

**National Qualifications Framework
IMPACT STUDY
Report 1**

CYCLE 1



**Establishing the
criteria against
which to
measure
progress of the
NQF
(2003)**

Copyright

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
<hr/>	
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	2
GENERAL	2
SAQA	2
<hr/>	
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
<hr/>	
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	8
THE PROJECT BRIEF	8
CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY	8
THE RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY	9
ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY	10
REPORT STRUCTURE FOR CYCLE 1 OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY	11
<hr/>	
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	13
INTRODUCTION	13
BACKGROUND TO AND CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY	13
EXAMINING THE NQF OBJECTIVES	14
DRAFT IMPACT INDICATORS	15
RESEARCH PROCEDURES	18
COMPONENTS OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	19
<i>Contextualisation</i>	20
<i>Data gathering</i>	20
<i>Findings and recommendations</i>	20
SUMMARY	21
<hr/>	
CHAPTER THREE: FIRST CYCLE CONTEXTUALISATION	22
INTRODUCTION	22
ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NQF	22
THE ROLE OF SAQA	25
NQF IMPLEMENTATION ACHIEVEMENTS	25
<i>Development of policies and systems and associated capacity building</i>	26
<i>Awareness of key NQF concepts</i>	26
<i>Shaping aspirations and actions</i>	26
NQF IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES	27
<i>Purposes and expectations of the NQF</i>	27
<i>Leadership and resourcing by government</i>	29
<i>Conceptualisation of integration</i>	30
<i>Stakeholder participation</i>	32
<i>NQF architecture and processes</i>	33
SUMMARY	34

CONTENTS

CHAPTER FOUR: FIRST CYCLE PILOTING OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND DRAFT IMPACT INDICATORS	35
INTRODUCTION	35
ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE FIRST CYCLE OF THE STUDY	35
EVALUATION OF THE DRAFT IMPACT INDICATORS	36
<i>Draft Impact Indicator Set 1</i>	36
<i>Draft Impact Indicator Set 2</i>	44
<i>Draft Impact Indicator Set 3</i>	47
<i>Draft Impact Indicator Set 4</i>	51
SUMMARY OF TENTATIVE LEVELS OF IMPACT FOR SELECTIVE DRAFT IMPACT INDICATORS	56
SUMMARY OF INDICATIVE FINDINGS	57
<hr/>	
CHAPTER 5: FIRST CYCLE SUMMARY AND FINDINGS	59
INTRODUCTION	59
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE DRAFT IMPACT INDICATORS	59
DESCRIPTION OF THE REVISED IMPACT INDICATORS	61
REVISED SETS OF IMPACT INDICATORS	62
FINDINGS OF CYCLE 1 OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY	65
CONCLUSIONS	67
<hr/>	
REFERENCES	68
<hr/>	
APPENDIX 1: STRUCTURE OF THE NQF	71
<hr/>	
APPENDIX 2: A CHRONOLOGY OF NQF STRUCTURES, OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS AND LEGISLATION	72
INTRODUCTION	72
1 APRIL 1995 - 31 MARCH 1997	72
1 APRIL 1997 - 31 MARCH 1998	72
1 APRIL 1998 - 31 MARCH 1999	72
1 APRIL 1999 - 31 MARCH 2000	72
1 APRIL 2000 - 31 MARCH 2001	72
1 APRIL 2001 - 31 MARCH 2002	72
1 APRIL 2002 - 31 MARCH 2003	73
<hr/>	
APPENDIX 3: NATIONAL STANDARDS BODIES AND STANDARDS GENERATING BODIES	74
<hr/>	
APPENDIX 4: PROJECT TEAM, WORKING GROUP AND ADVISORY GROUP	75
<hr/>	
APPENDIX 5: STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATION FOR THE FIRST CYCLE OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY	77
<hr/>	

