



Council on Higher Education

Annual Report

April 2023 – March 2024

May 2024

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report provides progress update covering April 2023 to March 2024. It is based on the Annual Score Card or Annual Plan which in turn draws from the Revised Third Generation CHE Strategic Plan 2022/23 – 2024/25. The report has four sections. The first is an introduction which presents the functions of CHE and the elements of its strategic direction. The second focuses on the performance of the organisation on the five strategic goals and associated objectives as outlined in the Strategic Plan. The third presents challenges that were encountered during implementation of the Annual Score Card, and the fourth and final section presents the conclusion, focussing on the impact that CHE has had within the Higher Education sub-sector and beyond.

Council Members

#	Council Members	Term of Service
1.	Dr. Mohlalefi Sefika (Chairperson)	First Term
2.	Mr. Mangangole-Tsikinyane	First Term
3.	Advocate Napo Rantsane	First Term
4.	Prof. Tiisetso Makatjane	Second Term
5.	Dr. Nthabiseng Taole	Second Term
6.	Dr. Tlotla Shadrack Selialia	First Term
7.	Mr. Mofihli Motšetšero	First Term
8.	Dr. Elizabeth Nonkosi Tlale	First Term
9.	Mr. Khiba Masiu	First Term
10.	Mrs. Maleshoane Lekomola- Danziger (<i>Proxy for PS Finance</i>)	<i>Ex officio member</i>
11.	Mrs. 'Maselloane Sehlabi (<i>Proxy for PS MOET</i>)	<i>Ex officio member</i>
12.	Dr. Litšabako Ntoi (Chief Executive of CHE)	Ex officio member

1.1

FUNCTIONS OF CHE

The mandate of CHE is to quality assure the higher education sub-sector and to advise the Minister of Education and Training on matters relating to higher education.

The functions of CHE are to:

- a) Monitor implementation of the policy on higher education;
- b) Publish information regarding developments in higher education on a regular basis;
- c) Promote access of students to higher education institutions;
- d) Advise the Minister of Education and Training on any aspect of higher education;
- e) Promote quality assurance in higher education;
- f) Audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions;
- g) Accredite programmes and issue a certificate of accreditation of higher education; and
- h) Monitor and evaluate the performance of academic programmes and higher education institutions

Additionally, CHE advises the Minister of Education and Training on the following areas:

- i. Quality promotion and quality assurance;
- ii. Teaching and research;
- iii. The structure and planning of the higher education system;
- iv. A mechanism for the allocation of public funds;
- v. Appropriate incentives or imposition of sanctions such as diminution or withdrawal of government funding, downgrading, termination of a programme, or even closure of an institution;
- vi. Student bursaries; and
- vii. Governance of the higher education institutions and higher education systems.

Extended Mandate

The Ministry of Education and Training extended the mandate of CHE to manage implementation of the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (LQF) across all the four tiers of education, namely, Higher

