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011. The ZAQA Act stipulates that for qualifications in each sub-framework there ought to be developed and implemented policies and criteria for (i) the development, accreditation and publication of qualifications and for assessment, recognition of prior learning and credit accumulation and transfer. Further, the Act requires the recommendation of qualifications or part qualifications for accreditation with ZAQA. Subsection (e) with regard to quality assurance within its sub-framework— (i) develop and implement policy for quality assurance; (ii) ensure the integrity and credibility of quality assurance; and (iii) ensure that such quality assurance as is necessary for the sub-framework is undertaken. In this study impact was thus narrowed down to the following changes that may be attributed to the ZQF. These served as the guiding criteria for impact in the study.

o   Legal and policy landscape

o   Integration of the sub-frameworks

o   Uptake of ZQF principles (classification, level descriptors, credits and notional hours)

o   Statistics on accreditation, registration and evaluation

o   Awareness, perceptions and satisfaction expressed by stakeholders

o   Availability of standards and guidelines for quality assurance

o   Availability and use of national occupational standards

o   Review of the national education curriculum framework and the ZQF.

6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

This study is informed by two theories, the human capital theory and the normalisation process theory. With human capital theory (HCT), education is viewed as a driver of economic growth by developing the human capital and thus is a theory that rationalises the development of NQFs. Human capital theory stresses that the individual's productivity can be improved through education and training. Moono and Rankin (2013) reported an increase in the demand for employees with post-secondary education and qualifications in Zambia from 2004 to 2010. They found that there was a hierarchy in wages by qualifications whereby those with degrees earned more than those with certificates or diplomas. Human capital theory predicts the potential for economic growth resulting from investments in education and training, and qualifications. In this study human capital theory is used to explain the benefits of establishing and implementing the ZQF.

On the other hand NPT explains how interventions become embedded into institutions or systems. The NPT is relevant in this study that is focussed on the impact of implementing the ZQF and ensuring its principles are integrated into the education and training system. This suggests that impact ought to be looked at with the lens of the ongoing implementation. The ZAQA annual reports acknowledge the importance of stakeholders buy-in and participation in the implementation of the various practices and innovations brought in by the ZQF. This buy-in is impacted by awareness, familiarity, perceptions, and understanding among different stakeholders. They will have different perspectives on the different features of the ZQF and its principles; that will affect their routine integration in the education and training system.

The Normalisation Process Theory (NPT) was adopted to frame the study and to interpret some of its findings. NPT has been used to explore the work that organisations, and individuals within them, undertake to normalise and embed new initiatives or interventions into routine practices. It provides a theory of implementation that emphasizes collaboration and collective action in explaining, and shaping, the embedding of new practices (Finch, et al, 2018). Developed and advanced in the context of exploring embedding and integration of technologies and interventions in health care (May, et al 2009; Sivakumar, et al., 2022), it has now extended

to other social policies, e.g. food policies (Chambers et al., 2020). In this case we extend it to the context of the implementation of a national qualifications framework and the impacts it achieves.

The NPT focusses on how new practices and organizational changes get implemented, integrated and sustained within a system (May, et al, 2009). The main constructs are the following: coherence (sense making), cognitive participation (engagement), collective action (enactment) and reflexive monitoring (appraisal). Each of these constructs have four sub-constructs that we reflect in Table 1. Table 1 is adapted after Chambers, et al. (2020), Huddleson, et al. (2020) and Murray, et al. (2010) to reflect some of the questions that apply to different stakeholders with respect to the implementation and impact of the ZQF. It is anticipated that ZQF partners and stakeholders can provide some insights into its impact by showing whether or not they (i) gained coherence (awareness and understanding of the ZQF), (ii) acknowledge and value the ZQF (cognitive participation), (iii) contribute to implementing the ZQF (collective action), and (iv) appraise and provide feedback on the ZQF (reflexive monitoring). The NPT serves well as the basis to understand and explain impacts of the ZQF on this study.

Table 1. Constructs and sub constructs of the NPT and relevant issues for ZQF impact study

Four constructs of the NPT			
Coherence (Sense-making & understanding of the ZQF)	*Cognitive Participation* (Engagement with ZQF practices)	*Collective Action* (Enactment of ZQF practices)	*Reflexive Monitoring* (Appraisal of ZQF implementation and impacts)
Is ZQF structure and scope easy to describe?	*Do they readily see purpose of ZQF?*	*Is ZQF seen to promote their work?*	*How do they perceive the ZQF? Can it be improved?*
Sub-constructs of the NPT			
(i) Differentiation Stakeholders viewing ZQF policy as new way of working	*(i) Enrolment* Stakeholder confidence and belief to drive the ZQF	*(i) Interactional workability* Interactions ZQF actors encounter in work to enable or hinder tasks	*(i) Systematisation* Formal or informal collection of information to judge impact of ZQF
(ii) Individual specification Actors in institutions understanding of tasks required to implement ZQF	*(ii) Initiation* Actors leading ZQF willing and able to engage others in implementation	*(ii) Skill set workability* Staff trained and skilled as ZQF is implemented	*(ii) Individual appraisal* Individual actor's understanding of how the ZQF affects them
(iii) Communal specification Actors shared understanding of ZQF aims and outcomes	*(iii) Activation* Stakeholder understanding of practices required to sustain ZQF	*(iii) Relational integration* Implementers confidence in new practices to sustain ZQF practices	*(iii) Communal appraisal* Stakeholders' collective assessment of the impact of the ZQF
(iv) Internalisation All stakeholders perceive benefits and value of engaging with the ZQF	*(iv) Legitimation* Stakeholder belief in involvement and role ZQF implementation	*(iv) Contextual integration* Resources and policies available to support ZQF implementation	*(iv) Reconfiguration* Actors' ability to modify or change ZQF practices to improve outcomes

Adapted (Chambers, et al., 2020; Huddleson, et al., 2020; Murray, et al., 2010)

7. METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

7.1 Methodology and research design

A mixed-methodology approach that pragmatically combined quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques to triangulate information and data sources was adopted as best to address the objectives and research questions of the study. The research approach entailed a desk review, analysis of secondary data, and the survey to collect primary data, as done in other studies that have explored impact of NQFs (Allais, 2011; Morrison, 2020; Raffe, 2013; SAQA, 2015). The data collected quantitatively enabled the quantification of the results achieved by the implementation of the ZQF in the last 6 years while the qualitative data provided insights into the awareness and perceptions of stakeholders identified through stakeholder mapping.

7.2 Stakeholder map for the impact study

The impact study required the mapping and engagement of appropriate stakeholders. The initial process involved looking into the stakeholders associated with national qualifications frameworks informed by the literature and review of Ministry of Education and ZAQA technical reports. This initial process led to preliminary mapping of the stakeholders. The stakeholders provisionally fell into these categories: government, employers, qualifications holders, education and training institutions, and students.

Before embarking on the study, an inception meeting with ZAQA senior management confirmed stakeholders that included CSOs, e.g., ZANEC, institutions training professionals for specialized fields under different Ministries, e.g., Health (Nursing Schools) and Agriculture (NRDC), and professional bodies that included, Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM), Zambia Institute of Advanced Legal Education (ZIALE), Zambia Institute of Human Resource Management (ZIHRM), Zambia Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (ZCILT), and the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Zambia (NMCZ)

Following this inception meeting, a power-interest stakeholder map was constructed following independent rating of the influence and interest on a scale of 1-10 by three researchers. On the scale lowest influence or lowest interest was rated '1 and the highest influence or highest interest was rated '10'. A stakeholder map in Figure 2 was then constructed using Microsoft Excel.
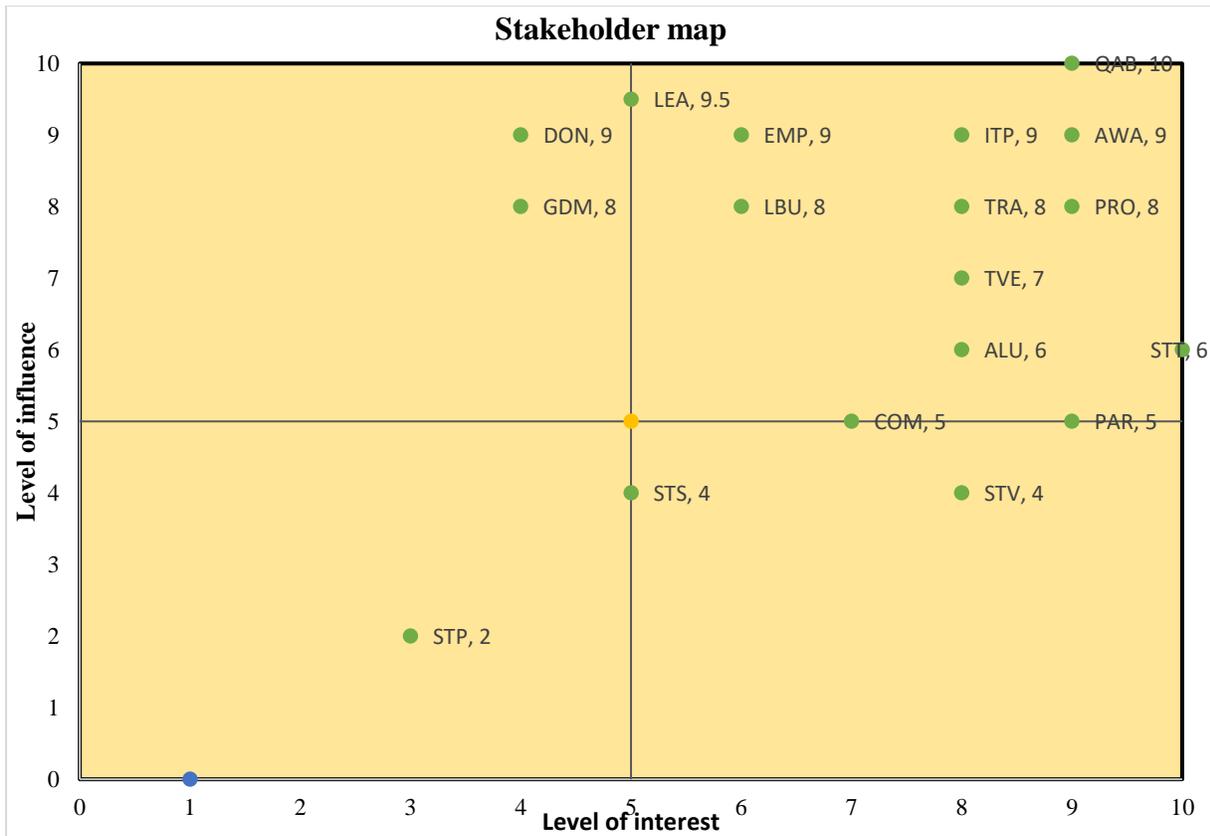
Key to stakeholders

LEA-Political Actors/Civic leaders **DON**-Donors/Funders/NGOs/Embassies **EMP**-Industry/Employers **GDM-** Government Departments/ Ministries **QAB**-Quality Assurance Bodies **TVE**-TVET Institutions **TRA**-Researchers/Academics/Educators/Trainers **AWA**-Examining/Certification/Awarding Bodies **PRO**-Professional Bodies **ITP**-Institutions Training Professionals in Specialized Fields **COM**-Community members/public **PAR**-Parents/guardians **STV**-Students-TVET **STP**-Students-primary **STT**-Students-tertiary **ALU**-Graduates/Alumni **LBU**-Labour Unions **STS**-Students-secondary

Figure 2. ZQF stakeholder map.

This stakeholder map helped the research team to identify key stakeholders for inclusion in the impact study and to decide on the sampling plan and the appropriate data collection strategies as summarized in Table 2. The table shows that both qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed yielding data for triangulating the evidence on the impact of the ZQF.

7.1 Study samples

Defining the exact population size for the selection of the sample for the study presented practical difficulties as there was no accessible database that could be relied on. For the questionnaire survey, a decision was made to sample education and training institutions across all ten provinces of Zambia. Once an institution was selected, its staff and students were automatically eligible to complete the appropriate survey. The electronic survey in Google forms was distributed with instructions for completion. Table 3 shows the number of institutions targeted in the survey.

7.1.1   Questionnaire survey participants

Out of the 412 registered TVET institutions country wide, 25% (n = 103) were sampled. From the 103, the number of institutions to be sampled was randomly selected proportionate to their number in each province. Tables of random numbers generated in Excel were used for this purpose. Contact details for the selected institutions were obtained from the TEVETA database.

Under the higher education sub-framework, all recognized public and all registered private higher education institutions were the target population. A purposive criterion was added to include only those institutions that offered both fulltime and open distance learning programmes as listed by the HEA. This resulted in all public universities and a university college being part of the survey. With this criterion, 36 out of 52 private universities, 10 out of 46 private college and 10 private university colleges were included.

Interviews only were administered to 12 participants in the general education subsector. The interviews were limited to head teachers and teachers in five STEM schools, three district education board secretaries, and a provincial education officer.

Table 2. Adjusted stakeholders categories and means of data collection

Stakeholder Category	Proposed for study	Rationale	Qualitative	Quantitative
1.Appropriate Authorities	ZAQA, ECZ, TEVETA, & HEA	Develop, implement and manage ZQF	Consultations, interviews	Statistics based on QMIS & desk reviews
2. GRZ Ministries	MoE, MoTS, MoLSS	Responsibility for ZQF and labour market needs	Interviews	Questionnaire survey
3.Education & Training Providers	Schools (senior secondary & trades), colleges & universities; institutions training professionals in specialized fields	Education and training providers and awarding bodies	Interviews, case studies, FGD	Questionnaire survey for staff and students
4. Professional bodies	EIZ, HPCZ, NMCZ, ZICA, ZIHRM, ZIM, ZIALE, TCZ	Ensure that qualifications meet industry standards	Interviews	Questionnaire survey
5. Employer Organisations	ZFE, Chambers of Commerce & Industry	Expect qualifications to meet industry standards	Interviews	Questionnaire survey
6. Students	Schools, Colleges & Universities	Expect qualifications to meet their needs	FGD	Questionnaire survey

Table 3. Target sample of institutions

Institutions		Criteria	Size (n) (institutions)	Selection method	Sample (n)
Trades and Occupati	• TVET institutions	Registered institutions (n = 412)	106	Proportionate stratified random sampling	106
General Education	• General education	All provinces	5 schools	Purposive selection for interviews only. PEO x 1; DEBS x 3; 4 head teachers, deputy head teacher, and 3 teachers	12
Higher Education	• Public Universities	Public	10	Purposive, offer both FT & ODL	10
	• Public Technical University College	Public	1	Purposive, offer both FT & ODL	1
	• Private Universities	Private	52	Purposive, offer both FT & ODL	36
	• Specialised Professional Training	Training of professionals in specialized fields	2	Purposive, offer both FT & ODL	2
	• Private Colleges	Registered Colleges	46	Purposive, offer both FT & ODL	10
	• Private University College	Registered University College	10	Purposive, offer both FT & ODL	10
	Employer organizations	Chambers of Commerce and	30	Purposive	30

Institutions		Criteria	Size (n) (institutions)	Selection method	Sample (n)
		Industry & HRM of companies			

The survey was administered electronically using Google forms to collect data from three (3) categories of stakeholders; management of education and training institutions, students and lecturers/trainers as well as employers and employees. The questions were framed according to the different categories of the stakeholders but all sought to get perceptions of the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia. The link for the survey was shared via email with management of education and training institutions for appropriate circulation in their respective institutions. In cases where available, the link was sent via WhatsApp.

Figure 3 shows the achieved sample for the study. A total of 227 Google forms were received from staff in management of education and training (29), lecturers or trainers or teacher (80), and students (103) as summarized in Figure 3.
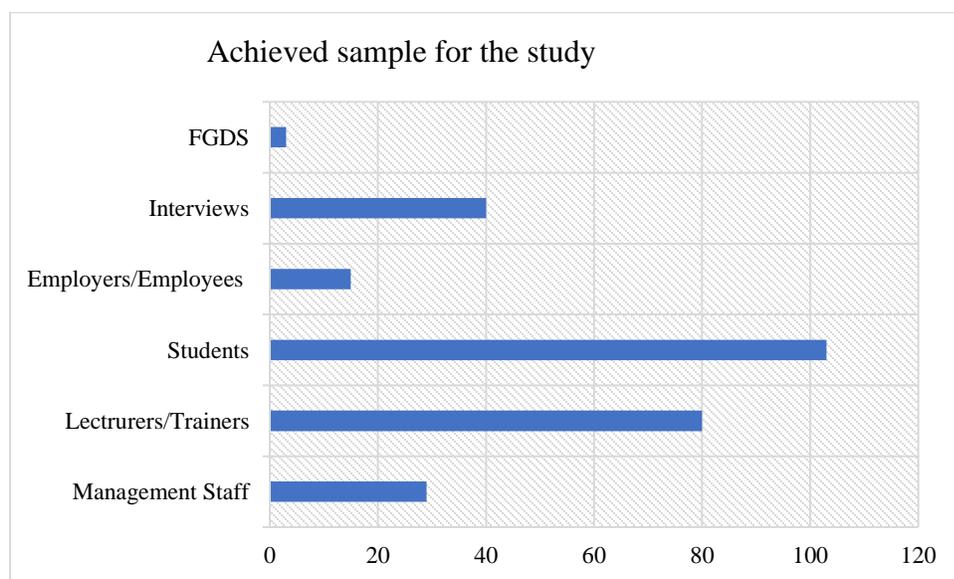
Figure 3. Achieved sample for the study (main cycle).

The response to the surveys was below expectations. This problem of low response rate in impact studies on NQFs has been reported elsewhere in SAQA impact studies in South Africa, especially where the intervention is new. In this study, some participants contacted expressed lack of awareness of the ZQF and thus opted not to respond. It was a challenge finding participants who knew about the ZQF. Further to this, a lot of emails bounced due to incorrect contact details in provided mailing lists. The national load management and power cuts frustrated the process as it

affected phone and internet connectivity. It is possible that some participants lacked skills to complete, and submit the e-survey. Others were simply reluctant to respond or comment on matters concerning the Authority.

7.1.2   Interview participants

The interviews were conducted in two cycles corresponding to the main data collection phase and to a second phase that entailed collecting supplementary data. Forty one (41) interviews and three (3) focus group discussions were conducted with some key stakeholders in the first cycle. The interviews were carried out with a variety of stakeholders as reflected in Appendix 2. They included students, lecturers/trainers, vice chancellor, deans, principals, quality assurance managers, registrars, unions, a Director General, and teachers, some officers in government departments.

In the second cycle, supplementary data were collected stakeholders in (i) the general education framework like teachers and officers involved in administration of standards and quality assurance and (ii) institutions that facilitated qualifications by foreign awarding bodies such as ABE, ABMA, ACCA, and others. Stakeholders were sampled from Lusaka, Central, Southern, North Western, Northern, Eastern, Luapula and Copperbelt Provinces. These stakeholders included a provincial education officer (PEO) and three district education board secretaries (DEBS). Participants were also drawn from five (5) STEM senior secondary schools where 4 head teachers, one deputy head teacher, and three teachers were interviewed, In those institutions that facilitated qualifications by foreign awarding bodies such as ABE, ABMA, and ACCA a principal, two directors, and four lecturers from five higher education institutions (a university, university college, and institute for training professionals in specialised fields) were interviewed. -

7.2 Data analysis procedures

Analysis of secondary data

Analysis of secondary data included the synthesizing of findings from the desk reviews and from the QMIS. Desk reviews provided background information and the operational activities involved in implementing the ZQF. They also provided researchers with a perspective on the intended

outcomes in operating the ZQF. Data from the QMIS was analysed in Excel and pivot tables were generated and presented where needed.