CONTENTS

APPENDIX 6: LINKS BETWEEN THE NQF OBJECTIVES AND THE IMPACT INDICATORS	78
TWENTY-THREE DRAFT IMPACT INDICATORS (BEFORE PILOTING)	78
SEVENTEEN REVISED IMPACT INDICATORS (AFTER PILOTING)	81
<hr/>	
GLOSSARY	93
<hr/>	
DIAGRAMS	
Diagram 1.1: Research design of the NQF Impact Study	9
Diagram 2.1: Relationships within the research design	14
Diagram 2.2: Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study	21
Diagram 5.1: Sequential development of Impact Indicators	60
Diagram 5.2: Development in the research design	63
<hr/>	
TABLES	
Table 2.1: Draft Impact Indicators for the NQF Impact Study	17
Table 2.2: Relationship between the NQF Objectives and the Sets of draft Impact Indicators	18
Table 2.3: Research reports	19
Table 4.1: Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 1	43
Table 4.2: Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 2	46
Table 4.3: Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 3	50
Table 4.4: Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 4	55
Table 4.5: Summary of tentative levels of impact for sample of draft Impact Indicators	57
Table 5.1: Description of the revised Impact Indicators	61
Table 5.2: Allocation of Impact Indicators to Sets	63
Table 5.3: Relationship between NQF Objectives and Sets of Impact Indicators	64
<hr/>	
GRAPHS	
Graph 4.1: Qualifications and unit standards	37
Graph 4.2: Provider-based qualifications and NQF levels	38
Graph 4.3: Regular qualifications and NQF levels	38
Graph 4.4: Provider-based qualifications and Organising Fields	39
Graph 4.5: Regular qualifications and Organising Fields	39
<hr/>	
ANNEXURES	
Annexure 1: Instruments for piloting of draft Impact Indicators	
Annexure 2: External literature review	
Annexure 3: Analysis of contextualisation interviews	
Annexure 4: Analysis of new qualifications on the National Learners' Records Database	
Annexure 5: Analysis of employer interviews	
Annexure 6: Analysis of focus group interviews	
Annexure 7: Analysis of departmental interviews	
Annexure 8: Analysis of union interviews	
Annexure 9: Analysis of provider interviews	

Note: A compact disc containing the full report as well as the annexures and other useful information can be found attached to the inside back cover. In order to improve readability, references to annexures are abbreviated as follows: (Annexure 1:17), which refers to Annexure 1, page 17, and so forth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) acknowledges the invaluable contribution of the following organisations and individuals:

- stakeholders, including learners, employers, unions, providers and Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs) that participated in the interviews and focus groups and without whose objective comments, honest answers and support for the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) the project would not have been possible;
- the European Union for the financial and technical support for this cycle of the study;
- HEDCO-Ireland, with European Union support, for sourcing and contracting two high calibre consultants, Gary Granville and Ron Tuck:
 - Gary Granville, (Professor of Education; National College of Art and Design, Ireland) for going beyond his contractual obligations as Project Team Leader and for the strong professional guidance that he gave to the Project Team;
 - Ron Tuck, (Independent Education Consultant, formerly Chief Executive of the Scottish Qualifications Authority) whose wide ranging NQF-related experience was invaluable and who was willing to go the extra mile to ensure that the Study was of high quality;
- SAQA, for showing vision and maturity to initiate a study of this nature, and for allowing the Project Team the freedom to present the research results as they were identified;
- the Western Cape Blind Association, Tshidi Nokaneng and Xolani Nkosi, for the meticulous transcription of the interviews, often under severe pressure from the Project Team;
- Paul Musker and Candice Harrison from Paul Musker and Associates, for conducting the External Literature Review in such a professional and thorough manner;
- Zaid Kimmie, Stephen Narsoo and Susanne Braehmer from the Community Agency for Social Enquiry, for conducting the qualitative analysis of a sample of qualifications on the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD);
- the members of the NQF Impact Study Working Group, who supported the Project Team during critical stages of the Study; and
- the members of the NQF Impact Study Advisory Group for giving the Project Team the necessary guidance and support to contain the project within the broader SAQA vision.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ANC	African National Congress
CCFO	Critical Cross-Field Outcomes
CHE	Council on Higher Education
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CUMSA	Curriculum Model for Education in South Africa
CUP	Committee of University Principals
DoE	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labour
ELOAC	Exit Level Outcomes and Assessment Criteria
ERS	Education Renewal Strategy
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
GENFET QC	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council (proposed)
GET	General Education and Training
HEDCO	Higher Education Development Company (Ireland)
HET	Higher Education and Training
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee (of the CHE)
HI-ED QC	Higher Education and Training Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council (proposed)
HRD	Human Resource Development
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IEB	Independent Examination Board
IMWG	Inter-Ministerial Working Group
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
NACWC	National Access Consortium Western Cape
NATED	National Education Department
NECC	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NEPI	National Education Policy Initiative
NPDE	National Professional Diploma in Education
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NTB	National Training Board
NUMSA	National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa
OBE	Outcomes-based Education
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SAUVCA	South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SMME	Small-, Medium- and Micro Enterprise
TOP QC	Trade, Occupational and Professional Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council (proposed)

SAQA

DSSD	Directorate for Standards Setting and Development
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance body
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SGB	Standards Generating Body

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This Report is the outcome of the first cycle of the National Qualifications Framework Impact Study commissioned by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The Study, envisaged as a long-term continuous exercise, aims:

To achieve the effective measurement of the impact of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) on the transformation of education and training in South Africa.