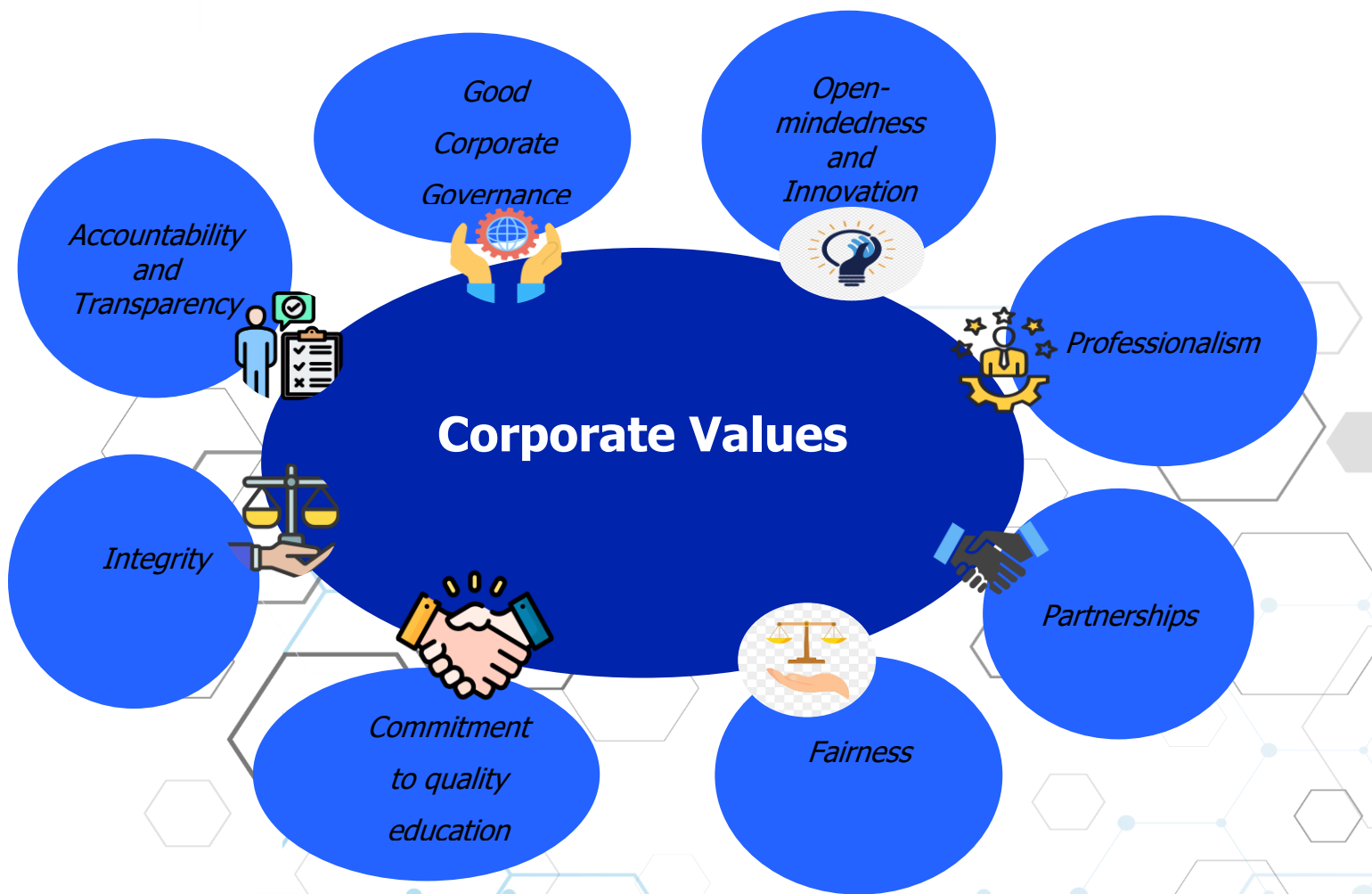
Education, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Basic Education and Professional Qualifications.

1.2 Mission, Vision and Values

Mission: To provide an environment that promotes quality assurance in higher education, enhances recognition of qualifications, mobility of learners and supports national development.

Vision: By 2030 CHE will be well resourced, with strong quality assurance systems in the HE sub-sector to enable attainment of comparable and competitive qualifications.

Slogan: "Quality education assured!" (*"Tiisetso ka thuto ea boleng!"*)



1.3 Strategic Goals

The CHE strategic plan has identified the following five strategic goals as the main areas of focus for the next five years:

- a) Forging and nurturing strategic partnerships with stakeholders;
- b) Developing and implementing QA systems, and managing LQF;
- c) Building physical infrastructure for CHE, and employing innovative technologies to improve efficiency;

- d) Strengthening governance, human capital and operations within CHE; and
- e) Diversifying and intensifying mobilisation of resources for CHE.

1.4 Perspectives and Strategic Objectives

Stakeholder Perspective

- a) Establish and nurture partnerships with stakeholders;
- b) Establish and maintain good working relations with partners;
- c) Improve the quality of Higher Education; and
- d) Implement the LQF.

Internal Processes Perspective

- a) Conduct research, develop and review legal frameworks and policies to inform decisions; and
- b) Improve internal operational efficiency.

Learning and Growth Perspective

- a) Increase staff complement and its capacity;
- b) Improve IT infrastructure and its ecosystem; and
- c) Build physical infrastructure for CHE.

Financial Perspective

- a) Diversify revenue sources;
- b) Improve management of costs; and
- c) Secure a stable source of revenue for CHE.

2.0

PROGRESS UPDATE ON EACH OF THE STRATEGIC

This section of the report gives a detailed account of the ground covered towards the strategic goals listed above. All the objectives related to each strategic goal will be reported on.