Analysis of primary data

Primary data was obtained from the Google forms surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions. Surveys captured responses to items using a Likert type and through items requiring open responses and comments. Responses to Likert type items were analysed and summarized using descriptive statistics; tables and charts were generated and narrated. Open ended responses from the surveys were coded and analysed using thematic analysis followed by grounded interpretation.

Notes were generated from interviews and focus group discussions conducted face-to-face. Recordings from the telephonic modes were transcribed using Turbo Scribe. Transcripts were analysed using Atlas.ti 24 Web Version qualitative data analysis software.

8. LIMITATIONS

The next section presents the study results which should be taken with limitations in mind. The sampling plan had a high number of institutions selected for participation but the survey returns were low. This could be a result of some targeted participants having limited understanding of the research topic. Therefore, the results should be taken with limitation of the sample size in mind. The survey was electronic and electricity load management and loss of connectivity was a factor that affected participants and researchers. Inaccuracies in contact information in the lists used could be another factor. Logistical challenges and cost made it necessary to opt for telephonic interviews. Some stakeholders preferred face-to-face interaction and some were not available for inclusion in the study.

9. RESULTS OF THE STUDY PRE-ZQF

The results of the study are organized and presented cognizant of the three objectives of the assignment that are restated here.

(i) Map, identify and engage appropriate stakeholders to participate in the study [**stakeholder mapping**].

(ii) Provide the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF **[pre-ZQF context]**, and

(iii)Measure the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation **[impact of implementing ZQF]**

9.1 Stakeholder mapping

The map in Figure 2 (in an earlier section) showed the categories of stakeholders for the ZQF in terms of their influence and interest. The matrix generated shows that the most stakeholders were found in the high influence-high interest quadrant. These key stakeholders included the qualifications and quality assurance authorities, awarding bodies, professional bodies, and labour market players. They need to be proactively engaged and consulted in the development and implementation of the ZQF. In the high influence-moderate interest were the various government departments, embassies, and development partners; they needed to be kept informed on the ZQF, Parents, guardians, and community members have high interest and moderate influence and needed to be kept informed. Students in tertiary institutions placed in high interest-low influence quadrant of the map. The only category in the low influence-low interest quadrant were primary level students. Overall, the stakeholder map illustrates that all the stakeholders are important and thus must be engaged and kept informed.

9.2 Pre-ZQF context analysis results

Research question 1 focused on the pre-ZQF context. In order to synthesize a picture of the status of education, training and qualifications, a desk review of policy documents and legislations was done, this gave the researchers an appreciation of context and the status of education, training and qualifications.

Research question 1. What was the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF (prior to 2017)?

Prior to the ZAQA Act of 2011 and its subsequent enactment, there was no coordinating national qualifications authority and neither was there a national qualifications framework. Globally, "only five first-generation frameworks had begun to be implemented by the mid-1990s, and a further 10 frameworks were in development or implementation in the mid-2000" (Raffe, 2013; p. 143 citing Tuck (2007)). Zambia was not yet part of these developments. In order to map the status of education and qualifications prior to 2017, our analysis begins with the education policy reforms since independence.

9.2.1 Policies and legislation landscape from 1963 to 1976

As independence approached a Commission led by Sir John Lockwood made recommendations to establish a university in Zambia (History | University of Zambia). The university had to be unique in departing from the Oxbridge model in the UK. The Commission recommended admission requirements and the structure of degree programmes which were adopted when the University of Zambia was established by the Education Act No. 66 of 1965. Admission requirements were set at O levels leading to four year university degrees. Since the opening of UNZA in 1966, this has continued as a norm in university education in Zambia. The first two years of university studies are not factored in degree classification. Consequently some universities in some jurisdictions do not accept or recognize some four year degrees. In addition to the establishment of university education in the 1960s, there were other important developments with impacts on qualifications.

The Education of Act of 1966 established decentralized structures for the governance and quality assurance of schooling by setting up the National, Regional, and local Councils for education. This Act was repealed by the Act No. 23 of 2011 that put stress on quality and standards in education.

In the TVET subsector the 1968 Technical Education and Vocational Training reforms resulted in more opportunities for enrolment being opened. The National Commission for Technical Education and Vocational Training was established.

In 1973 the Technical Education and Vocational Training Act Chapter 138 was passed establishing the Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training with among other things, a mandate through the Minister to establish standards and qualifications for occupations, skills, and trades, and to issue certificates and diplomas.

The government set up state owned enterprises (SOEs) and parastatals that established their own training centres and programmes that were not integrated under the Department of Technical Education and Vocational Training or the national higher education system. Examples of SOEs and parastatals include ZCCM, ZISC, and TAZARA.

As noted by Mulumbika and Karin (2018), "In fact, candidates trained under this arrangement only obtained internal certificates of attendance, with limited or no recognition beyond their work places" (p. 143). They further note that the role of employers "cannot be said to have been well incorporated in the national system, for whatever collaboration and participation attributed to industry was largely dependent on the interest or policies of individual enterprises or parent companies concerned" (p. 143).

Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6 summarize the key policies and legislations covering the period 1977-2013.

9.2.2 Policies and legislation landscape from 1977 to 1999

Table 1 shows policies and legislation shaping education and training from 1977 to 1999. It is observed that a major development was the opening up of access to primary, secondary and tertiary education, the liberalization of education to allow private sector participation, and the establishment of two regulatory authorities, ECZ (1983) and TEVETA (1998), respectively, for general education and for technical and vocational education and training. ECZ had broad mandates to set and conduct examination, to design syllabi for examinations, to award certificates or diplomas, and to promote international recognition of qualifications issued by it. Besides ECZ, other quality assurance responsibilities in general education lay with other departments in the Ministry of Education, for example, the directorates at national level responsible for curriculum and standards and provincial educating officers and district education boards.

TEVETA had the broad mandates for regulating and coordinating apprenticeship and trade testing facilities, leading curricular development, setting minimum standards and qualifications for TVET, approving and conducting national examinations, awarding TVET certificates, and registering training institutions. On the other hand public Universities exercised self-regulation with major responsibility for Senates to oversee quality assurance.

Table 4. Policies and legislation shaping education and training from 1977 to 1999.

Year	Policy or Act	Import	Qualification Issue
1977	Education reforms	Opened up access to primary, secondary and tertiary education Opened up colleges of education and health, nursing schools, and agricultural and trade training institutions,	Diversification No national qualifications framework
1983	Examinations Council of Zambia Act	Established ECZ to run and regulate examinations, award certificates, and promote international recognition of certificates.	Manage examinations Syllabuses for examinations Award certificates Quality assurance Regulator and promoter of qualifications
1987	University of Zambia Act No. 18 Copperbelt University Act No. 19	University Senates as the authorities to organize, direct, and control academic standards, learning programmes, assessment, and research, and award degrees, diplomas, certificates, and other awards	Institutional autonomy in managing QA and Qualifications
1992	Universities Act No. 26 Focus on Learning Policy	Repealed the CBU and UNZA acts Establishment and regulation of public universities Registration and regulation of private universities Concerns for quality and involvement of stakeholders	Participation of the private sector and affiliations Diversification of education and training providers
1996	Educating our Future	Address issues of quality and relevance Proposed a quality assurance body for higher education	Proposals for a Higher education Authority
1998	TVET Act 13 & Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (Amendment) Act No. 11, 2005	Establish TEVETA for regulating and coordinating apprenticeship and trade testing facilities, leading curriculum development, setting minimum standards and qualifications for TVET, approving and conducting national examinations, awarding TVET certificates, and registering training institutions	Develop national curricula Manage examinations Awarding body Quality assurance Registration of institutions

Year	Policy or Act	Import	Qualification Issue
1999	University Act No. 11	Repealed the Universities Act of 1992 Provided for establishment, regulation, control and functions of public and private universities Provided for affiliation of colleges and other institutions of teaching and research to public Universities	Affiliation of institutions for quality assurance Registration of private universities

There was a growing concern for the decline in standards in higher education as more private institutions got involved. A concern for quality of qualifications and their international comparability was reflected in the mandates of ECZ and TEVETA, and the Universities. ECZ, TEVETA, and public Universities had mandates for curriculum and assessment standards, quality assurance regulators, and awarding bodies. However, the mechanisms for achieving the mandates were different; there were regulators for general education and TVET subsectors and more autonomy and self-regulation in the higher education subsector. The three subsectors had different ways of accrediting institutions and learning programmes. Overall, the three subsectors developed separately and there was no overarching qualifications regulator. The TVET qualifications went up to the Diploma level but holders of this qualification lacked a pathway to progress to degree level. Education and training for professional qualifications in specialized fields were not covered or provided for in the three subsectors.

9.2.3 Legislations and professional bodies and institutes

An important development in the pre-ZQF period, is the enactment of legislation on the role of professional bodies and institutes. Table 5 shows some of the professional bodies and institutes that were set up to train, register and regulate practitioners. The institutes had broad functions: serving as providers of education and training in specialized professional fields, awarding qualifications, and regulating professional standards and practice. The qualifications offered were designed by the institutes and lacked alignment to the TVET or the University education subsector (HEA, 2021). The lack of linkages was a problem for professional qualifications holders to progress to university degree programmes. They awarded qualifications using standards and quality assurance mechanisms set by their independent Boards. Some, as the case with the Medical Council of Zambia (MCZ), had mandate to accredit foreign qualifications. The professional bodies

had the mandate to independently promote international recognition of local qualifications that they regulated.

Table 5. Legislations and professional bodies and institutes.

Professional body	Policy or Act	Some mandates	Qualification Issue
Medical Council of Zambia (MCZ)	Medical and Allied Professions Act, 1977	Establish MCZ Regulate medical qualifications and practitioners; Prescribe primary qualifications Institute certificates or diplomas of competency Recognize and list foreign qualifications	Regulate medical qualifications Prescribe primary qualifications Institute certificates or diplomas of competency Recognize and list foreign qualifications
Zambia Institute of Chartered Accountants (ZICA)	The Accountants Act 1983	Establish ZICA Regulate training of accountants	Education and training Conduct professional examinations Professional standards Promote international recognition of qualifications
Zambia Centre of Accountancy Studies (ZCAS)	Zambia Centre of Accountancy Studies Act No. 1 of 1989 & No. 13 of 1994	Constitute ZCAS and set up the ZCAS Board Train accountants	Training of accountants Conduct research and consultancy
Zambia Institute of Chartered Accountants (ZICA)	ZICA Act No. 13 of 2008	Redefine functions of ZICA Regulate accountants profession Research and advanced learning	Train, examine and award professional qualifications Registration and regulation of training and practice Accredit local and foreign qualifications
Zambia Institute of Human Resource Management (ZIHRM)	ZIHRM Act No. 11 of 1997	Develop standards, standardize training and practice, and research human resource management	Registration and regulation of training and practice International recognition of qualifications
Nursing and Midwifery Council of Zambia (NMCZ)	Nurses and Midwifery Act No. 55 of 1970 (repealed by Act No. 31 of	Regulate nursing and midwifery education and practice	Registration and regulation of training and practice

Professional body	Policy or Act	Some mandates	Qualification Issue
	1997 & No. 10 of 2019)		
National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA)	NIPA Act No. 15 of 1998	Develop programmes and train public administrators	Train, examine and award certificates and diplomas
Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM)	ZIM Act 2003 (Repealed with Act No. 2 of 2022)	Train marketing personnel Register and regulate practice and conduct of marketers	Training, examining and awarding qualifications Registration and regulation of training and practice
Zambia Institute of Purchasing and Supply (ZIPS)	Zambia Institute of Purchasing and Supply Act 2003	Establish ZIPs and set up a Council Train persons for purchasing and supply professions	Collaborate with training institutions Conduct research Train and confer certificates
Health Professions Council of Zambia (HPCZ)	HPCZ Act 24 of 2009	Registration and regulation of health professionals Recognize and approve learning programmes Accredit health care services	Registration and regulation of training and practice Recognition and approval learning programmes Accredit health care services
Engineering Institution of Zambia (EIZ)	EIZ Act 2010	Develop and promote standards for the profession Accredit universities and colleges' learning programmes leading to award of membership classes	Development of standards Accreditation of awarding bodies and learning programmes Registration and regulation
Zambia Institute of Advanced Legal Education (ZIALE)	ZIALE Act 1996 & ZIALE (Amendment) Act No. 9 of 2011	Establish ZIALE Develop syllabuses and provide training in post-graduate legal studies	Approve qualifications for admission Train, set and hold examinations Issue certificates Encourage international co-operation in post-graduate legal and legislative drafting studies

Table 5 shows that different legislations were developed to regulate non-degree professional training programmes and qualifications in accountancy, nursing, planning, human resources management, marketing, transport and logistics. However, as observed in the HEA *Status of Higher Education* (2021) report, there was no transparency on the progression of professional qualifications holders into degree programmes. These qualifications ranged from certificate, diploma, advanced diploma, and higher national diploma. The institutes were many and each was mandated to regulate its education and training standards and promote the quality of its qualifications through, for example, international cooperation. This created a situation of different systems of accrediting institutions and learning programmes; some   learning programmes were being accredited by some foreign bodies.

In summarizing, Figure 4 depicts the status of education and training in the pre-ZQF period. The sub-sectors of education and training and the awarding bodies lacked overall coordination and harmonization. There lacked a national qualifications authority and a national qualifications framework. There lacked progression routes for the TVET and professional qualifications to pursue degree studies, and thus limited opportunities for lifelong learning for others. Different standards applied by different awarding bodies led to stakeholder mistrust of qualifications issued by different institutions and the lack of comparability or equivalence of qualifications.
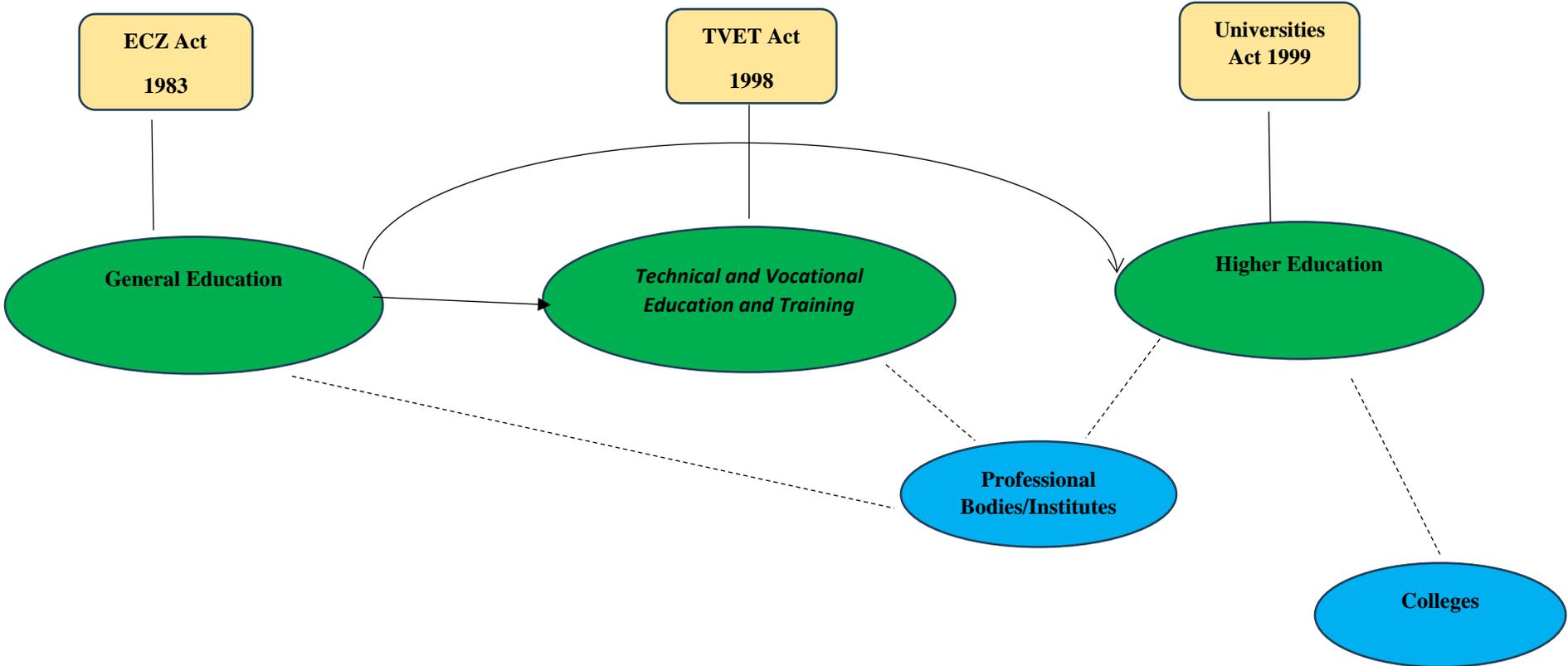
Figure 4. The status of education and training in the pre-ZQF period (Authors).

9.2.4 Policy and legal developments towards the ZQF

Table 6 maps out policy and legal developments in the pre-ZQF since 2006. The matter of qualifications system to meet the needs of the labour market was key in the FNDP 2008-2010. There was a need to develop the criteria for the operations of ZAQA and the management of ZQF within the context of the SADC framework. The Sixth National Development Plan 2011-2025 and the revised SNDP 2013-2016 stressed on the need for regulating quality assurance in university education. The ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 was enacted to establish the national qualifications authority to develop and implement the ZQF while the Higher Education Act No. 4 of 2013 was enacted to establish the national higher education quality assurance system.

Table 6. Policy and legal developments towards the Zambia Qualifications Framework.

Year	Policy or Act	Import	Qualification Issue
2006	Vision 2030	Education and Skills Development sector plan	Innovative and productive lifelong education and training for all
2008-2010	Fifth National Development Plan	Tertiary education as teacher education, TVET, and University Education Qualifications systems to meet current and future demands of the labour market Comprehensive and diversified university curriculum Linkages to other educational levels	Criteria for the operations and management ZAQA & ZQF within the context of the SADC framework Linkages to other educational levels Relevance of qualifications to labour market
2011-2015	Sixth National Development Plan	Promote private sector participation at university level. Establish a mechanism for Regulating university education in terms of quality assurance. Enhance the quality and relevance of university education.	Participation and consultation Regulate quality assurance
2013-2016	Revised Sixth National Development Plan	Improve university governance, supervision, monitoring quality assurance and control systems	Monitoring quality assurance and control system

Year	Policy or Act	Import	Qualification Issue
		Promote private sector participation at TVET level;	
2011	ZAQA Act No. 13	Establishing the ZAQA Develop and implement a national qualifications framework	Develop national qualifications framework Registration and accreditation of qualifications Standards and registered qualifications internationally comparable
2013	Higher Education Act No. 4	Establishing the HEA Quality assurance system for higher education	Registration of private universities Accreditation of learning programmes Broadened university education
2013	Teaching Professions Act No. 5 of 2013	Established Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ) Accredit and regulate colleges of education Oversee certification of teachers and standards of practice	Development of standards Registration and regulation

The policy and legislative developments in Table 7, were operationalized via statutory instruments. Statutory Instrument No. 16 of 2016 operationalized the Higher Education Act 2013. Statutory Instrument No. 18 of 2018 is the *Zambia Qualifications (Accreditation, Validation and Evaluation of Qualifications) Regulations* that enabled implementation of the ZQF. Noteworthy is the formulation of the Higher Education Policy (2019) which broadened higher education to include universities, colleges of education, technical and vocation training institutions, and other colleges, and prompted the repeal of the HE Act 2013 and other legislations (the amendments are dealt with in later section).