[Reference: p.8]

2. The NQF Impact Study is bounded by the following assumptions and limitations:

- 2.1 Firstly, the Study does not attempt to evaluate the rationale, aims or Objectives of the NQF as such.
- 2.2 Secondly, the Study is undertaken in the knowledge that evaluative judgements on the attainment of the NQF Objectives cannot be made with any degree of finality for a considerable number of years.
- 2.3 Thirdly, the present first cycle report is concerned with the establishment of the research design: the actual drawing of definitive conclusions from substantive data was less important than the piloting of the research design and the draft Impact Indicators.

[Reference: p.11]

3. The NQF Impact Study is designed as a longitudinal study stretching over a number of years, broadly described in a number of continuous cycles:

- 3.1 Cycle 1 (2003): Establishing the criteria against which to measure progress of the NQF. This includes the development of draft Impact Indicators, the description of the context against which the impact of the NQF is measured, the piloting of the draft Impact Indicators and a first report (the current report) documenting the cycle and its outcomes.
- 3.2 Cycle 2 (2004): Establishing a baseline against which to measure progress. This includes a description of the context against which the impact of the NQF is measured, data gathering and the development of recommendations contained in a second report.
- 3.3 Cycle 3: The first measurement of the impact of the NQF against the 2004 baseline data in order to identify trends and recommendations for further measurement of the impact of the NQF. This includes a description of the context against which the impact of the NQF is measured, data gathering and comparison, and the development of recommendations contained in a third report.
- 3.4 Cycle 4: Second measurement of the impact of the NQF identical to the third cycle.
- 3.5 Cycle 5: Third measurement, and so forth...

[Reference: Diagram 1.1, p.9]

4. The research project was defined in terms of its capacity to:

- 4.1 develop Impact Indicators that can be used for multiple measurements of the impact of the NQF in longitudinal comparative studies;
- 4.2 describe the context against which the impact of the NQF is measured;
- 4.3 pilot the research design and draft Impact Indicators; and
- 4.4 produce a report on the findings emanating from the first cycle.

[Reference: p.11]

5. The specific objective of the first cycle of the project, which is the subject of this report, was:

To establish the criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF.

The first cycle of research was concerned with the development of Impact Indicators for use in the measurement of the extent of achievement of the Objectives of the NQF. The context for the pilot application of these Impact Indicators was also researched.

[Reference: p.8]

6. Twenty-three draft Impact Indicators were developed through an intensive process of review, analysis and consultation. Stakeholders were engaged within a series of verification focus groups and interviews. Instruments for the gathering of qualitative and quantitative data were identified, and the first cycle of the Study was designed and implemented to test the effectiveness of both the draft Impact Indicators and the research and reporting structures.

[Reference: p.17]

7. The research design of the Impact Study, which was modelled in the first cycle of the Study, has, as its central spine, the relationship between the NQF Objectives and the Impact Indicators. The development of research questions and the categorisation of indicators into four Sets, were tools used by the team to facilitate the research process.

[Reference: Diagram 2.1, p.14]

8. Three Research Questions to address the criteria by which the extent of achievement of the NQF Objectives could be measured were identified and elucidated:

Research Question 1: To what extent has practice changed as a result of the implementation of the NQF?
Research Question 2: To what extent have mindsets changed as a result of the introduction of the NQF?
Research Question 3: To what extent has the NQF enabled the development of education and training relevant to a changing world?

[Reference: p.14]

9. The first cycle of the Study generated a range of quantitative and qualitative data in respect of all the draft Impact Indicators, using a range of instruments. A series of nine annexures contains the detailed data in respect of the various elements of the research, including the application of research methods with stakeholder groupings.

[Reference: Table 2.3, p.19]

10. The findings of the first cycle of the Study are presented in detail in the report. The effectiveness of each draft Impact Indicator is evaluated. A format for reporting the findings in respect of each Impact Indicator is presented. A summary means of describing the overall impact of each Impact Indicator is also suggested.