2.1

Forging and nurturing strategic partnerships with stakeholders

There are two objectives under this goal, namely, Establish and nurture partnerships with stakeholders; and Establish & maintain good working relations with partners.

2.1.1

Establish and nurture partnerships with stakeholders

Engaging Government Ministries as some of the key stakeholders is very important. To this end officials within the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and other relevant Ministries were engaged on issues pertaining to the advancement of CHE quality assurance mandate. For instance, in MOET the Minister and PS were engaged on a number of different issues during the reporting period including on supporting CHE to obtain a Government house for its offices, pursuing the approval and publication of the revised quality assurance fees, the Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC) quality assurance challenges which threatened its academic calendar, among other issues. The National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS) and the Ministry of the Public Service, Labour and Employment were engaged on issues relevant to them in the provision of quality higher education.

In respect of Higher Education Institutions, engagement takes place at different levels, namely, at the level of students, quality assurance contact persons, and Heads of institutions. The heads were engaged a number of times on an individual basis on matters relating specifically to their own institutions. For instance, the drive to encourage Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP) to introduce degree level qualifications continued during the year under review. In February 2024 the polytechnic and the Lesotho College of Education (LCE) got three and two of their new Bachelor level qualifications respectively accredited. This is a strong foundation for these institutions to ultimately be upgraded from colleges to universities.

Publicity: CHE activities were publicised widely through the mass media, particularly radio and television. CHE officials had a number of appearances on these platforms to provide information to the public about such things as verification and evaluation of qualifications, quality assurance challenges facing (LAC) and the National Health Training College (NHTC), findings of the skills audit study towards quality in higher education; and the 9th edition of the Higher Education Fair. Furthermore, publicity was done through digital media platforms such as the website and social media.

CHE was also publicised through the Higher Education Fair which is held annually. There were 6, 076 people who participated during the two days including students and parents/guardians. The total income generated from the Fair was M203 261.00. Thus, introduction of entrance fee at the Fair continues to make positive impact.

2.1.2 Establish & maintain good working relations with partners

CHE has maintained working relationships with regional bodies in the area of quality assurance. For example, CHE is not only an active member of the Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN), it serves as a Secretariat for the network since December 2023. It will serve in this capacity for the next four years. This body is a platform for quality assurance agencies in the region and HEIs. It is therefore, a very important platform for exchanging ideas and sharing good practices on quality assurance. Prior to assuming Secretariat responsibilities, CHE served on the Executive Committee of

SAQAN as Deputy President. CHE is already heavily engaged in SAQAN work including preparations for a conference to be held in Zambia in September this year.

CHE is also a member of the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) and was elected into the position of Deputy President of the network during the year under review. Moreover, it is active in the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) project. This project focuses on development and implementation of the African Qualifications Framework. The importance of a continental framework on qualifications is that it provides an important framework for regulating mobility of graduates and workers across the continent. CHE is also an active member of SADC – Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA) which is a committee responsible for standardisation of the practice of quality assurance in higher education in the SADC region. Among areas it deals with are implementation of SADC Protocol on Education and SADC Regional Qualifications Framework. The Committee has made significant progress towards harmonisation of national qualifications frameworks in the region.

CHE is also involved in a regional project on Potential of Micro-credentials in Southern Africa (POMISA) which has already injected M400,000.00 into CHE. There are higher education regulatory bodies and tertiary institutions involved in this project. In Lesotho there is CHE, National University of Lesotho (NUL) and Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP). The purpose of the project is to help participating countries to develop necessary capacity to offer credit bearing short courses or part-qualifications or micro credentials. Thus, the participating HEIs will be capacitated to offer these courses, while CHE will be in a position to quality assure them. Once capacity is build the skills will be transferred to other local institutions.

CHE also holds the position of Treasurer in the African Qualifications Verifications Network (AQVN), which is a continental body responsible for facilitating verification of qualifications across countries. Since students are highly mobile, studying in different countries, it is critical that their qualifications can be easily verified when they seek either employment or to further their studies. AQVN was established to address the challenges which were encountered when agencies responsible for managing qualifications were trying to verify qualifications across national borders.

These platforms are very important for sharing information on new trends of the CHE mandate of quality assurance, and for members to interact with each other on new developments and useful experiences. AQVN on the other hand provides a platform where member agencies including CHE consult and support each other on verification of foreign qualifications.