Table 7. Policy and instruments enabling implementation of the ZQF.

Year	Policy or Act	Import	Qualification Issue
2016	Statutory Instrument No. 16	Operationalized the Higher Education Act 2013 Higher education quality assurance system	Registration of private universities Accreditation of learning programmes Registration of learning programmes with ZAQA Classification of HEIs
2018	Statutory Instrument No. 18	The Zambia Qualifications (Accreditation, Validation and Evaluation of Qualifications) Regulations	Accreditation, Validation and Evaluation of Qualifications Register of qualifications
2019	Higher Education Policy	Broadened HE to include universities, colleges of education, technical and vocation training institutions, and other colleges Proposed repeal of HE Act 2013 and other legislations A coordinated framework for quality HE and skills training Separate mandates of regulatory bodies	Unify the HE Sector Coordinated framework for qualifications Partnerships among higher education institutions Strengthen internal quality assurance and accountability
2021	Higher Education (Amendment) Act No. 23	Differentiated types of HEIs QA oversight extended to colleges Introduced annual institutional audits for HEIs Streamline roles of HEA and Professional Bodies	Accreditation of all types of learning programmes Legal mandate for collaboration with other regulatory authorities

9.2.5 Stakeholder recollections and perceptions of status of education, training and qualifications pre-ZQF

Stakeholders consulted and interviewed recollected and reflected on the pre-ZQF status of education and training. Overall, stakeholders felt that the status during the pre-ZQF period, depended on the starting point. In the early period, Zambian qualifications were reputable and relevant for employment and with time, the reputability and relevance declined. Stakeholders attributed this tendency to the liberalization of education and the proliferation of private institutions and inadequate regulation. In an interview one respondent observed that:

> *People are building up institutions not with a mandate of doing what is required by regulatory authorities, but they are doing it just for the profit of themselves (IDI 35).*

Some private institutions violated admission requirements by admitting students that did not have a full school certificate to qualify for entry into higher education. However, others reminisced about the pre-ZQF period. For example one trainer in the TVET sector expressed the sentiments in the excerpt:

> *The tradesmen that used to be produced back then were much more hands-on, you see that? They were much more hands-on, meaning they didn't have too much of theory. You know, it was just instruction. Hey, can you get a crack at this? Can you get this? Can you do that? Not much of theory. But this one that we are doing now, it is being said to be stiff, but now looking at the content, the content that is in the syllabus, it is much of, we are having a lot of time on theoretical work, explaining concepts and then we don't have much in the workshop (**IDI 17**).*

For most stakeholders, it was the fall in standards and the proliferation of education and training providers from the 1990s that was concerning. The following sentiments in a focus group exemplify the perceived pre-ZQF status:

> *I think before ZAQA, like I earlier alluded to, we had a variety of qualifications that were difficult to ascertain their real value and their credibility because they*

are issued by different organizations. Some of those, for example, one does a six-month course and they call it a diploma. And another one does a three-month methodology course and they call it a diploma. So, you did have a framework by which these qualifications would be standardized and recognized (FGD 03).

9.2.6 Impact on foreign qualifications not meeting standards

Certificate and diploma courses, for example, ABE, ABMA, and City and Guilds, offered by foreign bodies in the UK not coordinated under the national tertiary education system. Local institutions, for example Evelyn Hone College, ZIBSIP, and NIPA, and many others served as centres for tuition, administration of examinations and distribution of results; course content and examinations were set in the UK. In addition to the huge costs incurred by students in registration and examination fees in foreign currency, the approach followed to earn the qualification made it difficult for knowledge and skills on curriculum development and assessment to transfer to local trainers in Zambia. The approach used is summed up in the quotes:

We were an exam centre, so some students would come and just write the exam from our centre here (IDI 58).

We would just enclose answer scripts in an envelope provided by the examining body and then we would dispatch the examination using express services to them (IDI 59).

The courses also lacked local content. With the implementation of the ZQF, the impact, these courses were evaluated. ACCA programmes were evaluated and recognized. Programmes like ABMA that could not be equated to the ZQF standard were discontinued. The impact implementation of the ZQF on the enforcement of standards has had is captured in an interview with a Director of an institute that served as a tuition centre.

I think after the coming on board of Zambia Qualifications Authority and then looking also at the duration of the programs that we offered in the past, some of them were downgraded. For example, the City and Guilds Diploma was downgraded to a certificate. The ABMA was downgraded to a craft. Why? Because of the duration and then even the number of courses that we are offered throughout

the programs. So, that gave us an eye-opener to us those qualifications, if you want to offer any qualifications be it local or foreign, there are certain standards that must apply. Okay, so for a qualification to be classified as a diploma, a degree or a master's, there is a minimum number of credit points or any hours that must be taken by an individual (IDI 59).

9.2.7　Impact on alignment of qualifications with ZQF

In this study it was observed that some professional qualifications were previously not aligned to the ZQF. This was noted for the ZICA chartered accountants (CA) programme on which certification was provided at the end of the programme, which on average was a 6-8 year duration for an average candidate (ZICA, 2020). The examination component was structured into three levels completed in one or two years but with which no certificates awarded. The CA Zambia has now been restructured and aligned to levels and nomenclature on the ZQF. The knowledge level now equates to the two year Certificate in Accountancy, the Knowledge + Application + 3.3 Strategic Business Analysis level to the four year Bachelor of Science (BSC) in Accountancy, and the Advisory level to the one year Master of Science (MSc) in Accountancy, CA Zambia.

A reflection raised by study participants was the issue of reciprocal recognition and equivalency between the academic and professional programmes, i.e., between degrees and professional diplomas. Each institution was said to take independent decisions on the matter of initiatives before the ZQF was implemented. In this study, participants in Schools of Business highlighted that institutions had different arrangements for recognising qualifications such as ABMA, ABE, ACCA, CIMA, and CA Zambia for the purpose of exemptions. Across three institutions interviewees confirmed non-exemption for holders of IMIS, ABMA and ABE qualifications; candidates could not be exempted but could be admitted into first year of degree studies. One School of Business developed a framework for exemptions shown in Box 1. Participants acknowledged that the matter of equivalencies and progression to degree studies was now easier with the ZQF as a reference point; one responded that ZAQA has normalized the problem of equivalencies and mobility between academic and professional qualifications.

The implementation of the ZQF was seen by stakeholders as having impacted on the alignment between local and foreign qualifications. The excerpt below is illustrative.

For the courses that me I am handling, yes. I would say yes, because like ACCA, so for ACCA, those who are in Zambia doing ACCA at some point, they will be required to do certain Zambian courses. For example, tax. They have to do Zambian tax, because even when they get that qualification, they will not be working from the UK, so there's no way they can do the UK tax. And there's that memorandum of understanding between ACCA and ZAQA. So at some point, they have to come back and do some of the Zambian courses, and then continue with the ACCA. Because these other courses, they are aligned with the Zambian courses, except for tax. So the Zambian tax here, but in ACCA, when you go there, there's UK tax. So in that case, it would not make sense for a Zambian to do UK tax, when that person would be working here in Zambia (IDI 46).

Box 1. Exemption Framework for School of business programmes

	Qualifications	Examination Body	Duration (Years)	Year of Entry	Programme of Study
1	Diploma-Accounting and Finance	NIPA/UNZA	2	2	BBA/BACC/MKT
2	Diploma -Business Administration	NIPA/UNZA	2	2	BBA/BACC/MKT
3	Diploma -Business Administration	ZIBSIP/CBU	3	3	Business Administration
4	Diploma-Production and Operations Management	Evelyn Hone/CBU	3	3	BSc POM
5	Diploma-Production and Operations Management	TVET/ECZ	3	3	BSc POM
6	Diploma -Production and Operations Management	TVET/Evelyn Hone	3	2	BBA/BBACC/MKT
7	Diploma Marketing	ZIM/ECZ	3	3	BSc Marketing
8	ICM/CIM	UK		2	BBA/BACC/MKT
9	Diploma -ABE/ABMA	UK	2	2	BBA/BACC/MKT
10	Diploma -Banking and Finance	ZIBF	2.5	3	BSc Banking and Finance
11	CIMA	CIMA UK		3	BACC
12	ACCA	ACCA UK		3	BACC
13	Diploma CIMA/ACCA/NATECH/ZICA Licentiate	All		2	BBA/BACC/MKT
14	CA Zambia	ZICA		3	BACC
15	Diploma-Purchasing and Supply	TVET	3	3	BSc PS/PP
16	CIPS Graduate Diploma	CIPS UK	3	3	BSc PS/PP
17	Diploma-Project Management		3	3	BSc BPM
18	Diploma -Business Administration /Accounting		2/3	2	BSc BPM
19	Diploma - Metallurgy/Mining/Industrial Engineering		3	2	BSc POM

Qualifications	Examination Body	Duration (Years)	Year of Entry	Programme of Study
20 Certificates/Advanced Certificates-Business		2/3	2	BBA/BACC/MKT
21 Diploma -Human Resources	TVET/Evelyn Hone	3	3	BA HRM

Source: Copperbelt University (2024).

9.2.8   Synthesis of pre-ZQF status of education, training, and qualifications

The pre-ZQF period is marked by a lot of changes, the policy and legal environment enabling participation of the private sector, the rising concerns with the falling in education and training standards, and the inadequate regulation of providers. In this section an attempt is made to synthesize the state of education, training and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF. The issues raised here provided the relevant impetus for legislations that led to the development and implementation of the ZQF.

(1) The status of education and training and the issues associated with qualifications can be seen to fall into three periods as shown in Figure 5. Those issues and policy formulation served to ground need for national qualifications framework and a quality assurance mechanism.

(2) In the pre-ZQF period, policies sought to promote access and at the same time cognizant of the need for quality as the general education, TVET, and higher education sectors expanded.

(3) Expansion of education and training was accompanied by diversity in the number of training providers and differences in the standards of qualifications issued.

(4) A regulatory council for general education examinations, ECZ, the authority for the regulation of TVET programmes and qualifications, TEVETA, and councils for professional bodies and institutes were established. Institutions providing university education remained with the authority to self-regulate, albeit without a clear cut higher education policy.

(5) Implementation of the ZQF led to the evaluation and non-recognition of learning programmes and qualifications that did not meet standards but were offered by foreign bodies such as ABE, ABMA, IMIS, and City and Guilds, implementation of the ZQF led to the enforcement of standards, curbing the proliferation of qualifications, protecting learners, and saving foreign currency for the country.

An interviewee for this study informed as follows:

> *Okay, ahh for City and guilds we only used to assess students from the lab. Then assessment …such examinations were prepared in London and then of course they*

would be administered at our institution. For ABE there was no continuous assessment students would simply be subjected to an examination. So, the aspect of continuous assessment was not present in qualifications that we used to offer……...then… In terms of recruitment, we did the recruitment, students used to pay tuition fees to this institution and then they also had to pay examination fees directly to the foreign examination bodies (IDI 59).
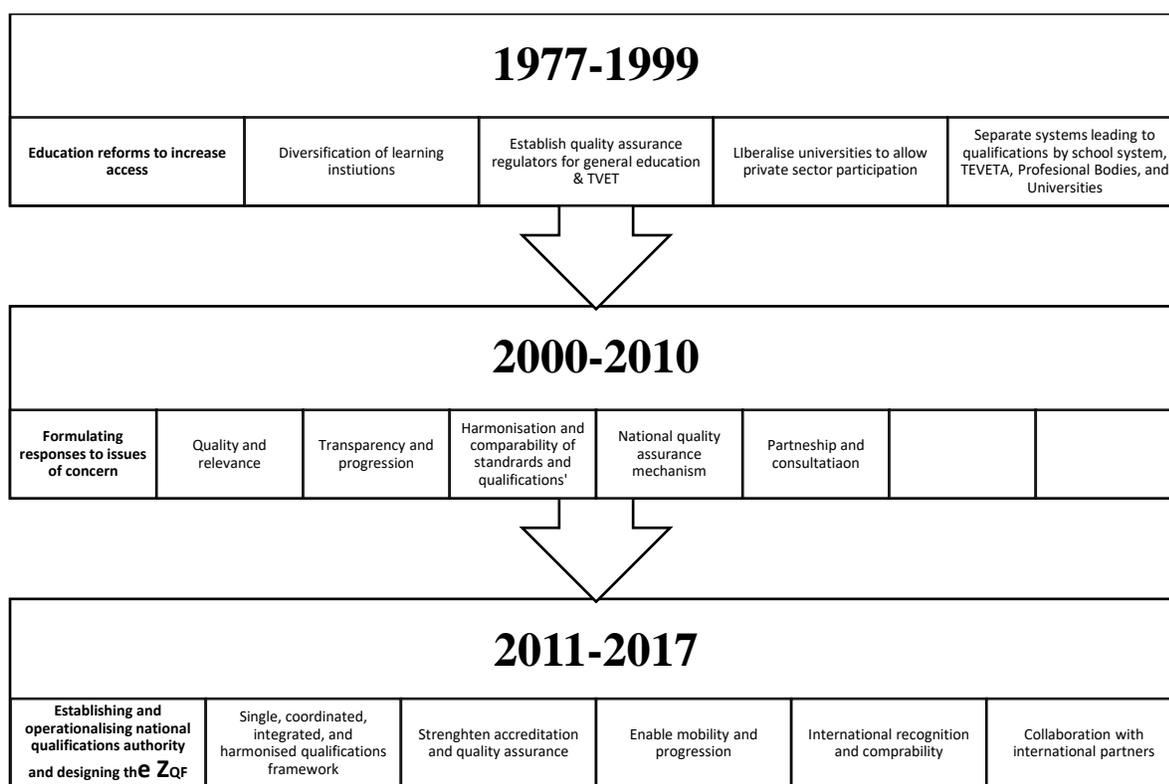
1977-1999				
Education reforms to increase access	Diversification of learning instiutions	Establish quality assurance regulators for general education & TVET	LIberalise universities to allow private sector participation	Separate systems leading to qualifications by school system, TEVETA, Profesional Bodies, and Universities

2000-2010						
Formulating responses to issues of concern	Quality and relevance	Transparency and progression	Harmonisation and comparability of standrards and qualifications'	National quality assurance mechanism	Partneship and consultatiaon	

2011-2017					
Establishing and operationalising national qualifications authority and designing the ZQF	Single, coordinated, integrated, and harmonised qualifications framework	Strenghten accreditation and quality assurance	Enable mobility and progression	International recognition and comprability	Collaboration with international partners

Figure 5. Education and training and the issues associated with qualifications.

(6) There was no coordination body for quality assurance or a structure for qualifications in the education and training system resulting in the absence of some progression routes. For example, holders of TVET and/or professional qualifications had no pathway into degree programmes.

(7) The timeframes between policies formulation and translation into concrete actions was long. For example, the policy *Educating our future* (1996) anticipated a harmonized

national quality assurance system that only got legislated more than ten years later. There was no coordinated national quality assurance system for higher education nearly 20 years after the 1999 Universities Act.

(8) As the pre-ZQF period progressed, stakeholders' perceptions of quality and relevance of qualifications became negative.

10. ZQF IMPLEMENTATION IMPACT RESULTS
10.1 Desk review results and expected impact outcomes of the ZQF

A desk review of the ZAQA annual reports was conducted to appreciate the Authority's operational activities and expected impact outcomes of the ZQF from its establishment and governance. It was necessary to understand the development and operation of the ZQF. Further, it was important to appreciate the institutionalization process for both ZAQA, the institution and, ZQF the framework and its principles. The timelines and major activities are reflected in Table 8 (the indicated color codes have no particular meaning assigned to them).

In Table 9 the operational activities have been assigned codes, in italics, to reflect the expected and realized impact of implementing the ZQF. From this Table 9, the following codes were associated with the expected function and outcome of operating the ZQF: integrated and harmonized system, institutionalization, standardization, transparency, and international benchmarking and comparability. Pre-operationalization of the ZQF in 2018, activities involved generating guiding standards and engaging stakeholders; this was expected to contribute towards understanding of the ZQF principles and standardization. Codes relating to relevance and employability can also be seen in Table 8. These codes arise from the development and launch of NOS with participation of experts from industry.

Table 8. Highlights of ZAQA operational activities.

2014-2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
-Initial period ZAQA -Drafting standards and guiding documents	-Finalizing standards-guiding documents -First year of ZAQA operations	-Develop SI-to operationalize provisions in ZAQA-Act No.13 of 2011 -Expiry of ZAQA Board	-SI No.4 of 2018 to operationalize in ZAQA Act No.13 of 2011 -Accreditation, validation and evaluation of qualifications	- Accreditation, validation and evaluation of qualifications -ZAQA participation in qualifications networks -Technical workshops on development of NOS -Developed employability &CATS guidelines

2020	2021	2022	2023
-ZAQA Board appointed -Review of ZQF level descriptors approved	- Commenced review of ZAQA Act No.13- 2011 -Review ZQF&Level descriptors completed -Participation in UNESCO Qualifications Passport Programme	-Finalized strategic plan -2022-2026 -Finalized review of the ZQF	-Revision of Registration-Accreditation guidelines -Revision of evaluation score sheet -Validation of ACQF policy

Table 9 also records capacity gaps due to ZAQA not fully staffed, governance gap when operating without a Board from October 2017 to August 2020, and gaps in legal provisions, for example, absence of a legal provision to operationalize the ZQF until SI no. 4, 2018. This SI saw the commencement of validation, accreditation and evaluation of qualifications. The review of the ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 commenced in 2021 was only enacted recently as the ZAQA Act No. 8 of 2024. The review of the ZQF and level descriptors approved in 2020 remained pending since.