[Reference: p.56]

11. As a result of the first cycle of the Study a revised and reduced schedule of 17 Impact Indicators, for implementation in subsequent cycles of the Study, has been defined as follows:

- 11.1 Number of qualifications
- 11.2 Effectiveness of qualifications design
- 11.3 Portability of qualifications
- 11.4 Relevance of qualifications
- 11.5 Uptake and achievement of qualifications
- 11.6 Integrative approach
- 11.7 Equity of access
- 11.8 Redress practices
- 11.9 Nature of learning programmes
- 11.10 Quality of learning and teaching
- 11.11 Assessment practices
- 11.12 Career and learning pathing
- 11.13 Number of registered assessors and moderators
- 11.14 Number of accredited providers
- 11.15 Quality assurance practices
- 11.16 Organisational, economic and societal benefits
- 11.17 Contribution to other national strategies

[Reference: Table 5.1, p.61]

12. For the first cycle of the Study, the draft Impact Indicators were grouped into four Sets. The aim of this grouping was to link associated Impact Indicators so as to make it easier to conduct interviews and collate and analyse data more effectively. In general, this was a useful approach, although some Impact Indicators were thought with hindsight to have been wrongly allocated to a Set. It is proposed that for the subsequent cycles of the Impact Study, the following revised Sets (with their component Impact Indicators) should be used:

- Set 1: The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of learners and South African society;
- Set 2: The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes addresses the education and training needs of learners and South African society;
- Set 3: The extent to which quality assurance arrangements enhance the effectiveness of education and training; and
- Set 4: The extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture.

These four Sets of Impact Indicators are directly related to all the NQF Objectives, and thus reinforce the central spine of the research.

[Reference: p.62]

13. All evidence obtained in the course of this Study is merely indicative. It does not provide a valid base for generalisation. It should also be noted that, in relation to many aspects of NQF implementation, stakeholders feel that it is 'too soon to say'.

With this strong caveat, some indicative findings are summarised below.

13.1 Impact Indicator-related observations

- 13.1.1 Movement in qualification development towards NQF levels four and five is notable.
- 13.1.2 Portability of qualifications remains a significant issue to be addressed. Employers were concerned about multiplicity of qualifications and complexity of the system. Providers thought that the qualifications themselves were conducive to portability. The biggest barriers to portability were the continuing divide between education and training and the continued existence of pre-NQF structures.
- 13.1.3 Qualifications themselves can do little about redress. The most significant factor in redress is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), for which there is huge support. Data on RPL uptake is available; numbers are small but growing.
- 13.1.4 Employers were positive about the relevance of NQF qualifications, especially Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and learnerships. Providers were very positive about relevance, citing the usefulness of unit standards in developing learning and assessment tools and the focus on the skills needs of industry.
- 13.1.5 Admissions practices and learner support systems have been developing since the introduction of the NQF, although there are differing views on the extent to which there is a link with the NQF.
- 13.1.6 There is little learner achievement data available. There are many learners currently in the system who have not yet completed their qualifications. This indicative finding supports the common perception amongst stakeholders that it may be too soon to measure the impact of the NQF.
- 13.1.7 Most providers indicated strong support for outcomes-based approaches. While there were some examples of involuntary compliance, others felt that outcome-based approaches had enhanced teaching and learning.
- 13.1.8 There is evidence of significant socio-cultural impact on the way people and organisations think and talk about and act upon lifelong learning.

[Reference: p.57]

13.2 General observations

- 13.2.1 Support for the NQF remains strong, especially among employers and many providers. It is not yet clear what learner experience is or what their views are, as many are still operating within the old system. Many new qualifications and associated developments such as learnerships are seen positively. There has been a beneficial impact on teaching, learning and assessment practices.

- 13.2.2 Integration of education and training remains problematic. Disparity of esteem continues to be seen as a barrier to portability and access.
- 13.2.3 There is a widespread belief that RPL is completely central to the goals of redress and access but that, despite some encouraging examples of good practice, progress is too slow.
- 13.2.4 Many respondents make little or no distinction between the NQF and SAQA. This could be taken to mean either that SAQA's effectiveness is significant or that SAQA has too dominant a role in NQF construction.
- 13.2.5 There were clear warning signs about a build up of frustrations about the NQF relating to blockages in the system and to the pressures of ongoing systemic change.

[Reference: p.58]