International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) is a global quality assurance network to which CHE is affiliated. Two CHE officials participated in the INQAAHE 17th Biennial Conference held in Astana, Kazakhstan in Eastern Europe. The conference was highly beneficial in that it provided current trends in the implementation of the INQAAHE International Standards and Guidelines (ISGs) 2022 for Tertiary Education. All members of INQAAHE are strongly encouraged to align their QA standards to those of the association for ease of comparability around the world.

Chief Executive and Director for the Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards attended the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) conference in Tanzania in November 2023. The theme of the conference was 'Potentials of Quality Assurance in Advancing Excellence in Higher Education in the Digital Era'. The team gained a great deal from the interactions at the conference.

Study Tour to CHE-South Africa:

A team of 5 people including the Chief Executive went on a study tour to CHE South Africa to learn about clustering a number of related programmes together for purposes of accreditation. The team came back with valuable lessons. The clustering approach has since been implemented in dealing with 3 Paray School of Nursing Programmes, namely, Certificate in Nursing, Diploma in Nursing and Midwifery programmes. The team also attended a conference while in SA which was organised by CHE-SA. This clustering approach will not only reduce time taken to review programmes, but it will also save CHE money that could have been used to engage many reviewers. Efficiency and effectiveness in CHE operations will increase significantly.

In relation to the negotiation of Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Agreement (MRQA) between CHE and SAQA, the two agencies have exchanged drafts of the agreement. The aim of the agreement is for the two countries to recognise each other's qualifications so that when graduates or nationals of one

country seek employment or to further their studies in another country their qualifications are not subjected to evaluation. Initially the agreement was intended to cover all the three tiers of education, namely, Basic Education, Technical Education and Vocational training, and Higher Education. Attempts to involve the Technical and Vocational Department (TVD) and Basic Education within MOET have been long drawn-out with very low responsiveness. So, the current draft MRQ is focusing on HE only. Once CHE and SAQA are satisfied with the agreement it will be processed for signing at the Ministerial level in both countries.

Once finalised and operational, the agreement will enable Basotho who seek employment or to further their studies in South Africa, to do so without having to go through onerous evaluation processes. The same thing will happen to South Africans and people who have studied there when they come to Lesotho for employment or studies. It is important to engage the Minister so that he is fully on board when he has to sign the agreement, once the negotiations are complete.

CHE held a successful two-day Forum on access to higher education for learners with disabilities. This was done in collaboration with NUL and two professors from University of Johannesburg and California - Davis (USA). The purpose of the Forum was to create a platform towards supporting youth with disabilities for their future employment. This was achieved by providing professionals, youth, and other relevant stakeholders with the knowledge, skills and competencies to navigate the labour market to enter the world of work. HEIs participated together with civil society organisations working in this area, and other stakeholders such as MOET through its relevant Departments, and employers from both public and private spheres. Sharing of lived-experiences and struggles of people with disabilities in trying to obtain higher education got HEIs representatives sensitised to the need to improve access for them.

CHE has good working relations with other agencies doing similar work in the SADC region and beyond. This is particularly critical because by nature quality assurance in higher education is done through peer review approach in which academics and quality assurance experts are engaged to form teams to review programmes in institutions other than their own. Such academics and QA experts can be from within the country and outside. To this end two officers from the Quality Assurance Directorate were

appointed by the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) Namibia to review two programmes at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). These kinds of engagements are important because they provide platforms for CHE staff to exchange notes with professionals from other jurisdictions, and therefore, learn from best practices. CHE also engages people from Namibia and mostly South Africa when undertaking programme reviews. This interaction and interconnectivity contribute positively towards staff exposure, development and growth.

2.2 Developing and implementing QA Systems, and managing LQF

2.2.1 Review Programmes

Fifty programme reviews were planned for the year under review, 53 were processed, out of which 13 were completed, while 40 were at different stages of the review by the end of the financial year. 7 institutional audits were planned, however, only 3 were started but not completed. They were at different stages of the audit process. The other 4 audits were not done at all because institutions did not submit their Self Evaluation Reports as expected. It is only when there is a submission that the audit process can start.

Identified potential members of review panels should be trained on the CHE QA system and tools. However, during the year under review no training was conducted, instead every time a panel of reviewers was engaged its members were inducted on CHE approach to quality assurance, and relevant documents. It is very important that an in-depth capacity building for potential members of QA panels is incorporated into future plans, and budget be allocated accordingly. This will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the QA processes.