Table 9. Summary of results in desk review of ZAQA annual reports.

| | | | Expected ZQF impact | |
Year	Operational activities	Facilitative	Positive	Negative
2014-2015	Initial period of ZAQA operation [*institutionalization*]			Inadequate staffing [*capacity gaps*]
	Drafting standards and guiding documents [*standardization*]	Standards and guiding documents [*standardization*]	Standards and guiding documents [*standardization*]	
2016	Finalizing standards and guiding documents [*standardization*] Effectively first year of ZAQA operations [*institutionalization*]	ZQF Level Descriptors gazette [*standardization, transparency*] Coordination meetings of quality assurance and awarding bodies [*harmonized system*] QMIS consultancy	Three sub-frameworks unified into a single integrated [*integrated, harmonized system*] Streamlined procedures for registration and accreditation of qualifications [*standardization, transparency*] Validation and evaluation of qualifications (n	Absence SI to operationalize provisions in ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 [*legal provisions gap*]

| Year | Operational activities | Facilitative | Expected ZQF impact | |
			Positive	Negative
			= 303) [*validation*]	
2017	Develop SI to operationalize provisions in ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 [*legal framework*] Expiry of ZAQA board in October 2017 [*governance gap*]	QMIS interfacing ZAQA staff, awarding bodies, quality assurance authorities, employers, and bank [*transparency*]	Validation and evaluation of qualifications (n = 629) [*validation*] Detection of misrepresented qualifications [*validation*] 21 qualifications from appropriate authorities [*registration*]	Expiry of ZAQA board in October 2017 [*governance gap*] Delayed registration and accreditation of qualifications on the ZQF [*delayed operationalization*]
2018	SI No. 4 of 2018 to operationalize provisions in ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 [*legal provisions*] Accreditation, validation and evaluation of qualifications	SI No. 4 of 2018 [*legal provisions*] Developed strategic plan 2018-2021 [*strategy*] Alignment of ZQF to SADCQF [*benchmarking, alignment*]	Regulations for accreditation, validation and evaluation of qualifications [*standardization*] 88 qualifications evaluated and accredited [*accreditation*] 1225 qualifications validated (3.7% misrepresented) [*validation*]	Operating without ZAQA board since October 2017 [*governance gap*] Zero submission of qualifications from higher education sub framework [*none compliance*]
2019	Accreditation, validation and evaluation of qualifications ZAQA participation in Qualifications Networks, e.g. ACQF, AQVN, and SADC	Benchmarking for regional and international comparability [*international*	48 qualifications evaluated and accredited [*accreditation*] 2506 qualifications validated (2.2% misrepresented)	Zero submission of qualifications from higher education sub framework [*none compliance*] National Recognition Information Centre

Year	Operational activities	Facilitative	Expected ZQF impact	
			Positive	Negative
	Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) [*international benchmarking, networking*] Technical workshops on the development of national occupation standards [*stakeholder engagement*] Developed and pilot tested employability guidelines with support of CoL [*employability, relevance*] Developed guidelines for development of CATS [*standardization, progression*]	*benchmarking, comparability*] Employability criteria [*employability*]	[*validation*] Regional and international recognition of the ZQF and qualifications [*international benchmarking, comparability*] National occupation standards [*employability, relevance*]	(NARIC, UK) downgraded some Zambian qualifications [*none recognition*]
2020	ZAQA Board appointed in August 2020 Review of ZQF and level descriptors approved [*dynamic ZQF*]	Adaptability of the ZQF [*dynamic ZQF, relevance*] Launch of 12 NOS In tourism and agriculture [*employability*]	46 qualifications evaluated and accredited [*accreditation*] 2170 qualifications validated (2.03% misrepresented) [*validation*] Learner records of achievement from 9 institutions	COVID-19 pandemic [*pandemic*] Slow response to submitting qualifications and learner records for registration on the ZQF [*low compliance*]

| Year | Operational activities | Facilitative | Expected ZQF impact | |
			Positive	Negative
			[*registration of learner achievements*]	
2021	Review of ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 [*legislation gap*] Review of ZQF and level descriptors completed [*dynamic ZQF*] Participation in UNESCO Qualifications Passport Programme for refugees and displaced persons [*inclusion, lifelong education*] Stakeholder sensitization workshops on NOS [*stakeholder engagement*]	Launch of 24 NOS in 4 sectors: energy, manning, manufacturing [*employability, relevance*] Reviewed guidelines for accreditation, validation and evaluation of qualifications [*standardization, transparency*] Quality assurance audits [*compliance*]	266 qualifications evaluated and accredited [*accreditation*] 2739 (1241 local, 1498 foreign) qualifications validated (1.8% misrepresented) [*validation*] Compliance with ZAQA standards in quality assurance audits [*compliance*] All appropriate authorities promote RPL [*inclusion, lifelong learning*] 80% Of awarding bodies in the three sub frameworks incorporate ZQF level descriptors in their qualifications [*standardization*]	Reviewed ZQF not implemented awaiting amendment of ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 [*legislation gap*] Low flow of local qualifications for registration on the ZQF [*stakeholder cooperation*] Poor participation of industry experts in the development of NOS [*stakeholder cooperation*]
2022	Finalized strategic plan 2022-2026 [*strategy*]	39 NOS in tourism and agriculture sectors	111 qualifications evaluated and	Target of 630 local qualifications accredited on ZQF not achieved

Year	Operational activities	Facilitative	Expected ZQF impact	
			Positive	Negative
	Finalized review of the ZQF [*adaptability of ZQF*]	[*employability, relevance*] Continued engagements with AQVN, ACQF, SADCQF, UQP, and the Global Academic Integrity Network (GAIN) [*international benchmarking, networking*]	accredited [*accreditation*] 14282 (12903 local, 1379 foreign) qualifications validated (1.8% misrepresented) [*validation*] Learning achievement records from 17 institutions 15 refugees recognized for the UNESCO qualifications passport [*inclusion, lifelong education*]	[*stakeholder cooperation*] Continued revive of ZAQA Act No. 13 of 2011 [*legislation gap*]
2023	Revision of the Guidelines for Registration and Accreditation of qualifications [*standardisation, transparency*] Revision of the scoring sheet for evaluation of qualifications [*standardisation, transparency*] Participated in validation of the ACQF Policy Document and launch of the ACQF II Project in Addis Ababa	6 NOS in the Construction Sector [*employability, relevance*] Redesigned the "How to Apply Online" brochure on using the QMIS [*transparency*]	79 qualifications were accredited. [*accreditation*] 4767 qualifications validated and evaluated [*validation*] 69 non-recognition certificates issued for misrepresented qualifications [*validation*]	

| Year | Operational activities | Facilitative | Expected ZQF impact | |
			Positive	Negative
	[*benchmarking, comparability*]			

In Table 10 international benchmarking, networking are important codes likely to impact on recognition of qualifications from Zambia in other jurisdictions. The development of the ZQF has provided for the alignment of Zambian qualifications locally and regionally, for instance, through the SADC Qualifications Framework (SADCQF) and the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF).

The desk review found that the validation of qualifications began in 2016 and that the ZQF was fully operationalized in 2018 with SI no. 4, 2018 in place. Figure 6 shows the trends the number of qualifications being validated by the Authority, the increase is steady from a low of 303 to a high of 2506 in 2019; the decrease in 2020 is attributed to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 6: Trends in validation of qualifications

Figure 7 shows the percentage of qualifications misrepresented out of the total number of those processed for validation from 2016-2022. The number of misinterpreted qualifications detected increased as the volume of qualifications presented for validation increased.
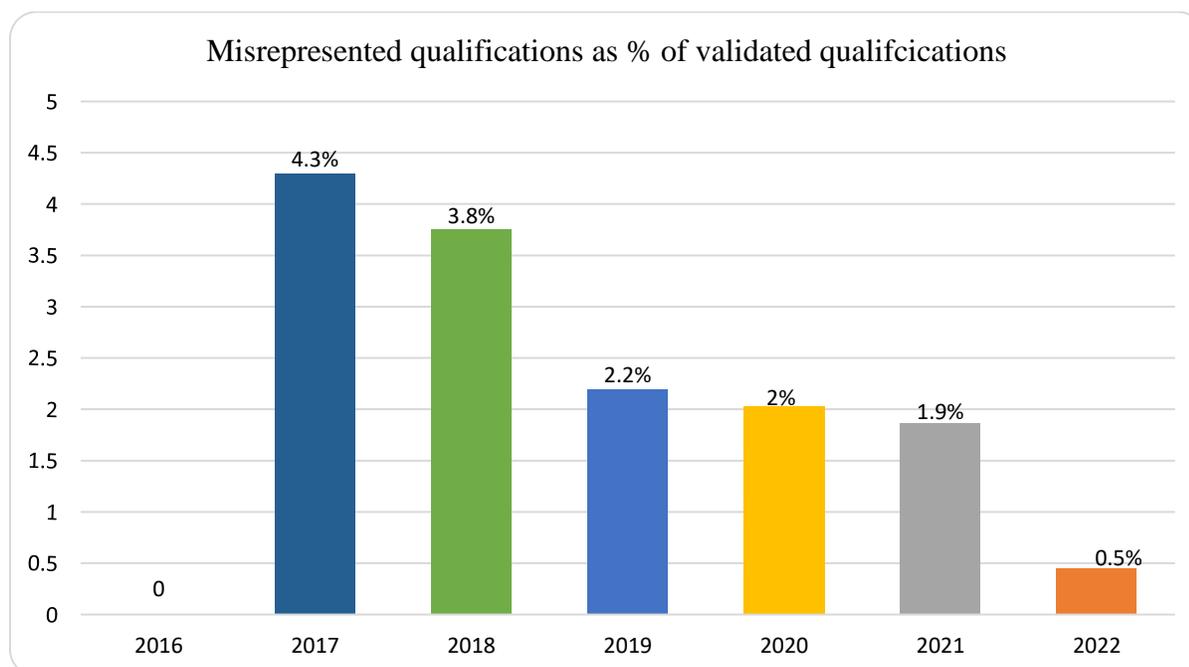

Figure 7: Trends in misrepresented qualifications

10.2 **Impact results from the QMIS**

ZAQA has the responsibility to operate the ZQF and thus its operation plans and activities include the development of a qualifications management information system (QMIS). Data captured there reflect the extent of uptake of the services such as applications for verification and evaluation of qualifications obtained by individuals in different jurisdictions. Researchers accessed and analysed the QMIS data exported into Microsoft Excel spreadsheet as of April 2024. QMIS is used to manage and track evaluations using different fields notably: reference number; identification number and names of applicant; application status; name of qualification; qualification level; awarding body; country; date created; verification date; evaluation date; and certificate URL.

It reveals that 19407 applications were received and processed. Table 10 summarizes the number of evaluations achieved annually and Figure 8 shows the trends.

Table 10. Summary of number of qualifications evaluated annually (N = 19407).

Year	Frequency	
	n	%
2018	2	0.01
2019	26	0.13
2020	778	4.01
2021	2298	11.84
2022	10642	54.84
2023	4821	24.84
2024	840	4.33
Grand Total	**19407**	**100.00**

Note: The date reflect QMIS statistics only. Annual reports higher statistics, e.g., 1225 for 2018 and 14282 for 2022. Source: QMIS (as of April 2024)
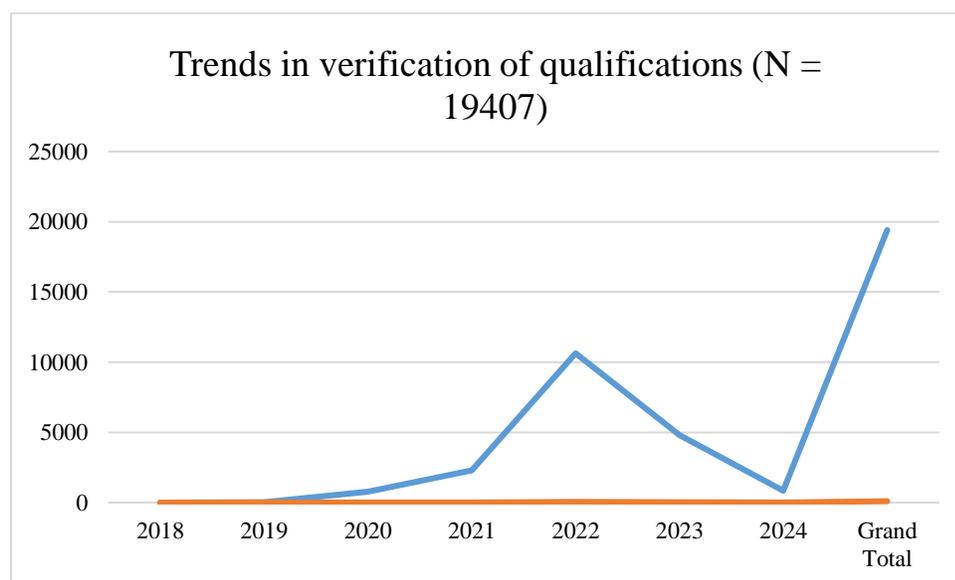
Figure 8. Trends in verification of qualifications

Source: QMIS (as of April 2024)

Table 11 shows the distribution of the qualifications validated and their levels. The highest proportion of validations was for the senior secondary certificate standing at 51.51% followed by bachelors' degrees at 32.74%. This may reflect on the demands for these qualifications for entry into further education and training, and for recruitment into employment. This is evidence too for the demand for services and that the system is institutionalized.

Table 11. Distribution of verification applications by qualifications via QMIS (N = 19407)

	Frequency	
Qualifications	**n**	**%**
1. Bachelor's Degree	6353	32.74
2. Diploma	879	4.53
3. Doctorate Degree	215	1.11
4. Junior Secondary Education Certificate (Grade 9)	54	0.28
5. Level 3 Certificate	104	0.54
6. Level 4 Certificate	90	0.46
7. Level 5 Certificate	94	0.48
8. Master's Degree	1466	7.55
9. Post-Graduate Diploma	144	0.74
10. Primary Education Certificate (Grade 7)	12	0.06
11. Senior Secondary Education Certificate (Grade 12)	9996	51.51
Grand Total	**19407**	**100.00**

Source: ZAQA QMIS (April, 2024)

Figure 9 and Table 12 show the distribution of countries from which qualifications were obtained. The over 31% of validation applications originated from 110 countries in Figure 9. More than two thirds (68.89%) of the qualifications validated were from Zambia.
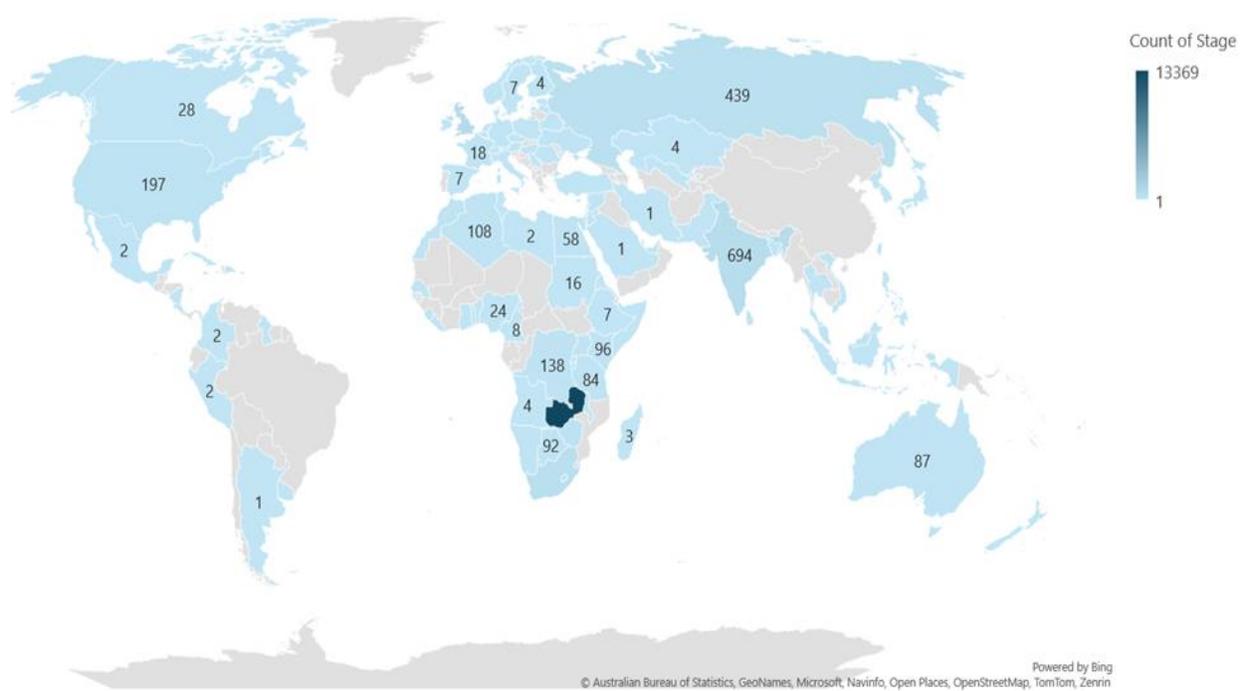
Figure 9. Global distribution of qualifications verified.

Source: Authors using Excel version 19.

Countries from which a minimum of 1% of the qualifications validated were for awarding bodies in China (1105), UK (854), India (694), RSA (514), Russia Federation (439), Zimbabwe (296), and USA (197). These data demonstrate the importance of ensuring international comparability of qualifications issued in Zambia and that the ZQF is making a difference.

Table12. Distribution of verification of qualifications by region

Region	Frequency	
	n	%
1. Africa	15315	79.01
2. Arab States	49	0.25
3. Asia and the Pacific	2558	13.20
4. Europe	1389	7.17
5. Latin America and the Caribbean	72	0.37
Grand Total	**19384**	**100.00**

Note: There were 23 discrepancies on country entries in the spreadsheet leading to grand total of 19834 instead of 19407; rows 5861 -5864, 6174-6178, and 19394-19408 had omissions. There was one blank.

Source: ZAQA QMIS (April, 2024)

The outcome of verification over the period is summarized in Table 13. Sixty-eight percent of the qualifications were processed and recognized on the ZQF; 30% were pending. A total of 273 (1.41%) were not recognized and recorded as misrepresented qualifications.

Table 13. Status of verification and evaluation of qualifications.

	Frequency	
Status of application	**n**	**%**
1. Qualifications recognized	13230	68.17
2. Pending	5862	30.21
3. Qualifications not recognized	273	1.41
4. Review	41	0.211
5. Paid (action not indicated)	1	0.0052
Grand Total	**19407**	**100**

Source: ZAQA QMIS (April, 2024)

The above results point to the institutionalization and demand for validation and evaluation of qualifications. Furthermore, they demonstrate the need to ascertain the comparability of qualifications to the standards in Zambia; the ZQF provides for this international comparability.

10.3 Comparison of data captured in QMIS and annual reports

Researchers observed some discrepancies in the data captured in the QMIS and that reported in the annual reports. The QMIS captures 19407 verified by date and months since 2019 compared to a total of 27689 in the annual reports. In the QMIS a total of 273 misrepresented qualifications are captured between 2018 and 2023 compared to a total of 331 in annual reports for same period, and 357 if 2017 is included. The team was unable to discern the source of the discrepancies. The QMIS is not reflecting all the evaluations done as values captured were lower than those reported annually. For example, 2 in QMIS versus 1225 for 2018 annual report and 10642in QMIS 14282

for 2022 annual report. Cleaning the data base may be required. For example, there are "null" entries in columns for payment date (n = 2006), verification date (5920), and column for evaluation date (n = 14,226).

10.4 Stakeholder perceptions of impact

Stakeholder perceptions were assessed basing on the results of the survey and interviews. Two research questions restated here served to focus the analysis.

Research question 3. How do stakeholders understand the ZQF and its impacts?

Research question 4. What are the perceptions of stakeholders on the impact of ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation, i.e., 2018-2023?

Understanding the perceptions of stakeholders is an important indicator towards the impact of ZQF. An electronic survey targeting staff and students in education and training institutions and targeting employers and employees was conducted. In addition to the structured Likert type items, each survey provided an opportunity to respond to open ended questions. For this study, staff in management functions were treated as a special group who may have a general perspective of issues at the policy level. Teaching staff and students were treated as a special group more directly engaged in implementing the curriculum and the principles prompted by the ZQF. The employer-employee group was unique for the perspective on the relevance and impact on the labour market. This section presents the results of the surveys.

10.4.1 Employer/employees' perceived impact of the ZQF

Fifteen (15) survey responses were received. A dozen (n = 12) of them representing 80% indicated that they were 'aware of the ZQF and the remaining 3 were not (Figure 10).
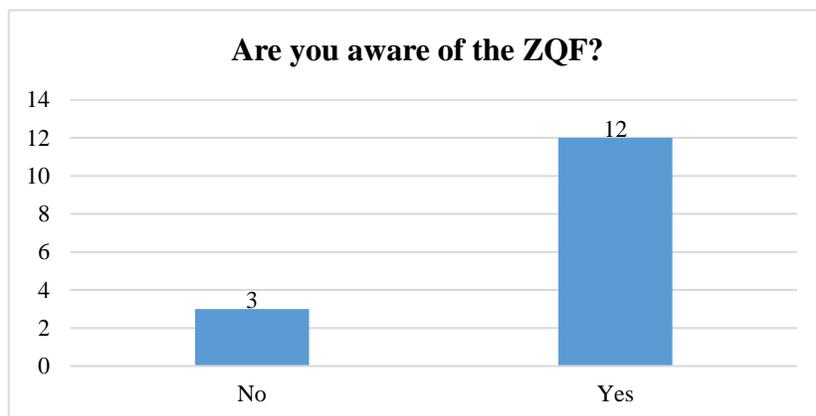
Figure 10. Distribution employers/employees according to awareness.