14. The findings related to Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study are summarised below:

- 14.1 Impact Indicators should continue to form the nucleus of the research design.
- 14.2 The 17 revised Impact Indicators can be used over time to measure the impact of the NQF with minor adjustments during each application.
- 14.3 The links between Set 4 of the revised Impact Indicators and Impact Indicators 16 and 17 will have to be made more explicit.
- 14.4 The main point of reference for the Impact Indicators, as well as the Study in general, must remain the five NQF Objectives.
- 14.5 The research design (contextualisation, indicator-based data gathering and the presentation of findings and recommendations in a report format) has been sufficiently piloted to be duplicated with minor improvements in subsequent cycles.
- 14.6 The continued importance of contextualisation must not be underestimated. A wider selection of references and less reliance on the Study Team Report and Consultative Document will improve future contextualisation.
- 14.7 The role of SAQA forms an important part of the contextualisation of the Study, but can be broadened to include the roles of other key stakeholders.
- 14.8 The specification and piloting of research instruments are a priority for the next cycle of the NQF Impact Study.
- 14.9 The interview schedules used in the first cycle of the Study worked effectively and could be used as the basis for interview specifications for the next cycle.
- 14.10 Analysis of data on the NLRD should be investigated further to ensure that useful data can be gathered timeously. The role of Critical Cross-Field Outcomes (CCFOs) in qualifications should also be investigated in more detail.
- 14.11 The baseline study (Cycle 2) should incorporate the use of questionnaire surveys as well as interviews and quantitative data from the NLRD and other sources. The piloting of such questionnaires should be an early priority for the next cycle of the NQF Impact Study.
- 14.12 Consideration should be given to the length of intervals between studies. Two- to four-year intervals are suggested.
- 14.13 The Study will also have to consider the methodological implications of measuring impact over time. On the one hand, comparisons are most easily achieved by repeated use of the same Impact Indicators and research instruments. This would argue for constancy of Impact Indicators and this should be the general principle. On the other hand, new issues and factors may emerge and it will be important to ensure that the Impact Study retains relevance.
- 14.14 Representative sampling must form part of subsequent cycles of the Impact Study.
- 14.15 Inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders, including providers, employers, learners, unions and government departments (mainly Department of Education (DoE) and Department of Labour (DoL)), must be maintained and broadened to include more small-, medium- and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and professional bodies.
- 14.16 The allocation of 'levels of impact' to each Impact Indicator (Table 4.7) is a first step towards reporting the impact of the NQF, but will need to be refined during the baseline study (Cycle 2).
- 14.17 Although the first cycle of the Study was conducted by SAQA, the research design allows for an external agency to conduct subsequent cycles. Even so, it is suggested that Cycle 2 (Establishing a baseline against which to measure progress) remains within the SAQA ambit with minimum outsourcing. On the other hand, outsourcing of further cycles (Cycles 3, 4, and so forth) of the Study may improve acceptance of the research results in the wider stakeholder community.

- 14.18 The relationship between SAQA and the NQF is important. The extent to which the NQF Impact Study relates to SAQA must form an integral part of future cycles of the Study. A concerted effort must be made to distinguish between the impact of the NQF and the impact of SAQA as the main steering agency of the NQF.
- 14.19 Although NQF architecture and processes remain an important part of the contextualisation of future cycles of the Study, it is important that the Study is not drawn into a debate that at the time of measurement may be in the public domain but that will offer limited researchable evidence.

[Reference: pp.65-67]

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The project brief

This report is the result of the first cycle of a longitudinal research project commissioned by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The project, envisaged as a long-term continuous exercise, aims to achieve the effective measurement of the impact of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) on the transformation of education and training in South Africa, with reference to the stated Objectives of the NQF¹ itself, which are to:

1. create an integrated national framework for learning achievements;
2. facilitate access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths;
3. enhance the quality of education and training;
4. accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities; and
5. contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

The specific objective of this first cycle of the project, which is the subject of this report, was:

To establish the criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF.

A Project Team was established within SAQA's Research Unit to carry out the research project. Two external consultants were appointed to assist the Project Team in its work. The role and functions of the external consultants were to advise the Project Team about strategy and project design, to provide an international dimension to and context for the work, and to ensure that professional objectivity and academic rigour underpin the project.

A wider Working Group was then established within SAQA, to ensure that the Project Team had the benefit of information and advice from all the directorates within the organisation, and that staff and committees operating within SAQA were apprised of and facilitated in contributing to the project. The Working Group (membership in Appendix 4) was convened on approximately 20 occasions over a nine-month period (March – December 2003) and a constant flow of information, interim reports and drafts were circulated for comments from Working Group members.

An Advisory Group for the project was also established. This Advisory Group comprised five members of the Authority as well as the Executive Officer and Deputy Executive Officer. The Advisory Group met on nine occasions to receive progress reports from the project and to guide the team in matters of strategy and operations.

A formal process of project reporting were also maintained through the Executive Committee (EXCO) to SAQA.

Conceptualisation of the NQF Impact Study

The decision to conduct an Impact Study is highly significant. It constitutes a confident and mature undertaking on the part of SAQA, realising an aspiration first proclaimed in 1999 (SAQA, 2002a) to undertake a review of progress in the development and implementation of the NQF. It is a landmark study nationally and internationally. It is the first time that an open-ended and transparent rolling plan for review of a national qualifications system has been developed at a national level.