CHE has worked very hard to encourage public institutions to introduce new programmes with qualifications at higher LQF levels. To this end, three institutions, namely, LP, NUL and Lesotho College of Education (LCE) have introduced new programmes which will contribute positively to the national

priorities. For instance, out of the 7 programmes submitted by LP for review, 6 were new and 5 of them are at degree level. 5 of them have been granted accreditation. NUL on the other hand introduced 2 new programmes, while LCE also introduced 2 first degree level qualifications. Once this drive for introduction of new and relevant programmes reaches a critical mass it will reduce the number of state-funded Basotho students studying outside the country, and thus, reduce erosion of the badly needed funds. Furthermore, the Kingdom will be in control of skills development for its socio-economic growth.

2.2.2 Conduct Institutional Audits

In respect of institutional audits, there were 7 audits planned for this reporting period. Only three audits for IDM, LeBOHA and NHTC were started, and were at different stages of the process by end of the reporting period. Four were not done because the earmarked institutions did not submit for audit. An Audit Report which was done in the previous year, but shared with the institution during the period under review was for the Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC). The findings of the audit point to a very gloomy picture. The college operates as a department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, and thus, has no operational autonomy over key things such as recruitment, and resources used for teaching and learning, among others. The institution has no functional governance structure, and it has lost teaching staff in many critical positions. The institution's internal quality systems are on the verge of collapse as 8 standards out of the 16 audit standards have not been met. The quality of provision of higher education is highly compromised.

CHE advised the Minister to close the institution down so that these important issues could be addressed. Subsequent to this, the institution suspended intake of first year students due to the mounting challenges. CHE further advised the Minister to establish an Independent Evaluation Panel in terms of provisions of the Higher Education Act. However, the Minister did not take the advice, nor did he provide reasons for not doing so. The college was ultimately reopened upon receipt of supplementary budget from the Ministry of Finance. CHE should seriously consider exercising its power as provided for by the Higher Education Act in this and similar cases. Its legal power lies in pronouncing accreditation or non-accreditation of programmes. Through such pronouncement CHE can have the same effect as what was envisaged the Ministerial intervention that was sought.

2.2.3

Conduct Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) on QA initiatives

When programme accreditation processes have been completed, and accreditation has been granted, a concerned institution has to develop an Improvement Plan to address short-comings identified in the programme. The Improvement Plan then forms a basis for CHE to monitor progress on implementation. Institutions are compelled to develop improvement plans regardless of whether they have undergone a programme review or institutional audit. In respect of the reporting period Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) was conducted for seven institutions that have been audited. The institutions are NUL, Paray School of Nursing, LUCT, Botho University, Scott College of Nursing, Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC) and Centre for Accounting Studies (CAS). There were detailed discussions with these institutions on the basis of their audit findings, and Improvement Plans. M&E sessions were also held with 5 HEIs on 9 programmes during the reporting period. They will be followed-up every 6 months to check on progress in implementing Improvement Plans. Once institutions have gathered momentum in the implementation of both institutional audits and programme accreditation report recommendations the frequency of M&E visits will be reduced.

There are three categories of institutions with the first being those that show progress towards implementation of CHE recommendations. The second category is of a few institutions that are not responsive, while the third is of those that are trying under very difficult circumstances which are beyond their control. LAC falls under the third category, with NUL being in the second category.

A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework has been developed as a general guide for all quality assurance related M&E activities. It was developed in consultation with all key stakeholders including HEIs. It will be tabled before both HEQAC and Council in the first quarter of next financial year (2024/25).

2.2.4 Provide requisite support to HEQAC

The Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee (HEQAC) is a statutory body within CHE whose mandate is to advise Council on issues of quality assurance. Its chairperson is appointed by the Minister of Education and Training. A two-day Special Meeting was held for HEQAC during the period under review. The purpose of the special meeting was for HEQAC to develop its Strategic Direction in line with the Higher Education Act and the CHE Strategic Plan. A two-year (2023/24 to 2024/25) HEQAC strategy document was developed. This will help the committee to work towards clearly articulated deliverables and, therefore, dictate the pace and coverage of its mandate instead of just processing what Management presents to it.