Asked to tick the features associated with the ZQF, the results in Figure 11 were obtained. The majority were aware that it gives the structure of qualifications (73.3%) and that Zambian qualifications can be compared to those of other countries (53.3%). Forty-six percent and lower were aware of the other listed features associated with the ZQF. They were least aware that it shows progression pathways (33.3%) or that earned credits may be transferred (13.3%).
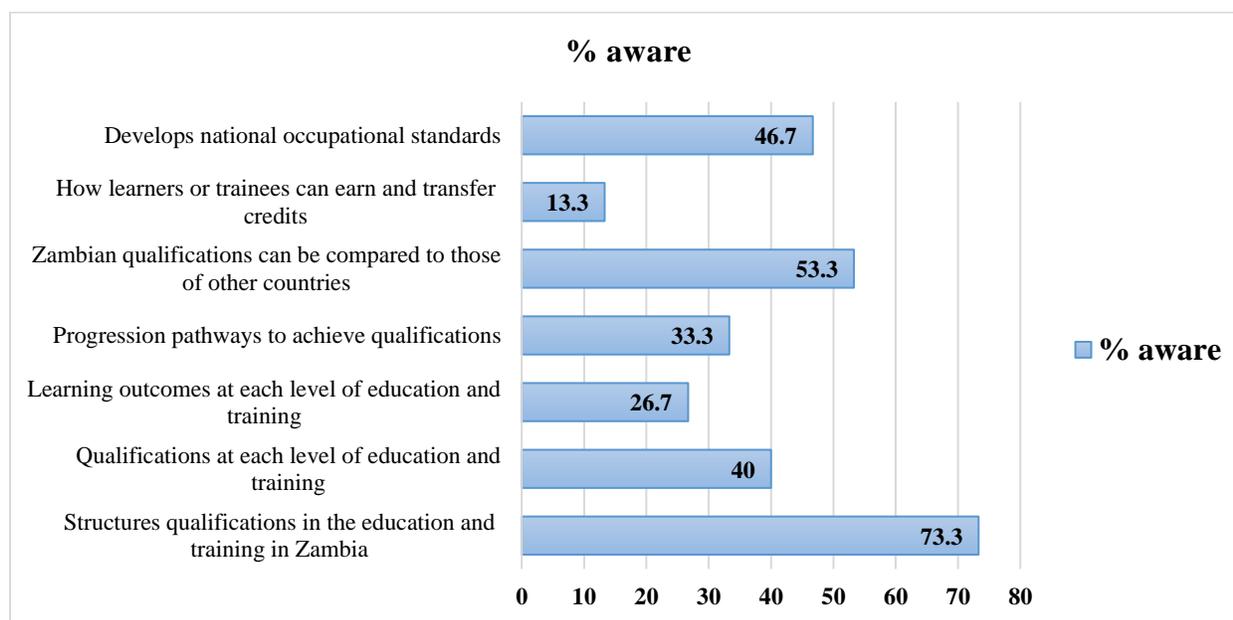
Figure 11. Proportion of employers/employees aware of features of the ZQF (n = 15)

Their responses showed that more than 80% were either in agreement or neutral on the 10 items. The results for 'agree and 'strongly agree' were aggregated in Table 13. The results show that two thirds or more were in agreement to three items concerning verification of qualifications (73.4%), detection of fake qualifications (66.7%), and recruitment of qualified persons (66.7%). A slight majority (53.3%) agree that the implementation of the ZQF has resulted in a positive view by employers/ the same percentage agreed that qualifications of employees from different institutions are comparable. Noteworthy in the Table is the indication of 'neutral' by as much as 60% on level descriptors and 53.3% on recognition of skills gained in non-formal work. As many as a quarter of the respondents are neutral to five other items depicting the features of the ZQF.

Table 13 also identifies the ZQF feature associated with each item in column 1. Overall, it would appear that the majority of this group of respondents agree that impact of the ZQF lies in bringing about transparency, standardization, quality assurance, and relevance to the qualifications landscape. On the other hand they are neutral or disagreeing on the impact on flexibility and on levels. Neutrality may be a reflection of inadequate awareness of the scope and implementation details of ZQF. This is consistent with results in Figure 11 where only a minority were aware of aspects associated with the ZQF, e.g., progression, credit transfer, and levels. Analysis of responses to open ended questions yielded further insights.

Table 13. Employer/employee level of agreement on perceived impact of the ZQF (n = 15)

ZQF Feature	Survey item	*Aggregated %*		
		Disagreeing	*Neutral*	*Agreeing*
1. Transparency	1. Employers and members of the public can have qualifications verified on the ZQF.	*6.7*	*20.0*	*73.4*
2. Relevance	2. Employers to have a positive view of qualifications.	*20.0*	*26.7*	*53.3*
3. Flexibility	3. The ZQF has made it possible for employees to upgrade their skills and qualifications	*33.3*	*26.7*	*40.0*
4. Quality assurance	4. The ZQF has made it possible to detect fake qualifications.	*6.7*	*26.7*	*66.7*
5. Flexibility	5. The ZQF has made it possible to recognize prior learning.	*13.4*	*40.0*	*46.7*
6. Levels and structure	6. Level descriptors clearly show learning outcomes for different levels of education, training and qualifications.	*0.0*	*60.0*	*40.0*
7. Relevance	7. National occupational standards show skills and knowledge required in different jobs.	*13.3*	*26.7*	*60.0*
8. Quality assurance	8. The ZQF assures that only qualified persons are employed.	*26.7*	*6.7*	*66.7*
9. Standardization and comparability	9. The ZQF has made qualifications of different institutions in Zambia comparable	*20.0*	*26.7*	*53.3*
10. Flexibility	10. Skills and knowledge acquired in non-formal work are recognized on the ZQF.	*33.4*	*53.3*	*13.4*

10.4.2 Students and teaching staff's perceived impact of the ZQF

One hundred and eighty-three (183) survey responses were received from 103 students (56.3%) and 80 teaching staff (43.7%). Their distribution by gender and institution category are shown in Figure 12 and Figure 13. Of the total number of respondents 39.3% were female and 60.7% were male.
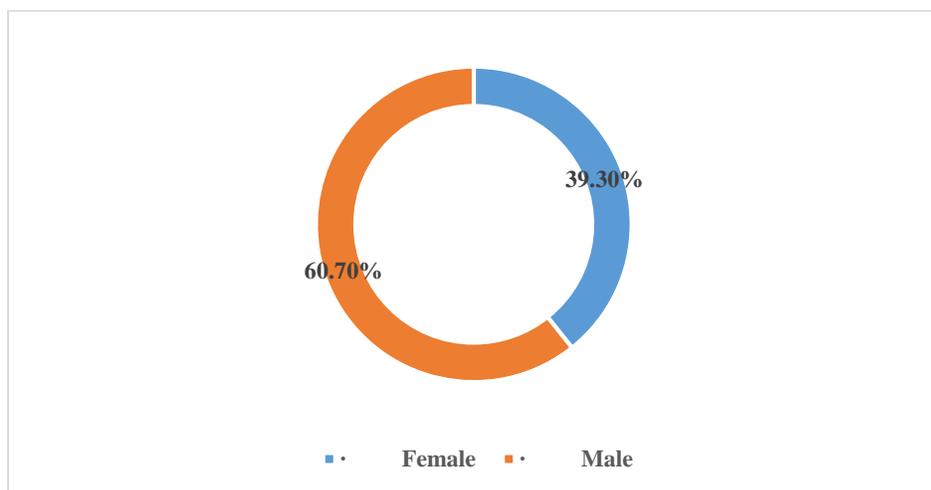

Figure 12. Distribution of staff and students by gender.

The majority (n = 143) came from public institutions as shown in Figure 13. Forty respondents, i.e., 21.9% were in private institutions.
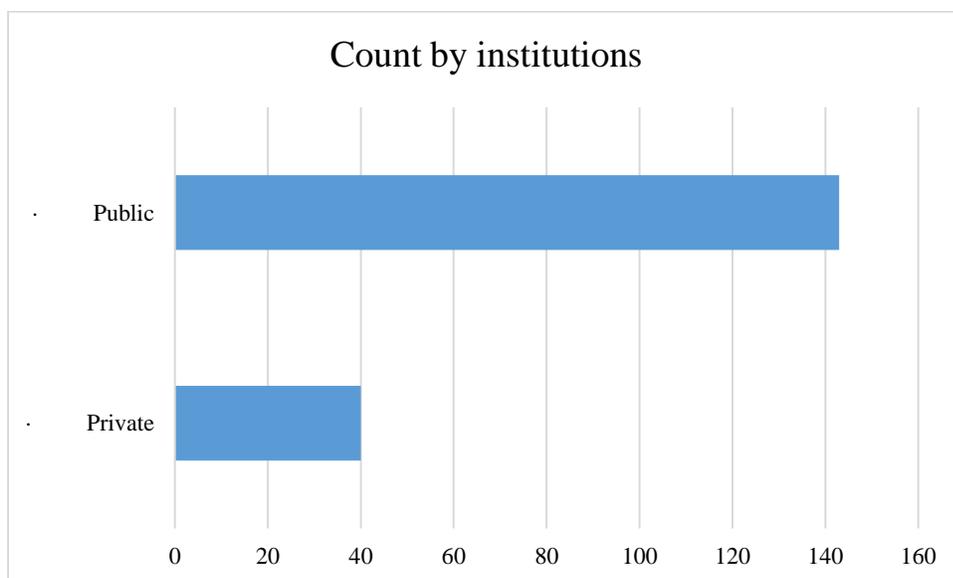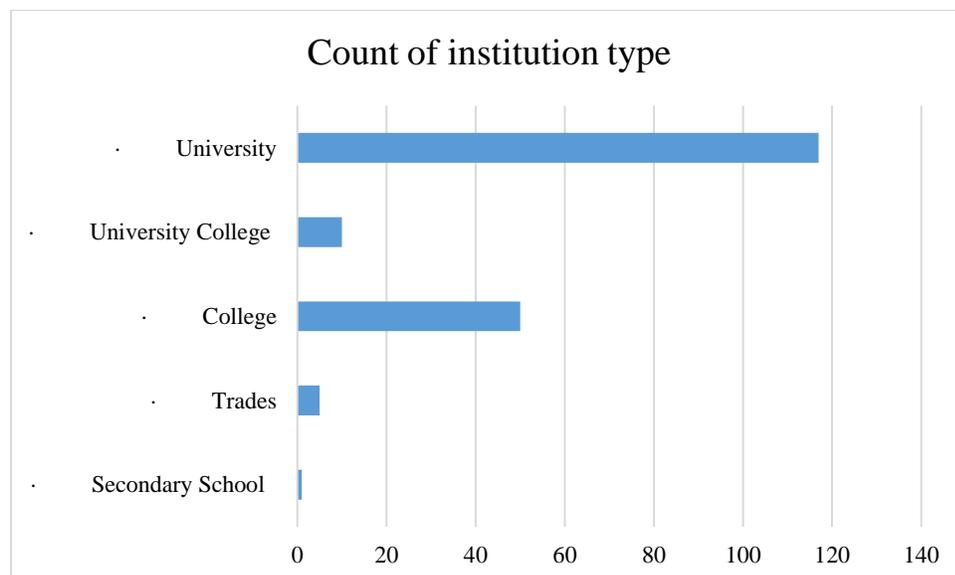

Figure 13. Distribution of staff and students by institutions.

Figure 14 shows their distribution according to the institutions shows that 117 (63.9%) were in universities; 50 were in colleges, 10 in university colleges, and 6 were in trade schools.

The results of analysing their responses are aggregated in Table 14. Teaching staff and students showed high percent agreement to items that reflect the impact of ZQF on transparency and relevance. Public and employers could verify qualifications (86.9% in agreement) and employers had a positive view of qualifications (85.8% agree).

On the other hand only 60% agreed that students and trainees had a positive view of the ZQF. Approximately the same proportion (61.2%) agreed that impact was that only education and training programmes meeting minimum standards are registered (33.3% were neutral). A small majority (53.3%) also perceived that the ZQF impacted on only qualified persons getting employed. The responses show that teaching staff and students rated lowly the items linked to impact on flexibility and lifelong learning, e.g., 38.3% agreeing to recognition of skills and knowledge earned in non-formal settings (45.4% were neutral) or ZQF making it possible for transfer of credits (55.7% agree, 32.2% are neutral).

Overall, Table shows that teaching staff and students agree that the ZQF impacts on transparency, relevance, and quality assurance but their level of agreement is lower concerning its impact on flexibility, i.e., items reflecting on RPL and credit transfer.

When the data in Table 14 was inspected with pivot charts, for example in Figure 15 and Figure 16, the pattern of agreement is the same of teaching staff and students. Very few responses were recorded to disagree or strongly disagree, on the items relating to transparency or relevance.
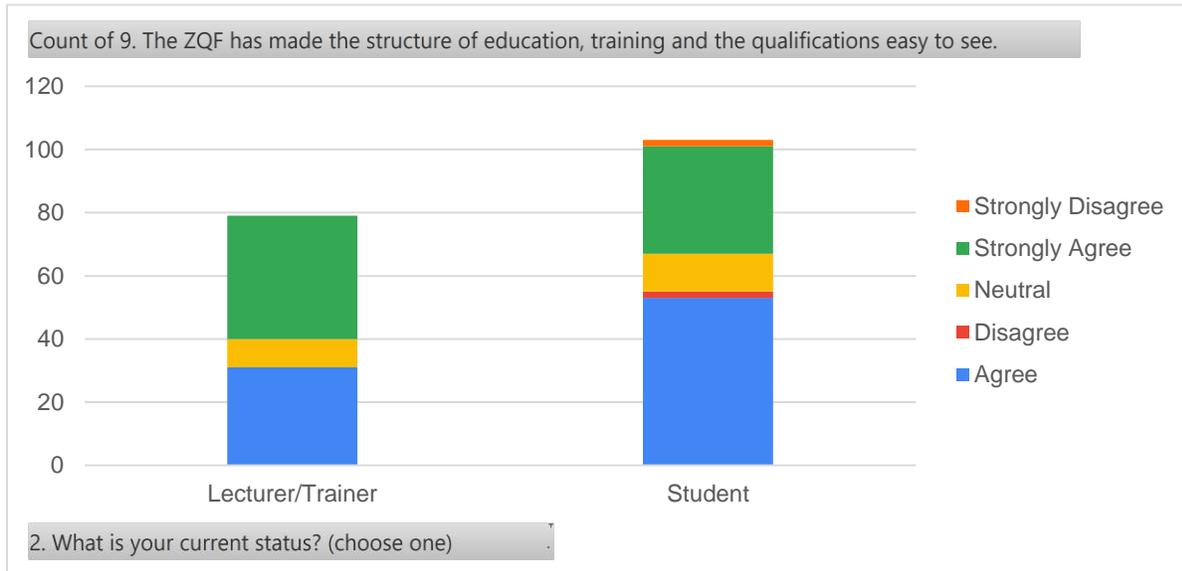

Figure 15. Comparison of teaching staff and students on a transparency item.

Table 14. Students and teaching staff level of agreement on perceived impact of the ZQF (n = 183)

ZQF Feature	Survey item	Aggregated %		
		Disagreeing	*Neutral*	*Agreeing*
Transparency	• Employers and members of the public can have qualifications verified on the ZQF.	*1.1*	*12.0*	*86.9*
Transparency	• The ZQF protects the reputation of Zambian qualifications.	*4.9*	*12.6*	*82.6*
Relevance	• The ZQF has made education and training more relevant in Zambia.	*6.0*	*19.1*	*74.8*
Relevance	• Employers to have a positive view of qualifications.	*2.2*	*12.0*	*85.8*
Flexibility	• The ZQF makes it possible for learners to carry credits from one institution to another	*12.0*	*32.2*	*55.7*
Quality assurance	• The ZQF has made it possible to detect fake qualifications.	*8.2*	*17.5*	*74.5*
Flexibility	• The ZQF has made it possible to recognize prior learning.	*7.1*	*23.0*	*69.9*
Standardization and comparability	• The ZQF has made qualifications obtained in Zambia more acceptable.	*7.1*	*20.8*	*72.1*
Transparency	• The ZQF has made the structure of education, training and the qualifications easy to see.	*8.8*	*18.6*	*72.6*
Quality assurance	• The ZQF assures that only genuine local and foreign qualifications are recognized.	*6.0*	*19.1*	*74.6*
Levels and structure	• Level descriptors clearly show learning outcomes for different levels of education, training and qualifications.	*2.1*	*21.9*	*75.9*
Flexibility	• Movement between different education and training sectors is possible under the ZQF.	*7.7*	*26.2*	*67.1*
Relevance	• National occupational standards show skills and knowledge required in different jobs.	*3.8*	*26.8*	*69.4*
Relevance	• Students and trainees view the ZQF positively.	*10.9*	*29.0*	*60.2*

| Quality assurance	• The ZQF assures that only qualified persons are employed.	20.8	25.7	53.5
Standardization and comparability	• The ZQF has made qualifications of different institutions in Zambia comparable	7.7	26.8	65.6
Quality assurance	• The ZQF has improved credibility of education, training and the qualifications.	7.6	21.3	71.0
Levels and structure	• The ZQF makes it easier to appreciate the qualifications offered in Zambia.	5.5	17.5	77.0
Flexibility	• Skills and knowledge acquired in non-formal work are recognized on the ZQF.	16.4	45.4	38.3
Quality assurance	• Only education and training programmes meeting minimum standards are registered on the ZQF.	5.5	33.3	61.2
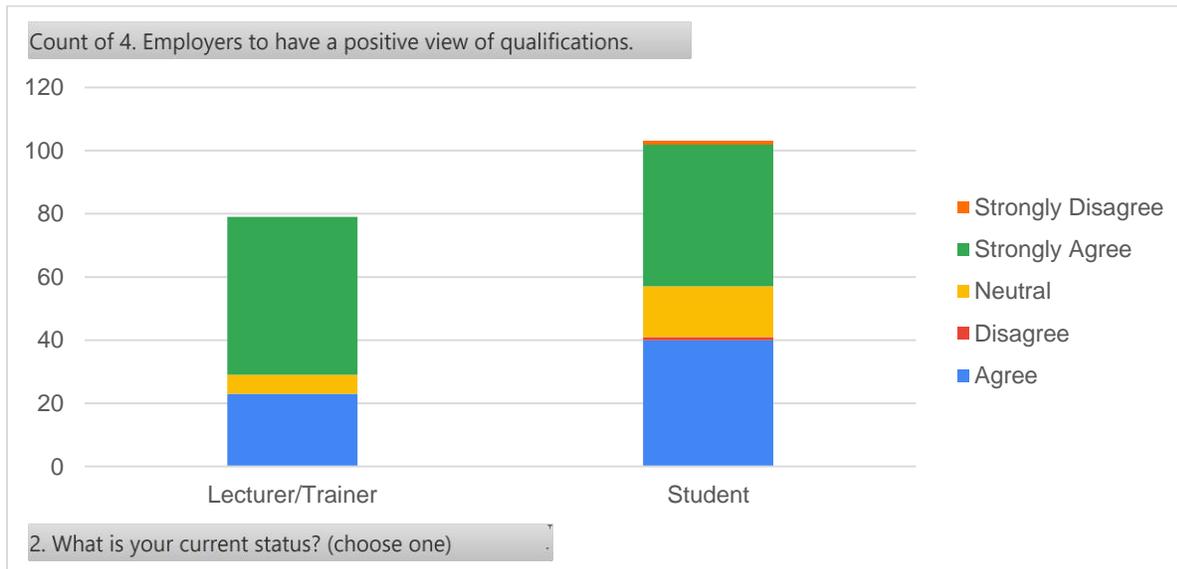
Figure 16. Comparison of teaching staff and students on a relevance item.