While the research has been commissioned by and located within SAQA, the structure of the Study is such that both the process and the evidence are objective and open to interrogation by all. The research design for implementation is such that future applications can be carried out by agencies other than SAQA, should that be appropriate.

1. The structure of the NQF is given in Appendix 1.

The NQF, enacted in legislation in 1995, is still in its infancy. A final assessment of the impact of the NQF is impossible at this early stage of its implementation. However, it is extremely important to establish some baseline data regarding the impact the NQF has had in relation to a variety of stakeholders. In particular, it is necessary to establish a research design that will facilitate continuous and progressive monitoring of the strengths and weaknesses of the framework as it evolves over time.

The research design of the NQF Impact Study

This research design is illustrated in the diagram below.

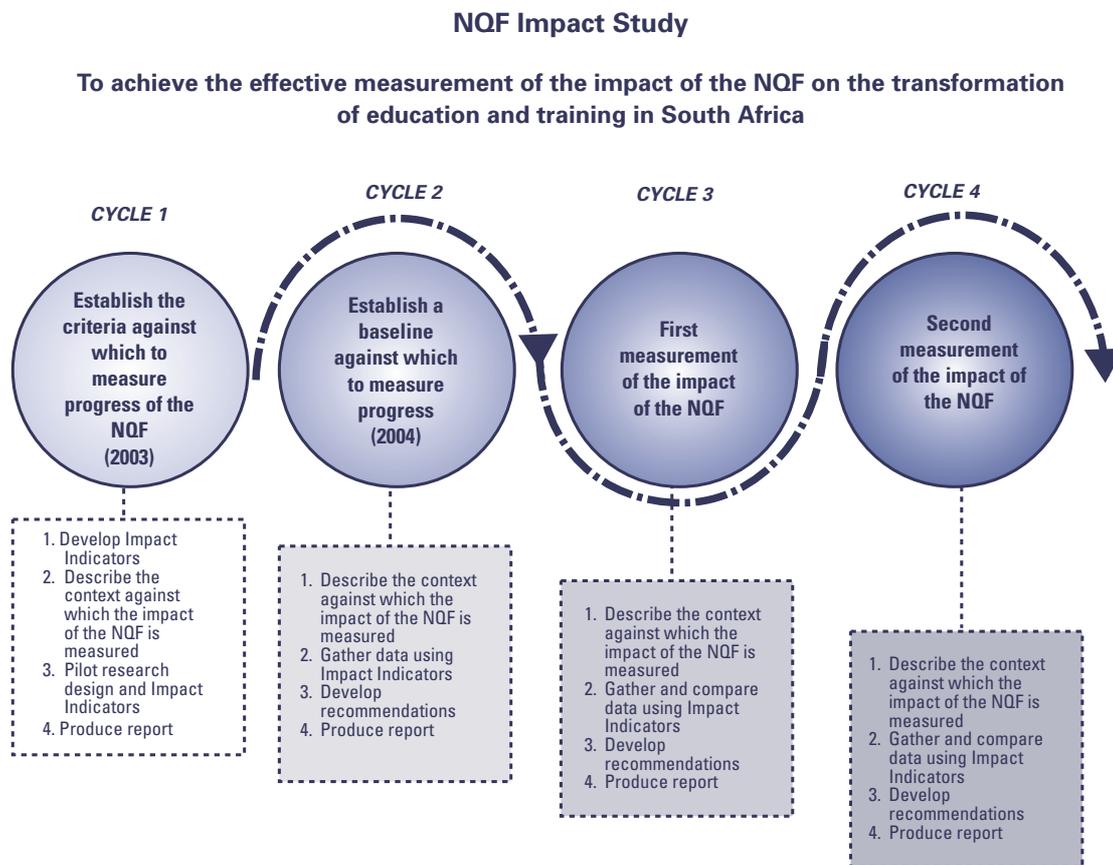


Diagram 1.1: Research design of the NQF Impact Study

In 2003, the central focus of the research design was to establish the criteria against which the progress and impact of the NQF are to be measured and evaluated. This entailed developing draft Impact Indicators, planning the research design, writing a description of the context of the evolution of the NQF, and piloting the draft Impact Indicators as can be seen in the first cycle shown in Diagram 1.1.

In 2004, a baseline will be generated through the application of the revised Impact Indicators that were tested in 2003. (Refer to the second cycle of Diagram 1.1.) This will entail a new contextual description of the NQF, the gathering of baseline data from the Impact Indicators, and the documenting of the findings and recommendations that emanate from this data.