HEQAC held a total of five meetings during the reporting period. The issues discussed during these meetings included accreditation of programmes, and representations from institutions that were eligible given the outcomes of their programme reviews. The accreditation reports considered also included new degree programmes from LCE and LP. There were two vacancies within HEQAC during this period, and they were filled as necessary.

2.2.5 Build capacity of HEIs in Quality Assurance

CHE builds capacity of HEIs in quality assurance to assist them to comply with the requirements for programme accreditation and institutional audits. This is done through workshops and consultation sessions. Training on Quality Assurance and on CHE mandate was conducted to the following institutions:

- Lesotho Institute of Public Administration and Management (LIPAM);
- Lesotho Agricultural College (LAC); *and*
- Lesotho Cooperative College (LCC);

In respect of LIPAM the staff was capacitated on quality assurance, tools used and the principles. With regard to LAC the training focused on getting the staff ready to submit their programmes to CHE for

accreditation. Thus, issues such as development of Self Evaluation Report (SER), programme design, and alignment of programmes to the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (LQF) dealt with in detail. Lesotho Cooperative College (LCC) on the other hand was not part of the institutions that CHE deals with on an ongoing basis. Its programmes were inclined towards cooperatives, as opposed to following the academic route. The training by CHE was necessitated by LCC's desire to introduce programmes at Diploma level that are academic in nature. So, staff of the college were taken through what is required for them to meet the CHE requirements for accreditation. The training was received very positively in all the three institutions. The plan is to go to all HEIs.

CHE also provides general guidance to institutions and individuals who aspire to set up in the country or to get their programmes accredited, be they local or foreign. Such consultations focus on the CHE mandate, and what is required for programme accreditation and registration of institutions or training centres. Once consultations have been held, the concerned institutions would go back and make the necessary arrangements to submit to CHE for review. During the period under review, sessions were held with the following eight stakeholders:

- Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) South Africa Chapter;
- Machabeng College;
- Network of Early Childhood;
- American Institute of Certified Public Accountants – Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (AICPA-CIMA), Africa Chapter;
- Franklin University, USA;
- The Golding Institute, Johannesburg; *and*
- Authentic Solutions.

2.2.6

Evaluate foreign qualifications and verify both local and foreign qualifications

As part of its extended mandate, CHE manages the Lesotho Qualifications Framework (LQF). This role includes such things as registration of qualifications on the framework; development of necessary infrastructure for smooth implementation of the LQF; and verification and evaluation of qualifications among other things. Five hundred and eighty-two (582) qualifications were verified and the results for the majority of them were positive, which means they did not have any problem. Eight verifications were negative and therefore, were rejected. The verifications which were rejected were mainly from unaccredited institutions in India, United States of America and United Kingdom. Ninety Four qualifications were evaluated and they were all positively confirmed at the levels they were awarded. The revenue raised through verification fees was M365, 100.00, while collection on evaluations amounted to M303,000.00.

The impact of CHE's intervention through verification and evaluation of qualifications while still marginal, it is destined to increase significantly over time towards clearing different workplaces of qualifications fraud.

CHE is working on a comprehensive system which is the Lesotho Qualifications Management Information System (LQMIS) for better management of the LQF. The system was presented to the Information Communication Technology (ICT) Committee of Council to give them progress update. Heads of institutions were engaged on the system and how it is planned to work. The development process is at the system-testing-phase. The plan is for the system to be commissioned in phases, so that each module can go live once it has gone through the testing. Currently, there are two modules that are complete, and therefore, can be implemented. The main challenge relates to lack of funds for securing equipment such as servers and other related accessories. The system will be operated from cloud while arrangements are made to mobilise resources for establishment of on-premises facilities.

2.2.7 Statistical Reports:

CHE undertakes Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the higher education sector with a view to checking progress on the implementation of the Higher Education Policy. Key role players in the implementation of the policy are the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), CHE itself, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and National Manpower Development Secretariat (NMDS), among others. CHE therefore, collects data from these role players regularly to compile reports which inform management decisions and policy direction. There are two types of reports that are compiled, namely, the State of Higher Education Report which is the main one compiled after 3 – 4 years, and Statistical Bulletin which is compiled during the years when the main report is not produced. During the period under review data was collected and a Statistical Bulletin for two-years, 2020/21 and 2021/22 was compiled and validated accordingly. Collection of data for 2022/23 – 2024 is underway with a report expected at the end of the second quarter of next financial year (2024/25).