Figure 17 and Figure 18 show little difference in perceptions between staff and students on items relating flexibility and credit transfer.
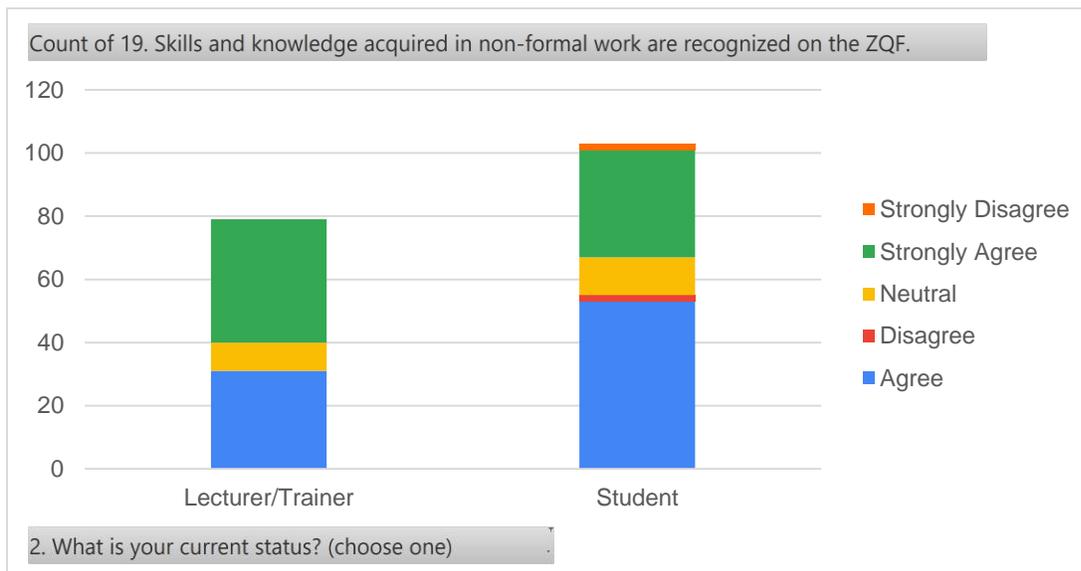

Figure 17. Comparison of teaching staff and students on a flexibility item.
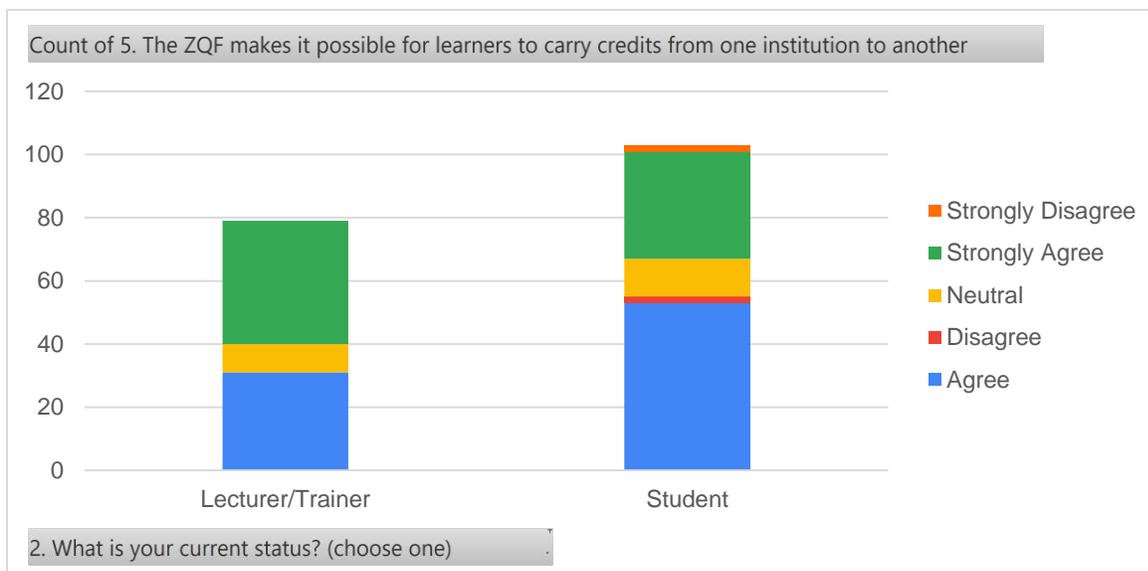
Count of 5. The ZQF makes it possible for learners to carry credits from one institution to another

2. What is your current status? (choose one)

Figure 18. Comparison of teaching staff and students on a transfer item.

10.4.3 Management staff perceived impact of the ZQF

Twenty-eight (28) staff (12 female and 16 male) in the management of institutions or learning programmes in the institution responded. Eight (8) were in private institutions and twenty (20) were in public institutions. Their distribution according to institutions they came from is in Figure 19. The majority (60.7%) of respondents came from the universities. The distribution of management staff by role in the institution is shown in Figure 20.
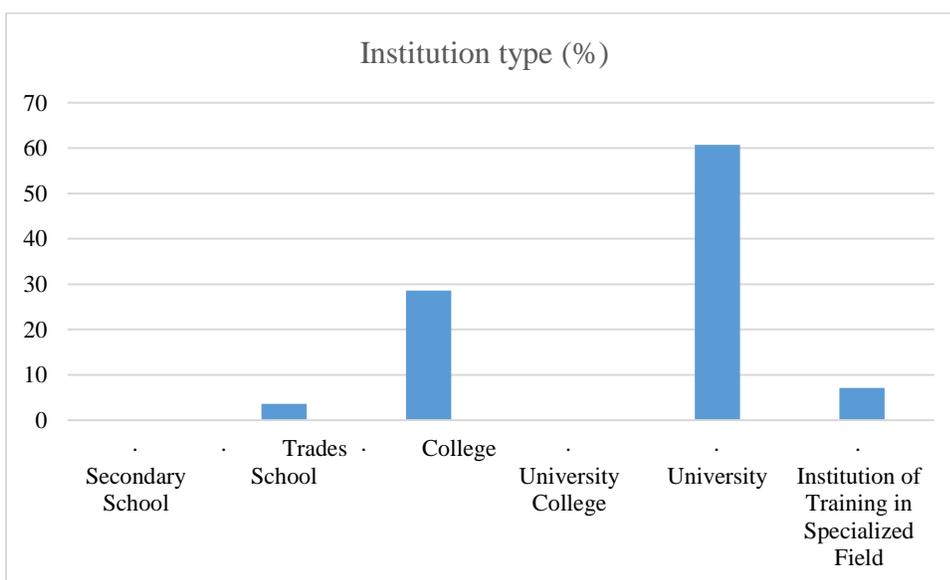

Institution type (%)

Figure 19. Distribution of management staff by institution.
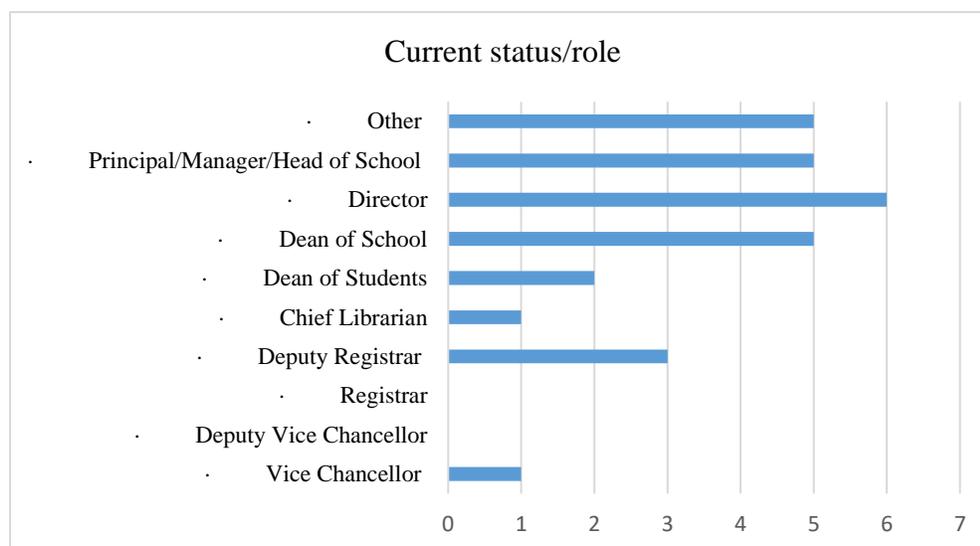
Figure 20. Distribution of management staff by role in the institution.

Table 15 aggregates the responses of the management staff. Three quarters (75%) or more showed agreement to items suggesting impact of ZQF towards, for example, transparency (92.9%), relevance to employers (85.7%), flexibility and RPL (85.8%). Only 53.3% agree that students and trainees had a positive view of the ZQF; 39.3% were neutral on this. More than a third tended to be 'neutral' on items that referenced national occupational standards and skills for jobs (39.3%) and indicating that only education and training programmes meeting minimum standards are registered on the ZQF (35.7%).

Table 15. Management staff level of agreement on perceived impact of the ZQF (n = 28)

		Aggregated %		
ZQF Feature	**Survey item**	*Disagreeing*	*Neutral*	*Agreeing*
• **Transparency**	1. Employers and members of the public can have qualifications verified on the ZQF.	*0.0*	*10.7*	*89.3*
• **Transparency**	2. The ZQF protects the reputation of Zambian qualifications.	*3.6*	*3.6*	*92.9*
• **Relevance**	3. The ZQF has made education and training more relevant in Zambia.	*7.1*	*17.9*	*75.0*
• **Relevance**	4. Employers to have a positive view of qualifications.	*0.0*	*14.3*	*85.7*
• **Flexibility**	5. The ZQF makes it possible for learners to carry credits from one institution to another	*7.1*	*25.0*	*67.8*
• **Quality assurance**	6. The ZQF has made it possible to detect fake qualifications.	*10.7*	*10.7*	*78.6*
• **Flexibility**	7. The ZQF has made it possible to recognize prior learning.	*0.0*	*14.3*	*85.8*
• **Standardization and comparability**	8. The ZQF has made qualifications obtained in Zambia more acceptable.	*0.0*	*17.9*	*82.1*
• **Transparency**	9. The ZQF has made the structure of education, training and the qualifications easy to see.	*7.1*	*17.9*	*75.0*
• **Quality assurance**	10. The ZQF assures that only genuine local and foreign qualifications are recognized.	*3.6*	*25.0*	*71.4*
• **Levels and structure**	11. Level descriptors clearly show learning outcomes for different levels of education, training and qualifications.	*0.0*	*17.9*	*82.1*
• **Flexibility**	12. Movement between different education and training sectors is possible under the ZQF.	*3.6*	*14.3*	*82.2*
• **Relevance**	13. National occupational standards show skills and knowledge required in different jobs.	*14.3*	*39.3*	*60.7*

• **Relevance**	14. Students and trainees view the ZQF positively.	*7.1*	*39.3*	*53.6*
• **Quality assurance**	15. The ZQF assures that only qualified persons are employed.	*14.3*	*17.9*	*67.9*
• **Standardization and comparability**	16. The ZQF has made qualifications of different institutions in Zambia comparable	*7.1*	*21.4*	*71.5*
• **Quality assurance**	17. The ZQF has improved credibility of education, training and the qualifications.	*0.0*	*21.4*	*78.6*
• **Levels and structure**	18. The ZQF makes it easier to appreciate the qualifications offered in Zambia.	*0.0*	*14.3*	*85.7*
• **Flexibility**	19. Skills and knowledge acquired in non-formal work are recognized on the ZQF.	*0.0*	*67.9*	*32.1*
• **Quality assurance**	20. Only education and training programmes meeting minimum standards are registered on the ZQF.	*7.1*	*35.7*	*57.2*

Table 16 compares the aggregated percentages of staff and students agreeing. Overall, management and teaching staff and students show similar trends in their perceptions of impact of the ZQF on transparency, relevance, and provision of quality assurance. The only noticeable difference is that higher percentages of management staff rate items on flexibility highly. They tended to acknowledge that the ZQF impacted on the recognition of prior learning and on ability to transfer credits more than students and teaching staff.

Table 16. Comparing management, students and teaching staff level of agreement on perceived impact of the ZQF

ZQF Feature	Survey item	Aggregated % Agreeing	
		Management (n = 28)	Students & trainers (n = 183)
• **Transparency**	• Employers and members of the public can have qualifications verified on the ZQF.	89.3	86.9
• **Transparency**	• The ZQF protects the reputation of Zambian qualifications.	92.9	82.6
• **Relevance**	• The ZQF has made education and training more relevant in Zambia.	75.0	74.8
• **Relevance**	• Employers to have a positive view of qualifications.	85.7	85.8
• **Flexibility**	• The ZQF makes it possible for learners to carry credits from one institution to another	67.8	55.7
• **Quality assurance**	• The ZQF has made it possible to detect fake qualifications.	78.6	74.5
• **Flexibility**	• The ZQF has made it possible to recognize prior learning.	85.8	69.9
• **Standardization and comparability**	• The ZQF has made qualifications obtained in Zambia more acceptable.	82.1	72.1
• **Transparency**	• The ZQF has made the structure of education, training and the qualifications easy to see.	75.0	72.6
• **Quality assurance**	• The ZQF assures that only genuine local and foreign qualifications are recognized.	71.4	74.6
• **Levels and structure**	• Level descriptors clearly show learning outcomes for different levels of education, training and qualifications.	82.1	75.9
• **Flexibility**	• Movement between different education and training sectors is possible under the ZQF.	82.2	67.1

• **Relevance**	• National occupational standards show skills and knowledge required in different jobs.	*60.7*	*69.4*
• **Relevance**	• Students and trainees view the ZQF positively.	*53.6*	*60.2*
• **Quality assurance**	• The ZQF assures that only qualified persons are employed.	*67.9*	*53.5*
• **Standardization and comparability**	• The ZQF has made qualifications of different institutions in Zambia comparable	*71.5*	*65.6*
• **Quality assurance**	• The ZQF has improved credibility of education, training and the qualifications.	*78.6*	*71.0*
• **Levels and structure**	• The ZQF makes it easier to appreciate the qualifications offered in Zambia.	*85.7*	*77.0*
• **Flexibility**	• Skills and knowledge acquired in non-formal work are recognized on the ZQF.	*32.1*	*38.3*
• **Quality assurance**	• Only education and training programmes meeting minimum standards are registered on the ZQF.	*57.2*	*61.2*

Table 17 presents aggregated results to compare agreement ratings for the three surveys for teaching staff and students, management, and for employers and employees. The percentage of employers and employees agreeing to 8 of the 9 items is lower than that for those in education and training institutions. For example, only 53.3% agree that employers have a positive view of qualifications compared to over 85% of those in training institutions agreeing. Only 46.7% of the employee/employer group agree that the ZQF has made it possible to recognize prior learning compared to 85.8% for management staff agreeing. While 65.7% teaching staff and 71.5% of management staff agree that the ZQF has made qualifications of different institutions in Zambia comparable only 53.3% of the employee/employer group agree to this standardization impact. All three groups do not perceive the ZQF to have impacted on flexibility to recognize skills and knowledge acquired in non-formal work. Only 40% of the employer-employee respondents agreed that ZQF has made it possible for employees to upgrade their skills and qualifications. These results suggest the possibility that the impact of implementing the ZQF is so far felt more in education and training institutions compared to the labour market.

Table 17. Comparison of level of agreement on perceived impact of the ZQF by students and trainers, management, and employer-employee groups

ZQF Features	Survey item	Aggregated 'agree' & 'Strongly Agree' %		
		Stu.(n = 183)	Man. (n= 28)	Emp. (n = 15)
Transparency	1. Employers and members of the public can have qualifications verified on the ZQF.	86.9	89.3	73.4
Relevance	2. Employers to have a positive view of qualifications.	85.8	85.7	53.3
Flexibility	3. The ZQF has made it possible for employees to upgrade their skills and qualifications	Not asked	Not asked	40.0
Quality assurance	4. The ZQF has made it possible to detect fake qualifications.	74.5	78.6	66.7
Flexibility	5. The ZQF has made it possible to recognize prior learning.	69.9	85.8	46.7
Levels and structure	6. Level descriptors clearly show learning outcomes for different levels of education, training and qualifications.	75.9	82.1	40.0
Relevance	7. National occupational standards show skills and knowledge required in different jobs.	69.4	60.7	60.0
Quality assurance	8. The ZQF assures that only qualified persons are employed.	53.5	67.9	66.7
Standardization and comparability	9. The ZQF has made qualifications of different institutions in Zambia comparable	65.6	71.5	53.3
Flexibility	10. Skills and knowledge acquired in non-formal work are recognized on the ZQF.	38.3	32.1	13.4

Note: Item 3 was unique to the employer/employee survey.

10.5 Qualitative analysis of open responses from the Google survey

The Google survey carried three open ended questions where respondents could provide comments on relevance and impact of the ZQF. They were to suggest improvements they expected. Three researchers read the responses manually analysed them for codes. Table 18 summarizes the codes obtained among the three categories surveyed. This section presents the results for each group and ends with a synthesis.

10.5.1 Employers and employees perceptions of the ZQF

Fifteen (n = 15) employers and employees from different companies provided open responses on the relevance of the ZQF. The majority provided responses on the affirmative. Themes that emerged pertained to relevance and impact, lack of awareness of the ZQF, and visibility and access of ZAQA services. Perceived relevance of the ZQF among, the majority of comments, was expressed in relation to understanding foreign qualifications, alignment of personnel correct positions, hiring qualified human resource, and providing credibility to the qualifications of employees.

> *I believe it is, because employers want to be sure that they are employing individuals with a desired IQ, which is represented by the qualifications we obtain*

> *Yes, it has enabled qualified people to take up positions*

> *Companies are able to recruit candidates that have appropriate qualifications for the job as per their requirement*

> *Yes. Employees with verified qualifications are employed*

> *ZQF has impacted companies and industries because it provides services that allow employers to verify the authenticity of peoples qualifications as well as being a gauge as to weather a potential employee is trainable or not.*

We use them the help us evaluate qualifications especially from foreign countries/ universities to help us what level they are equated to e.g. Degree Diploma or Masters.

Theme 2 was perceived lack of influence of the ZQF, which as the quotes below show is linked to (i) lack of awareness of the ZQF and (ii) lack of visibility of ZAQA. The use of 'it', 'them' and 'they' in these quotes suggests a lack of understanding of what the ZQF is. It illustrates that they do not differentiate between the ZQF (the framework) and ZAQA (the authority).