The third cycle in Diagram 1.1 depicts the first measurement of the impact of the NQF against the baseline developed in 2004. In addition to a new contextual description against which the impact of the NQF is to be measured, the research process will gather and compare data against the 2004 baseline and make recommendations on the basis of the findings of this data.

An identical process is repeated in the fourth cycle shown in Diagram 1.1 for the second measurement of the impact of the NQF against the 2004 baseline and the data of the first measurement of the impact of the NQF in order to identify trends and recommendations for further measurement of the impact of the NQF. The diagram also indicates that identical processes will be repeated on a continuous basis, using the same Impact Indicators and subsequent data from repeated measurements of the impact of the NQF.

The Report sets out a research design that can, through repeated application over time, provide essential evidence upon which to assess the impact of the NQF and contribute to a fuller understanding of its role in the transformation process in education and training. Through the first cycle of the Study that was undertaken to test this research design, some preliminary and indicative findings in relation to the impact of the NQF are presented. These findings are important in themselves and, while not definitive or comprehensive, they can inform current policy debates and help to shape priorities for future research.

A premise of this report is that the effective measurement of the impact of the NQF can only be achieved over a long period of time. The research design that has been developed is intended for application at regular intervals between 2003 and 2009 initially. This strategy is adopted in recognition of the fact that measuring the impact of NQF is a long-term process. However, there is an immediate need to establish baseline data, where none exist at present.

There is also a need to situate the NQF Impact Study within the current context of education and training in South Africa. An appropriate contextualisation that details the introduction of an NQF against the apartheid legacy of education and training and the subsequent implementation of the NQF is all the more important. Within this contextualisation chapter, the role of SAQA as the central steering agency for the implementation of the NQF is also detailed. The process of drawing on external literature and internal SAQA literature, and contextualisation interviews with NQF stakeholders will have to be repeated in all future applications to provide an appropriate context for data emanating from these studies.

The five NQF Objectives present a highly ambitious programme of development. In developing a research design to assess its impact, the Project Team engaged in a complex and intensive programme of analysis, with the aim of identifying appropriate Impact Indicators and means of verification of evidence. The development of the research design evolved through a process: first, of project conceptualisation; secondly, the identification of indicators aligned to NQF Objectives; and, thirdly, the creation of an operational design.

The NQF Impact Study is based on the development, application and re-application of four Sets of Impact Indicators. Quality assurance bodies, learners, providers, employers and unions have participated in a process to develop the draft Impact Indicators. The draft Impact Indicators are based on the five NQF Objectives as well as on internationally acceptable criteria for the development of measurable indicators.

The identification of these Sets of Impact Indicators was followed by the selection of appropriate research instruments. The component elements of this cycle of the project were:

- consultation with stakeholders through a series of four regional focus groups, to obtain feedback in respect of the draft Impact Indicators and research strategy;
- interviews with key players in the implementation of the NQF, to provide insights into the political, professional, cultural and organisational contexts within which the Study would be taking place;

- identification of research instruments appropriate for each Impact Indicator, reflecting the sources immediately available and the need to generate new sources of information in certain situations; and
- pre-pilot testing of some research instruments in respect of selected draft Impact Indicators, to ensure clarity of purpose and quality of response.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were to be gathered in the Impact Study. The sources and instruments to be utilised were to include the SAQA National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), interviews with a cross-section of selected individuals drawn from the entire range of stakeholders, focus group meetings with stakeholders and questionnaires for particular target groups. The first research cycle was designed to test the appropriateness of the various draft Impact Indicators for the variety of target groups to be engaged.

The outcome of this first cycle was to provide the Project Team with an operational context both at a macro-level – the socio-political context within which the NQF operates – and at a micro-level – the levels of understanding that various stakeholders might have in respect of the NQF. This included the need to revise the draft Impact Indicators to ensure that shared understanding of the Impact Indicators by key stakeholders was achieved.

Assumptions and limitations of the NQF Impact Study

The NQF Impact Study is bounded by certain assumptions and limitations. For this reason, it is important to describe the parameters within which the Study operates.

- Firstly, the Study does not attempt to evaluate the rationale, aims or Objectives of the NQF as such. These remain as a given, and the Study is concerned only with the impact that the NQF, as it is perceived and operated, has had on the practice and relevance of and the mindset related to education and training in a transitional environment.
- Secondly, the Study is undertaken in the knowledge that evaluative judgements on the attainment of the NQF Objectives cannot be made with any degree of finality for several years.
- Thirdly, the present report on the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study is concerned with the development of Impact Indicators and the establishment of the research design; the drawing of indicative conclusions from substantive data was less important than the piloting of the indicators and the research design itself.