2.2.8 LQF Act:

The Ministry of Education and Training plans to establish a separate body to manage implementation of LQF. The process of establishment has started with development of an enabling legal framework. CHE is part of a team assembled by the Principal Secretary to facilitate development of the Lesotho Qualifications Bill. All key stakeholders were consulted through a series of workshops. The only group of stakeholders that has not yet been consulted comprises proprietors of schools that are not owned by Government. Once consultations are complete their inputs will be analysed and Drafting Instructions for the Parliamentary Counsel will be drawn.

Initially the Ministry had taken the route of getting CHE to transform into the body that would perform dual mandate of managing qualifications and overseeing quality assurance within the higher education

sub-sector. This approach is also articulated in the LQF document. The rationale for this approach was that Lesotho is a small country with a small education sector. However, there has since been this change in the trajectory towards establishing a separate body altogether. In the mean-time CHE will continue to implement LQF.

Development of relevant tools for effective implementation of the LQF is one of the key functions of CHE under this extended mandate. To this end draft guidelines for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) have been developed, and are due to be validated with stakeholders. Focus is currently on RPL, and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) guidelines will be dealt with after these ones have been completed and functional, so as to learn from this process. The RPL guidelines will enable easy implementation of the RPL Policy. The purpose of the policy together with these guidelines is to establish a comprehensive system for recognising skills and competencies of people who do not have formal qualifications in the areas in which they have acquired substantial knowledge and experience.

2.3

Building physical infrastructure for CHE, and employing innovative technologies to improve efficiency

2.3.1

Procure old government building and renovate it for CHE offices



CHE has been renting offices since the Secretariat started operations in 2010. This was burdensome on its already limited finances. The efforts towards obtaining a Government house bore fruit when the Ministry of the Public Service, Labour and Employment allocated an old Government building to CHE for offices. The building has since undergone major renovations, and CHE occupied it in December 2023. This is a big achievement, because the burden of rentals has been removed. Thus, the money that was used for rent will now be directed towards operations. The building was dilapidated, but it is now habitable, though still has some plumbing and power supply challenges.

2.3.2

Implement electronic submissions of programme documentation for QA



In respect of improvement of operational efficiency there are significant improvements. For instance, during programme reviews and institutional audits, reviewers used to be given arch lever files full of documents. This practice was costly in a number of ways including photocopying and transportation of such files to the reviewers, some of whom are outside the country. A system has been put in place for electronic submission of programme documentation by HEIs for review and institutional audits. The system works very well and makes it easy for reviewers to access all relevant documents remotely. This has also reduced the cost of reviews in terms of printing and photocopying of material. This electronic platform together with other systems for virtual meetings have reduced the need for members of review panels from outside the country to travel to Lesotho.

2.4

Strengthening governance, human capital and operations within CHE

2.4.1

Provide support to Council and its committees



Council had 5 meetings during the period under review, while HRMC and AFRMC had 2 meetings each, and ICT committee 1. The following were some of the key issues discussed and approved during Council meetings:

- Accreditation of programmes from various institutions;
- Plans and budget of the organisation;
- Job profiles for senior officials following organisational restructuring;
- HEQAC Strategic Direction document;
- Salary advance for staff;
- CHE relocation from rented facility to its own office block; and
- CHE to host Secretariat of the Southern African Quality Assurance Network (SAQAN).

2.4.2

Increase staff complement and its capacity



The Revised Organisational Structure for CHE was approved by Council the previous year, but implementation of the new structure took place during the period under review. The main purpose of the revision was to remove officer-level positions from being engaged on a contract basis to being permanent and pensionable. This arrangement was costly to the organisation with frequent terminal benefits pay-out as people's contracts ended. Preparations for implementation of the structure started with consultations of staff which were done as expected. Most members of staff have since migrated to the new structure, except for one officer whose issues are still being addressed.

Staff complement was maintained as necessary. For instance, employment contracts of three officers that came to an end during the reporting period were renewed; and two vacant positions of ICT Manager and Office Assistant were filled. In an effort to supplement the staff complement CHE has acquired services of 7 Graduate Interns from the Lesotho Youth Apprenticeship Programme. The two-year duration of the interns will come to an end in June 2024. This is going to leave a significant gap given their contribution. CHE has invested a great deal in building the capacity of the interns, and therefore, if possible would want to retain them.