No impact due to limited awareness
Not relevant due limited awareness and unclear application
No impact due to limited awareness

They have not done anything so far
It doesn't have Offices in all Districts
Because they never visited or check on people's qualification

Table 18. Open response codes on relevance, impact, and improvement to ZQF [are there trends across groups or questions? Check the codes here and in the text]

	Students, lecturers & trainers (n = 182)	Management in institutions (N = 28)	Employers/employees (n = 15)
Relevance	1. Slow improvement 2. Curriculum revision to meet industry needs 3. Consensus on examining bodies 4. Comparable qualifications 5. Increased employability 6. Needs to be more practical/skills based and relevant 7. Improved standards 8. Needs to be standardized across the country 9. Good but can improve more 10. Standards are bad/going down (linked to mushrooming of private institutions and irrelevance of curricular)	1. Not yet/No change 2. Policy on RPL exemptions 3. Entry level requirements 4. Accredited Programs offered 5. Verification of results 6. Skills based education and Training 7. Training (programmes offered and how training is done) 8. Entry level relating to education and training admissions and employment	1. Standardization 2. Validation 3. Credibility 4. Validating of foreign qualifications 5. Employability (of qualified personnel, right placement of employees) 6. Not relevant
Impact of ZQF	1. Downgraded Institutions due to non-compliance 2. Equality encouraged 3. Matching of training and career 4. Harmonization of training 5. Knowledge of training 6. Recognition of qualifications	1. Validation of qualifications 2. Employability 3. Standardization 4. Authenticity of qualifications 5. Quality Assurance 6. Enhanced credibility of qualifications	1. Employment of qualified personnel, 2. Validation of qualifications 3. Job placement 4. Training gap 5. Neutral 6. Irrelevant 7. No impact

	7. Knowledge of training /qualification 8. Employability (linked to employer confidence, employment on merit, personnel placed at right positions) 9. Recognition of qualifications 10. Standardization of Qualifications 11. Quality enhancement 12. Credibility 13. Mobility and progression in education, training and career 14. Entry for training 15. Not sure 16. No impact	7. Relevance 8. Mobility 9. Can't tell 10. Relevance 11. Mobility 12. Curriculum tailored to level of training 13. Given Value to Zambian Qualifications	
Proposed improvements to ZQF	1. Visibility 2. Enhance monitoring and evaluation 3. Awareness 4. Sensitization 5. Enhanced Stakeholder involvement 6. Establish feedback mechanisms 7. Align institutional programs 8. Not sure	1. Visibility 2. Accessibility 3. Enforce compliance 4. Verification/validation fees 5. Record management 6. Centralized guidelines 7. Awareness	1. --Awareness 2. -Monitoring and Evaluation 3. -Visibility 4. Sensitization 5. Accessibility 6. No comment /Neutral

		8. Sensitization 9. Stakeholder orientation 10. Improved service delivery 11. No comment 12. Not sure/can't tell	

When asked to propose improvements to the ZQF structure and its implementation, nearly all comments provided related to improving the operational activities of ZAQA. The ZQF is perceived like an institution or organization. Concrete suggestions were the following quotations which reflect expectations for awareness raising, accessibility, visibility, coordination and dialogue with stakeholders, and, verification of qualifications.

Create more awareness

Having offices in all Districts

Need to have physical presence in each province as well as do more information dissemination about its operations and functions. Also need to have a harmonising role with ministry of education

They have to make their presence known and state what their functions are in both print and social media

Easy access in various towns

They should put up a system in organizations and institutions that subjects all employees results at recruiting and also when they up their qualifications

All paper for training should be satisfied (sic) by ZQF before presented to any institution

Capture Zambian qualifications at before issuance of certificates so that certificates should have ZAQA seal

Sustainable dialogue and input among educators, employers and ZAQA

10.5.2 Perceptions of management in education and training institutions

Changes influenced by the ZQF

Out of the twenty-eight (28) responses received and analysed, only 5 suggested 'no', 'not yet' or 'not really' to changes linked to the ZQF. The rest of the comments pointed to positive changes in policies and adoption of the ZQF principles, but numerous indicating 'yes' did not specify examples of the changes. Changes to policies mentioned were the following: emphasis on work place skills, enforcement of minimum entry qualifications, policy to offer accredited learning programmes, employing personnel with ZAQA validated certificates, and policy on exemptions. Adoption of ZQF principles and standards were noted as follows: qualifications scaled on the ZQF, adoption of notional hours, and detection of misrepresented or fake qualifications.

> *It has inspired change of policy for understanding qualification levels and minimum entry requirements. This is crucial to express a standard playing field*
>
> *Yes, programs have been designed in line with ZQF standards and guidelines in public universities*

Perceived 'greatest impact on education training and employment

There were numerous impacts that were cited and credited to the implementation of the ZQF. They considered that it had raised standards, quality, value, and acceptability of local qualifications. Qualifications were becoming relevant for employment and placement of employees in correct positions. The following quotes illustrate this.

> *Given value to Zambian qualifications*
>
> *The fact that ZQF validates what HEA has accredited*
>
> *Tailored curriculum to level of training*

There is confidence in employers of the graduates

Placement of employees made relevant

The implementation of the ZQF impact on the standardization of learning programmes and qualifications enabled students to transfer from one institution to another. They perceived that the curriculum focused on specific outcomes tailored to levels of the qualification. One of the impacts they credit to the ZQF is validation and evaluation of qualifications. Two quotes suffice to illustrate.

> *The greatest impact is that an employee seeking employment can entirely rely on validated qualifications by ZAQA as opposed to validating them with commissioner of oath authorities*

> *Certificates both locally and those obtained from outside the country have been scrutinized allowing those with genuine certificates to get employed.*

An important impact in the implementation of the ZQF was associated with registration, and validation and verification of qualifications. They recognized that these procedures had led to the detection of misrepresented qualifications and closure of unsuitable training providers.

Perceptions on improving ZQF structure and implementation

Management staff in education and training institutions in their comments made proposals that will be useful towards operational activities of ZAQA in implementing the mandate of managing the implementation of the ZQF. The majority of codes pertained to awareness raising, sensitization and information dissemination to all stakeholders. They expected presence of ZAQA in districts and online for ease of accessibility and visibility to the stakeholders. This quote sums this up.

> *Open more branches in some of provincial headquarters of Zambia, or clients should have full access of validating documents online as opposed to them physically traveling for the said service*

They proposed the need for improved and efficient service delivery as expressed in the following quotes.

By ensuring that service delivery conforms to expectations i.e. the implementation must be enforced along with accountability processes for proper implementation

There should be a time frame for validating local and foreign qualifications while being mindful that your clients are not unnecessarily inconvenienced. Also, records should clearly be documented to avoid misplacement, which adversely impacts on the clients who have made a payment and awaiting results.

Maybe carry out market survey to assess the adherence of recruitment policy and employment of graduates from different institutions

Some of their comments pointed to the following issues: (i) mandatory validation and evaluation of certificates obtained locally and abroad, (ii) monitoring the Zambian qualifications as this will improve the education standards, (iii) coordination with appropriate bodies such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Zambia, and (iv) enforce compliance and accountability to ensure that institutions adhere to standards.

10.5.3 Perceptions of students and teaching staff

Perceptions concerning education, training and qualifications

Most comments by students and teaching staff presented a favourable perception about education, training and qualifications in Zambia using the terms 'positive', 'raise', 'getting better', and 'needs to be further standardized'. They expressed the positive developments associated with the implementation of the ZQF.

With the authority in place people are now able to appreciate the equivalent qualifications but most employers are not up to date with this reality.

Those expressing negative perceptions expressed the concern that education and training was theoretical and that the curriculum failed to meet the needs of industry.

Zambian education is not field oriented. Though people can have good qualifications but due to lack of hands on activities, they fail to perform in the society

Further, it was expressed that the mushrooming of private institutions had led to lowering of standards and raised the incidence of fake qualifications.

> *Private colleges have been seen enrolling students who don't meet the 5'0 level threshold, yet we see such people graduating and are in schools teaching.*
>
> *Qualifications are obtained in Zambia from different institutions, however there is still fear to obtain qualifications from private institutions.*
>
> *They are a lot of fake qualifications especially doctorates from private universities and some foreign trained (on-line) which ZAQA has not dealt with adequately and needs to be seriously looked into*
>
> *The standards of education have gone down especially with the mushrooming of private training centres at every corners*
>
> *Quality in private institutions is compromised by the profit motive. Private institutions worry more about their cash flow and not the quality of graduates they produce. That is why it is very difficult to fail exams in a private college or university.*

A code that occurred quite frequently in the open responses was that of 'corruption' in the award of qualifications or 'connections' facilitating employment without proper qualifications.

> *I feel education, training and qualifications in Zambia is okay though some of these qualifications are not obtained genuinely some qualifications are obtained through corruption.*

However, comments also pointed to the fact that implementing the ZQF was having an effect in solving the above challenges.

> *There is much improvement since non-credible institutions are being deregistered and fake qualifications spotted, with instant dismissal of the culprits.*

Sentiments were expressed concerning the non-recognition of qualifications issued in other jurisdictions in the region and internationally.

This is a rather broad question as there is so much that can be expressed. That being said, while relevant to Zambia, a number of training and qualifications clearly FAIL to match up with what is prevailing elsewhere. A typical example are the multitude of students whose applications are questioned when they apply to study in countries such as South Africa. In a nutshell, the main issue with education, training and qualifications in Zambia is that they are seemingly ONLY restricted to Zambia.

Locally, some expressed that more could be done for the ZQF and its principles to be known to stakeholders.

There is much to be done in terms of standards. ZQF must come out and educate the public it is a closed-up entity very few people are about it hence people conferring themselves with fake unearned Doctorates

Perceived 'greatest' impact of implementing the ZQF

Overall, the comments from staff and students suggested a mixed understanding of the ZQF and made little distinction between it and ZAQA. Generally, the majority of comments were aligned to a positive impact of the ZQF and the mentioned activities of the Authority. As one put it "Has been fantastic only need to improve in certain areas for smooth running of ZQF". Many comments cantered on perceived raised education standards, standardization of qualifications, relevance, employability, and on the comparability and international recognition of qualifications as the impact of the ZQF. The following quotes are illustrative.

The greatest impact of the ZQF on education, training, and employment in Zambia has been the enhancement of the quality and relevance of qualifications, leading to improved employability and mobility within the education system and the labour market.

Among other things the ZQF has standardized qualifications across different education and training institutions in Zambia, ensuring that the quality and level of education are consistent nationwide. This has facilitated the recognition and comparability of qualifications both locally and internationally.

> *Standardizing the qualifications to ensure that all institutions offer similar and comparable qualifications.*

An important impact was that on quality assurance and improved accountability of education and training providers.

> *Training institutions strive to offer genuine and recognized programs*
>
> *Institutions ensure that students are given acceptable education quality. There is quality assurance*
>
> *Institutions paying attention to accreditation of their programmes now*
>
> *It pushes professional training institutions and trained professionals to improve in terms of their duties.*

However, a significant number of responses suggested that they (and other stakeholders) lacked awareness and failed to distinguish the framework (ZQF) and the Authority (ZAQA).

> *I don't really know what the ZQF is all about.*
>
> *There has been no impact. Most people do not even know that this frameworks exists.*
>
> *In my view, the ZQF has not yet been publicized, and not so many people, let alone employers know about it and make reference to it when selecting human resources for job placement*
>
> *ZQF hasn't been so good with sensitization on what exactly they do and what main object is. No wonder some of the answers above are neutral because not sure if they do or don't.*

Proposed improvements to the structure and implementation of the ZQF

Nearly all suggested improvements related to the operational activities of ZAQA rather than on the ZQF structure and principles. Many comments centred on the themes aligned to ZQF awareness raising and presence and visibility of ZAQA as shown be the illustrative quotes.

Improve presence and visibility in districts

> *First the institution must make itself visible. I have heard of it but I do not know what it does*

> *ZAQA needs to expand its operations in all provincial centres*

Conduct awareness and sensitization campaigns

> *Intensify the aspect of sensitization to the public, schools, colleges, universities, and employers. ZQF should come out like HEA educating people on the qualifications matters both in Zambia and outside Zambia*

Other improvements recommended were as follows:

- Establish and implement a monitoring and annual inspection mechanism
- Conduct needs assessment in education and training institutions
- Develop a web based national portal
- Collaborate with industry
- Delineate roles between HEA and ZAQA
- Reduce registration and validation fees

Codes that reflected on the ZQF were centred on the need to implement recognition of prior learning and the need to place micro-credentials on the ZQF.

> *Recognition of prior learning has not been fully implemented by all higher learning institutions*

> *Including micro-credentials in the ZQF to recognise smaller, more specific competencies that are increasingly relevant in the modern job market.*

10.5.4 Results from the interviews

Transcripts and notes from interviews in the first were coded and analysed using Atlas.ti Web Version 24. Figure 21 shows a screen shot of some of the output. Out of the 236 codes emerged six themes with exemplar codes presented in Table 19 and Figure 22.
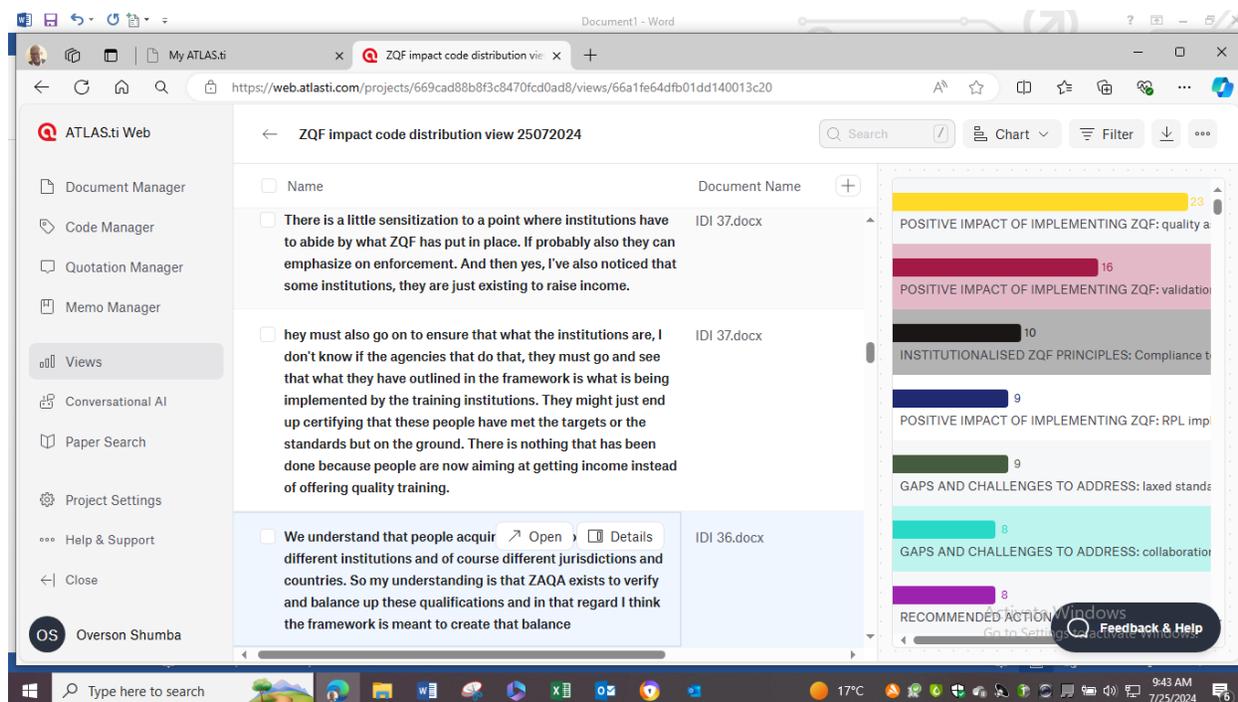
Figure 21. Screen shot of some of the output in Atlas.ti version 24.

More than a third of the codes (38.14%) were associated with positive impact of implementing the ZQF. Codes associated impact of implementing the ZQF included quality assurance, validation of qualifications, classification of institutions, international comparability standardizing qualifications, and credit transfer. A theme related to this was 'institutionalized ZQF principles' around which 11% of the codes belonged. They perceived institutionalization to have taken place as seen in review of legal provisions, compliance to guidelines, and in the positive response to impact. The following quotation is illustrative:

> *But as I said, we have embedded some of the recommendations from ZAQA, as well as some of the standard guidelines from HEA. And we have also added some of the things to talk to our strategic framework, as well as our mission statement (IDI 30).*

On the other hand, stakeholders told of gaps and challenges that needed to be addressed. They raised the issue of sensitization and lack of awareness of the ZQF, and the inadequate engagement with institutions. Some suggested the challenge of lowered standards.

Three codes, i.e., coordination, collaboration, delineation of roles came up with respect to ZAQA and the sub-framework authorities. Table 19 also shows that less than 10% of the codes fit into the

theme knowledge of ZQF objectives and principles' and 'operational activities of ZAQA'. Many interviewees lacked awareness and information and as one respondent put it:

> *What I think, I think we heard from when we started our interview, my responses were on the surface, which means that there is less engagement with the institution and the universities (IDI 35)*

Table 19. Themes and exemplar codes from the interviews.

Themes & interpretation	Exemplar codes	Code Frequency	
		N	%
1. POSITIVE IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTING ZQF- What is perceived as the positive impact	Quality assurance, validation of qualifications, aligning training to industry, classification of institutions, international comparability, curriculum review, standardize qualifications, student transfer, credit transfer	90	38.14
2. GAPS AND CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS-Stakeholder perceived gaps, challenges, negatives, and/or action areas	Coordination, collaboration, delineation of roles, sensitization, engagement with institutions, lack of knowledge of ZQF, lack of information, lowered standards	56	23.73
3. RECOMMENDED ACTION FOR ENHANCEMENT OF IMPACT- Stakeholder recommendations to improve impact of ZQF	Awareness of ZQF and ZAQA, sensitization, engagement with institutions, coordination, collaboration, harmonization, delineation of roles, review ZQF, monitoring and inspections	40	16.94
4. INSTITUTIONALISED ZQF PRINCIPLES- Stakeholder perception of ZQF aligned activities	Review of legal provisions, compliance to guidelines, positive response to impact, credit transfer	26	11.02
5. KNOWLEDGE OF ZQF OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES- Stakeholder awareness of purpose, structure, and/or principles	Transparency, international standards, employer confidence, level descriptors, set standards	14	5.93

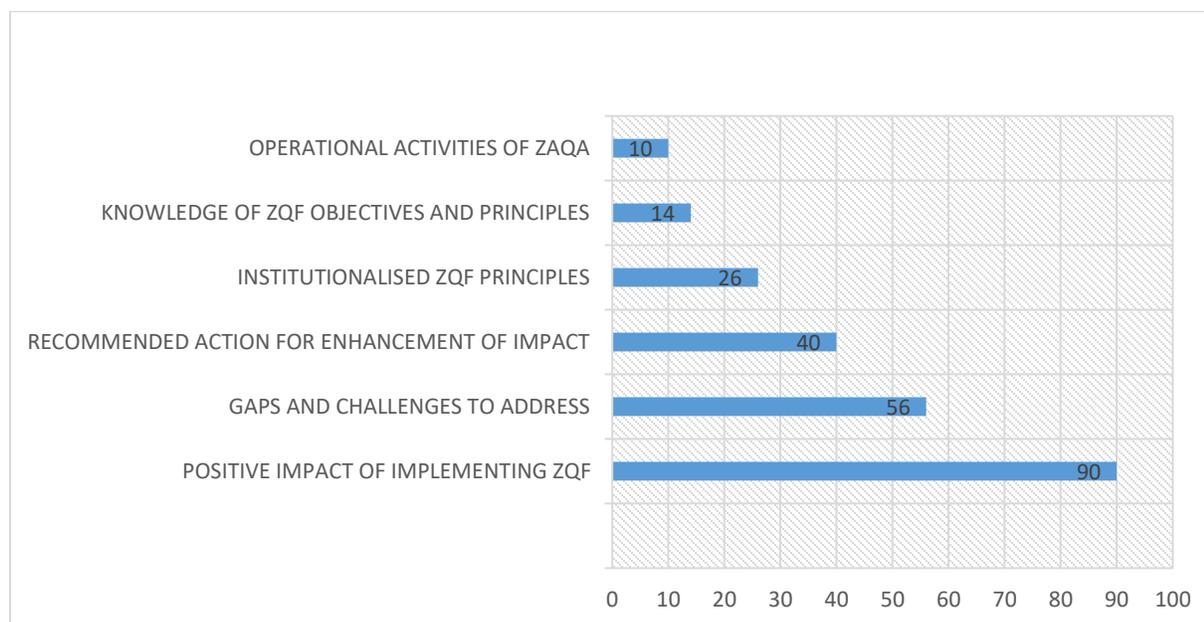|			
6. OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF ZAQA- Stakeholder perception of ZQF aligned activities	Accreditation, validation of qualifications, enforce compliance	10	4.24
	Total	**236**	**100.00**

Figure 22. Themes and number of codes from the interviews.