2.4.3

Improve IT infrastructure and its ecosystem



The ICT infrastructure was maintained as necessary and, software licences were renewed and outsourced services' contracts were managed accordingly. An IT expert was engaged on a temporary basis to help CHE Management to supervise the consultant who is developing the Lesotho Qualifications Management Information System (LQMIS) before the IT Manager was employed.

2.4.4

Develop and monitor operational policies



The internal operational policies were implemented. Audit of books of accounts of CHE was completed, and it was unqualified. This is the 10th unqualified audit of CHE which talks to the robust financial system. The procurement policy is being developed in order to separate procurement function from Finance.

2.5

Diversifying and intensifying mobilisation of resources for CHE

2.5.1

Diversify revenue sources



The fee structure for various services that CHE charges was reviewed such that there were varying increases in different areas of service provided by CHE. They were presented to AFRMC which in turn tabled it before Council for approval. The Council approved accordingly, and the Ministry of Education was requested to issue a revised gazette. However, The Ministry did not approve the CHE proposed fee increases, instead it recommended 5% increment across the various fees charged by CHE. HEIs have since been consulted on these developments. What remains is for a gazette to issued accordingly.

CHE also charges fees for services provided in relation to implementation of the LQF. This revenue stream is picking-up momentum, and money collected during the reporting period was M668,100. This positive cash injection was realised through the support of the Ministry of the Public Service and the Public Service Commission which now ensure that all people who apply for Government positions verify and evaluate their certificates with CHE. However, not all Government Ministries have come on board. There is still need to engage key officers in those Ministries such as Principal Secretaries and Human Resources Directors. In addition, parastatals and large private sector companies should also be

engaged to appreciate the importance of vetting qualifications of their existing staff, and new ones being recruited.

2.5.2 Improve management of costs



Most CHE meetings are currently held using virtual platforms, printing has been reduced drastically, telephone bills are reduced as the monthly telephone bills are closely monitored, in general the budget lines spending levels are within the budget limits.

2.5.3 Secure a stable source of revenue for CHE



CHE continues to advocate for fee per student for quality assurance services provided to Higher Education Institutions for the benefit of students. It is envisaged that this would go a long way towards securing a stable source of revenue for CHE. With the Government subvention to CHE having been stagnant for a long time, and declining in recent years, it is critical that CHE obtains a stable source of revenue coming through the services it provides to its clientele. Government support for the quality assurance levy has been look-warm, while institutions have expressed mixed reactions. If finally approved and implemented, one of the key benefits is that institutions would be relieved from paying fees for accrediting their programmes, as this would be covered through the levy. Currently large old institutions such as the National University of Lesotho (NUL) have a substantial number of old or legacy programmes that have not been put through the CHE system. One of the main issues relate to finances. This could, to a large extent be addressed through the levy.

3.0

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, despite serious challenges of inadequate funding for its operations, CHE continues to have impact towards improving quality assurance and improving access to higher education. The following areas are some of those in which significant progress has been recorded:

- Acquisition of a corporate base for CHE where it does not have to pay rent was one of the big achievements during the period under review;
- Quality assurance in higher education is well established and continues to have positive impact across the sector;
- Two institutions, namely, Lerotholi Polytechnic (LP) and Lesotho College of Education (LCE) have introduced multiple Degree Qualifications as a result of encouragement and push by CHE. Thus, these colleges have improved their contribution towards the national priorities. Their status will soon change from college and polytechnic to university.
- There is gradual acceptance of the need for qualifications to be verified and evaluated as part of recruitment processes for the Civil Service and admission into state funding for students. This was evident with Lesotho Nursing Council (LNC), NMDS referring relevant cases to CHE and Ministry of the Public Service issuing a general circular for vetting of qualifications for employment in Government jobs;
- Effective implementation of the LQF holds promise of being a real game changer towards improvement of the quality assurance landscape; and
- Approval by Minister of the RPL, CAT and RCC policies would help expedite effective implementation of LQF.

As indicated in the body of the report, pursuit of the Quality Assurance Levy will be continued in the next financial year given its strategic importance towards CHE securing a stable revenue source. CHE is an active member of the international community of quality assurance agencies. This helps to keep abreast of new developments and trends in its line of work. This is very important given the fact that

quality assurance in higher education by its nature enables mobility of both learners and professional across national boundaries.