Sensitization of stakeholders and engagement with institutions, and increasing visibility of ZAQA are thus emerging as important codes under the theme 'recommended course of action to enhance impact'. In addition to more sensitization and engagement with institutions and increased monitoring and inspections by ZAQA were recommended. 'Review of the ZQF' emerged as a code. A case was made to include those qualifications not placed on it. Stakeholders cited the case of A-levels in the general education sub-framework and the honours bachelor degree and the specialized Master's degree for medical professions in the higher education sub-framework.

10.5.5 Analysis of interviews with teachers and DEBS

In this section, the responses from teachers and DEBS are analysed. They were unique in bringing out the role that ZAQA has played with respect to evaluation of qualifications, enforcement of standards, and curbing the proliferation of fake awarding institutions. Two excerpts illustrate this.

> *... Trying to bring sanity to the education sector, even other sectors, to make sure that people are really qualified, they really have the required qualifications (IDI 49).*

> *I feel there's been, because we are now getting what is quality. We don't seem to, sometimes we would hear of Matero, Matero University. Okay. But now, I'm not hearing of it more than the way it was (IDI 48).*

However, they indicated that they were not conversant with the ZQF, their responses showed some general appreciation. One DEBS expressed the following:

> *Okay, I may say, I may not be really sure, but from my own perspective because I've not interacted with the ZQF, but overall, I may say as a country because there is this framework which is guiding those qualifications, because we have at least a reference document, which will guide instead of probably doing things haphazardly where people can use opinion and so forth (IDI 51).*

Responses of teachers, head teachers, and DEBs were unique in observing the need for linkages between the ZQF and the National Education Curriculum Framework. One expected the level in qualifications on the ZQF to be matched with levels of remuneration.

> *So in a way, the structure is there, but what goes with the structure is not there. For instance, there is no salary scale for a master's, there is no salary scale for a doctorate. So we have a good number of teachers who have maybe a master's, degree, a doctorate degree, but they are getting salary for a diploma, because there is no salary for a degree, for a master's and for a doctorate (IDI 55).*

DEBS expressed a concern that the professional competencies earned from different universities were not comparable and that some qualifications from Zambia were doubted elsewhere.

When you look at, especially those that are coming from different universities, they come quite alright with qualified papers, but when it comes to practice, that is something else (IDI 45)

When they have gone with our, some of our qualifications, when they go there, they are asked first of all to probably do some more, other additional course in order to meet the minimum standard before they are considered for anything(IDI 51)

10.5.6 Summary of qualitative findings

The results from the written open responses compliment responses from interviews. Overall, they show that participants lacked understanding of the specific detailed features of the ZQF yet they easily identify with its scope and purpose, and propose its perceived impacts. They suggest that the framework is needed and that it is bringing sanity to the education, training and qualifications landscape. The majority identified the ZQF with the improvement in quality, standards, and value of local qualifications, and employability and fairness in the recruitment of qualification holders. Stakeholders in education and training institutions made mention of the impact of the ZQF on policies, quality assurance, and on credit transfer, student mobility and progression.

Those in management and quality assurance had a higher level of understanding of the ZQF compared to the other stakeholders. They were more likely to have participated in stakeholder engagements or consultations. This may suggest also that there are weak mechanisms for cascading information to faculty in institutions. The majority identified the ZQF with the improvement in quality, standards, and value of local qualifications, and employability and fairness in the recruitment of qualification holders. Stakeholders from education and training made mention of the impact of the ZQF on policies, for quality assurance, credit transfer, student mobility and progression.

11. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This synthesis is structured around the four questions of the study. Overall the results point to the positive impact implementation of the ZQF has had in the education and training sector. However, the ZQF is not well understood suggesting the need for greater sensitization and stakeholder engagement.

11.1 What was the state of education and qualifications before implementation of the ZQF (prior to 2017)?

The desk review on the pre-ZQF period revealed that the education and training sector was growing and diversifying in types of institutions and in qualifications awarded. With liberalization there was rapid appearance of the private institutions which, some of the stakeholders in this study say, prioritized profit over standards. There was no overarching quality assurance mechanisms and no national qualifications framework. The higher education sub-sector which was described as uncoordinated and operating in an environment with a fragmented policy and legal framework. This had an impact on the image of certain qualifications as not meeting the needs of Zambian society and industry, and not meeting standards of qualifications in other jurisdictions. Professional qualifications were awarded using standards and quality assurance mechanisms set by their independent Boards. In the absence of coordinated national structure for qualifications, holders of TVET and professional qualifications had no pathway into degree programmes.

Two subsectors, the general education and technical vocational education, had authorities, respectively, the ECZ (established by the 1983 Act) regulating examinations and certification and TEVETA (established by the 1998 Act) regulating curriculum, examinations and certification. The policy and legal landscape changed considerably enabling the establishment of an authority for the higher education subsector, the HEA and the national qualifications authority, ZAQA.

11.2 What is the impact of the ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation? i.e., 2018-2023?

The impact of the developing and implementing the ZQF has been to unify education and training in the country and to set out a transparent and distinguishable levels of qualifications, the learning

outcomes or level descriptors, and the minimum notional hours and credits for courses and learning programmes. There are multiple impacts observed that maybe attributed to operationalization of the ZQF:

(i)   Regional and internationally benchmarked qualifications framework enabling validation and evaluation of foreign qualifications

(ii)   Formulation and enactment of legal provisions enabling the more effective implementation and harmonized institutionalization of the framework through delineation of roles.

(iii)   Development of standards and guidelines and stakeholder engagements for transparent and effective implementation and institutionalization of quality assurance, especially in the higher education sub-sector.

(iv)   Strides towards institutionalizing ZQF principles in education and training institutions and the accreditation of learning programmes.

(v)   Non-recognition and discontinuation of learning programmes that do not meet the ZQF standard.

11.3 How do stakeholders understand the ZQF and its impacts?

Most stakeholders in the survey did not have a clear understanding and thus found it difficult to describe the ZQF. However many understood what they wanted it to contribute in terms of benefits, i.e., raising quality standards and the reputable qualifications. Stakeholders perceived the ZQF to be contributing towards standardization and transparency in the qualifications for each level of education and training, ensuring international comparability, and towards increasing relevance of qualifications for the labour market. Their understanding was that ZAQA could make this possible with increased stakeholder engagement and sensitization on ZAQA's services and the ZQF.

11.4 What are the perceptions of stakeholders on the impact of ZQF on education, training and employment in Zambia in the last 6 years of implementation, i.e., 2018-2023?

Different stakeholders identified with benefits that could accrue with the implementation of the ZQF. While they were not fully conversant with it, the stakeholders in education and training perceived that with more engagement with ZAQA, their role in implementing its principles and

internal quality assurance could be enhanced. By and large stakeholders perceived that quality assurance was being enhanced, education and training institutions were using standards and guidelines, and that learning programme accreditation by the Authorities was increasing.

The few employers and employees in the study perceived the ZQF as having enabled them to hire the right employees with the right skills and competencies. Students and teaching staff on the other hand perceived the ZQF as having impacted transparency, standards and relevance while management of education and training institutions showed an understanding of the ZQF having impacted other aspects such as recognition of prior learning as well as transfer of credits. They perceived that the ZQF was enhancing their work, e.g., internal quality assurance mechanisms and exemption policies. They perceived inadequacies in ZAQA's engagement with institutions and its coordination, harmonization, and the delineation of its roles and those of the sub-framework authorities. Some stakeholders perceived the need to review ZQF to accommodate some sub-qualifications such as Advanced levels, honours degrees, and the specialized Masters in medicine.

12. IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESULTS

12.1 Assessing study results against objectives of the ZQF

The ZQF pursues four objectives which are the following:

(a) Create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;

b) Facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;

(c) Enhance the quality of education and training; and

(d) Promote education, training and employment opportunities.

With respect to the first objective, the ZQF has indeed created a single integrated national framework for learning achievements by unifying the three education and training sub-sectors. With respect to the second objective, the ZQF is enabling access and mobility. However, it requires a review to ensure that all qualifications and sub-qualifications can be placed on the framework and to take into account the reviewed National Education Curriculum Framework (MoE, 2023)

and the various amendments to the laws governing the education and training sectors. This is the case for A-levels, honours degrees, and higher degrees for specialists in the medical field.

Both internal and external quality assurance guidelines and standards are being implemented enhancing quality through accreditation of learning programmes and their registration. This reflects progress towards attainment of objective 3. With respect to objective 3, the ZQF is benchmarked against regional and international frameworks and thus promoting international comparability. In this study, it was observed that qualifications obtained from awarding bodies in all continents were being presented to be accredited and evaluated by ZAQA. This points to the acceptance of Zambian qualifications for education and training in those countries.

12.2 Reflection on implications for practice

The expansion and liberalization of education in the pre-ZQF period played a major role in raising the need for a coordinated quality assurance mechanism and a unified national qualifications framework. National qualifications frameworks serve as instruments to improve transparency and comparability of qualifications by providing clear and consistent description of qualifications at each level of the education and training system (Tuck, 2007; Chakroun, 2010). This is what the ZQF aims to do and the participants in this study appear to recognize this and other benefits of the ZQF. For example, participants in the study associate the ZQF with standardization and transparency of qualifications, which reflects the benefits of the NQF structure and criteria (Tuck, 2007; CEDEFOP, 2017).

However, the many participants are not sufficiently familiar with the ZQF. This has been linked before to resistance to change by some stakeholders that resulted in low quality or input to the process of consultation on the ZQF (Chiyaba, 2011). Contrary to this, the participants in this study show a welcoming attitude and expected greater sensitization and engagement. This is particularly important given the dynamic nature of the ZQF. Noteworthy is the review of the ZQF level descriptors to incorporate employability attributes and the integration of national occupation standards. Those in the TVET sector appeared to us more aware of NOS, perhaps because they operate with curriculum prepared by TEVETA.

It is important for stakeholders to understand the ZQF associated concepts and principles if they are to be effectively embedded into regular, e.g., the design, delivery and quality assurance of

learning programmes. The normalisation process theory seems handy; it focusses on how new practices and organizational changes get implemented (bringing a practice or practices into action), embedded (practices routinely incorporated in everyday work) and integrated and sustained within a system (May, et al, 2009). Applying this theory would suggest that participants in this study lack fuller awareness and understanding of the ZQF yet they acknowledge and express positive expectations regarding the ZQF. Without coherence or full understanding, they will not be able to collectively institutionalise some principles. For example, management suggested that the ZQF promoting their work such as development of quality curricular and developing and implementing credit transfer and RPL policies. The coherence construct of the normalisation process theory is quite important for principles and practices to become embedded in everyday education and training processes.

This is quite crucial given the vital function of education to develop the human capital, and hence our use of human capital theory to appreciate the impact of the ZQF. A well implemented ZQF can help drive the economy (Mutton, 2021) by assuring quality of learning programmes, authenticity of qualifications, and the knowledge and competencies of the holders of those qualifications. In this study, stakeholders point to the improvement of quality and standards in education and training. The ZQF has catalysed the institutionalization of quality assurance in the education sector. It is also possible that as standards rise, less people will prefer earning qualifications from foreign awarding bodies thus saving the country sums on foreign exchange. Regulation of quality is the route by which education impacts on economic growth (Odhiambo, 2024). While focusing on labour market data was beyond the scope of this study, anecdotal evidence points us to the following aspects of the ZQF that will likely impact on economic growth in the long term:

- Employers engage employees with verified qualifications
- Development of the national occupational standards
- Engaging employers in the development of NOS for increased relevance
- Focusing on employability attributes, self-employment, and entrepreneurship
- Qualifications progression and lifelong learning possible in trades and occupations and academic pathways.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, while stakeholders perceive benefits of implementing the ZQF favourably, the results point to the fact that, for many stakeholders, the structure and scope of the ZQF is not easy to describe. Regardless, those in education and training institutions believe that they can have a role implementing the principles required for quality transformation to increase relevance and repute of qualifications. The following recommendation arise from their acknowledgement of the institutionalization of ZAQA and the ZQF and need to enhance its impact.

13.1 Increased stakeholder engagement to improve understanding of the ZQF structure and purpose, and to increase understanding of level descriptors, employability attributes, national occupational standards, and the concepts of RPL, inclusivity, and lifelong learning.

13.2 Improved synergies in the implementation of the ZQF between ZAQA and sub framework authorities, and other stakeholders such as education and training institutions, professional bodies, government ministries, and the industry players.

13.3 Increased accessibility and visibility of ZAQA to stakeholders across the country.

13.4 Increased information and communication concerning accreditation of learning programmes, and submission of learner achievement records.

13.5 Revision the ZQF to accommodate the (a) revised National Education Curriculum Framework that introduces Advanced Level to the general education and general and honours degrees in the higher education sector, and (b) the introduction of technical universities and colleges into the higher education sub framework.

14. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the education and training system has substantively transitioned from the pre-ZQF era when it was characterized by fragmentation and the absence of a unifying qualifications framework. The past six years has seen the implementation of the ZQF and the

institutionalization of principles and practices that it promotes. The study also finds and reports that the past six years were marked by enactment and amendment of laws and statutory instruments, sensitization and engagement of stakeholders, development and deployment of standards and guidelines, and operational activities of the Appropriate Authorities enabling the institutionalization of the ZQF. In this study, the stakeholders positively perceive the institutions implementing the ZQF and yearn for them to engage and sensitize them more.

Overall, the study demonstrates emerging impact including the transformed policy and legal landscape, availability of QMIS and statistics on accreditation, registration and evaluation of qualifications, positive perception of stakeholders, availability and use of standards and guidelines for quality assurance, implementation of RPL and CATS policies, availability and use of national occupational standards, and increasing standardisation with the uptake of ZQF principles (level descriptors, credits and notional hours).

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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF DESK REVIEW REPORTS & PUBLICATIONS

1. Bwalya.T.(2023). 'An Evaluation of the National Higher Education Policy of Zambia.' *Concept Paper. doi: 10.20944/preprints.202301. 0047.v1*

2. Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) Annual Report, 2016

3. Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ), 2017

4. Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ), 2018

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8. Kazonga, E. (2018). 'Implications of Policy and Legal Frameworks on Higher Education in Zambia'. *Excellence in Higher Education*, Vols 8 & 9, Nos 1&2 December, 2018, pp 8-13.

9. Mpolomoka, D.L, Banda, S, Dube, M.V, Muyangana, A, Kanduza, E and Kaleba, M. 'The Role of Private Higher Education Provision in Zambia: Changing the Higher Education Landscape in Africa.' *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science.* Vol. 8, No. 6. June 2018, pp 97-103.

10. 10. Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Eighth National Development Plan (7NDP),2017 – 2021. https://www.mofnp.gov.zm

11. 11. Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP),2022 – 2026. https://www.mofnp.gov.zm

12. Ministry of Youth and Sport and Child Development. (2015). <u>National Youth Policy</u> Lusaka.

13. Southern African Development Community Regional Accreditation Framework. (SADCQF) Report, 2022.

14. Ministry of Finance and National Planning .(2006). <u>'Vision 2030-A prosperous Middle-income Nation By 2030'</u>. Lusaka.

15. Ministry of Finance and National Planning. (2005). <u>Fifth National Development Plan</u>. Lusaka

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19. SI No. 16 of 2016

20. SI No.18 of 2018

21. TVET Act no 13 of 1998, revised in 2005

22. Technical Education, Vocational & Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) Annual Report, 2016

23. Technical Education, Vocational & Entrepreneurship Authority (TEVETA) Annual Report, 2017

24. Technical Education, Vocational & Entrepreneurship Authority (TEVETA) Annual Report, 2018

25. Technical Education, Vocational & Entrepreneurship Authority (TEVETA) Annual Report, 2019

26. Technical Education, Vocational & Entrepreneurship Authority (TEVETA)Annual Report, 2020

27. Technical Education, Vocational & Entrepreneurship Authority (TEVETA)Annual Report, 2021

28. Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA). (2016), Guidelines for the registration and accreditation of qualifications on the Zambia Qualifications Framework

29. Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA). (2016), Level Descriptors

30. Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA). (2016), Policy and Criteria for Recognition of Prior Learning in Zambia

31. Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA). SI No. 4 of 2018

32. Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA). (2019), Annual Report

33. Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA). (2022), Annual Report

34. Zambia Qualifications Authority Bill, 2022

35. Zambia Qualifications Authority Annual Report,2016

36. Zambia Qualifications Authority Annual Report,2017

37. Zambia Qualifications Authority Annual Report,2018

38. Zambia Qualifications Authority Annual Report,2019

39. Zambia Qualifications Authority Annual Report,2020

40. Zambia Qualifications Authority Annual Report,2021

41. Zambia Qualifications Authority Annual Report,2022

42. Zambia Qualifications Authority Annual Report,2023

43. ZICA Circular 4/2019

44. ZICA Circular 4/2020

APPENDIX 2. LIST OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS' INSTITUTIONS

1. Auxiliary Auto
2. CFAO Zambia
3. Chalimbana University
4. Charles Lwanga College of Education
5. Chipata College of Education
6. City Safety and Security Wear/Mystique car Rental
7. Copperbelt University
8. Eden University
9. Edgar Chagwa Lungu Secondary School
10. EMCA Consultancy
11. Evelyn Hone
12. Financial Insight Zambia
13. Hillcrest Secondary School
14. Isoka Trades
15. Kapiri Girls Secondary School
16. Kasanshi Mines Training College
17. Kwame Nkrumah University
18. Legal Aid Board
19. Livingstone Institute of Business and Engineering Studies (LIBES)
20. Lunsemfwa Hydropower station
21. Mansa Trades
22. Ministry of Education
23. Ministry of Labour and Social Security
24. Ministry of Technology and Science
25. Mongu College of Education
26. Mopani Copper Mines
27. Mpika College of Agriculture
28. Mukuba University
29. Mulungushi University

30. Musonda Girls Secondary School

31. National Institute of Public Administration

32. Northrise University

33. Plush Paints/Value World Hardware

34. Right to Care Zambia

35. Sesheke Trades

36. Solwezi Boys Secondary School

37. Solwezi College of Education

38. TAZAMA

39. Teaching Council of Zambia (TCZ)

40. Technical and Vocational Entrepreneurship Training Authority

41. The Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ZACCI)

42. University of Lusaka

43. University of Zambia

44. Zambia Compulsory Standards Agency

45. Zambia Information and Communication Technology University

46. Zambia Institute of Human Resource Management (ZIHRIM)

47. Zambia Institute of Marketing (ZIM)

48. Zambia Institute of Special Education (ZAMISE)

49. Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC)

50. Zambia Qualifications Authority

51. ZAMIM