For these reasons, the population samples reported on in this Report are much smaller and less representative than will apply when the full research design is implemented in the further cycles. To that extent, the findings of the research are presented as indicative outcomes rather than as definitive observations. However, the indicative findings will be important both to policy makers and to future researchers. Policy makers will find the indicative results helpful in assessing the impact of NQF practices in various sectors and in addressing priorities for the immediate future. Researchers, particularly those engaged in future applications of the research design, should find the recommendations arising from the first cycle of the Study informative and helpful in adapting or refining the research design for specific purposes.

Report structure for Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study

This report is the first of what is intended to be a multiple-cycle Impact Study. The first cycle entails the development and piloting of Impact Indicators and of a research design. The purpose of this report is twofold:

- to present the findings of Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study, including the development and piloting of the Impact Indicators, and a description and evaluation of the piloting of the research design; and
- to provide some indicative data on NQF impact, insofar as this emerges from the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study.

Chapter 2 describes the *methodology* adopted by the Project Team in identifying the key questions, indicators and instruments to be employed in the research. The operational research design that was developed is described. This is intended to be the reference for future applications of the research design, allowing for development and adaptation within the constant frame of the Impact Indicators.

Chapter 3 locates the first research cycle in the context of the evolution of the NQF in South Africa and with reference to similar experiences in other countries. Some significant recurring issues attendant on the NQF are identified.

Chapter 4 documents the application of the research design and piloting of the draft Impact Indicators during the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study. The results of the first cycle are summarised in general terms, with reference to detailed data supplied in a series of annexures.

Chapter 5 reflects on the summary and findings of the first cycle. Some comment is made in relation to the subsequent cycles of the Study, together with policy implications that may be of relevance in the short term.

Six appendices are included with the report and contain background information that may be of interest to specific stakeholders.

A series of nine annexures accompany the report, giving more detailed accounts of the various research reports carried out in the development of the Impact Indicators and in the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study. The annexures are available in electronic format only², as they contain detailed information that may not be useful to all stakeholders. The views expressed in the annexures are not necessarily those of the SAQA.

2. A compact disc containing the full report as well as the annexures and other useful information can be found attached to the inside back cover.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the

- background to the NQF Impact Study;
- evolution of the research design; and
- the process of research definition and structure.

The crucial features of the Study are explained and an operational structure for application over time is described. Key sources are the relevant internal SAQA documents pertaining to the concept of the Study and documents and data generated by the Project Team in the course of the first year of its work (the first cycle of the Study).

Background to and conceptualisation of the NQF Impact Study

The initial concept of an NQF Impact Study was set out in an internal SAQA Concept Document (SAQA, 2002a). That document noted that in 1999 SAQA “had agreed to institute a review of progress in the development and implementation of the NQF against the Objectives of the NQF outlined in the SAQA Act” (SAQA 2002a:1). The Study Team set up by the Ministers in 2001 to review certain aspects of the NQF implementation experience meant that the Impact Study as envisaged at that time was deferred.

However, by 2002, it was decided to take as a point of departure the fact that the first period of the implementation of the NQF had come to an end with the NQF Study Team Report (DoE & DoL, 2002). In that context, it was proposed that the Impact Study should look at the extent to which the Objectives of the NQF have been achieved, with the purpose of establishing “a baseline against which future progress can be measured” (SAQA, 2002a:2).

The overall aims of the Impact Study were to establish criteria against which to measure success, to establish a baseline against which to measure progress, to set and monitor targets and to plan for the evaluation of the impact of the NQF. Around these overall aims, the initial work of the project was concerned with the definition of the research domain and the specification of objectives for the Study.

The primacy of the NQF Objectives was asserted from the start of the Project Team’s work. At an early stage, the five NQF Objectives were examined and tested as to their meaning and application in research terms. The first task of the project was to ‘unpack’ the NQF Objectives – to identify what factors would indicate the successful achievement of those Objectives. The purpose of this exercise was to come up with a range of Impact Indicators that could be used regularly and repeatedly to measure the successful implementation of the NQF.

The Project Team found that the NQF Objectives, on their own, were too broad and generalised to serve as specific tools of application for research purposes. A helpful means of interrogation of the Objectives, however, was found in the formulation of three Research Questions, which provided a point of entry into the domain of possible Impact Indicators.

The application of these Research Questions to the NQF Objectives generated an extensive pool of potential Impact Indicators. This pool was subsequently refined and a final suite of 23 draft Impact Indicators was defined. It was found helpful for operational purposes to categorise this fairly long list of indicators into four general Sets of Impact Indicators.

The research design that emerged, and that is described in the rest of this chapter, has as a central spine the relationship between the NQF Objectives and the Impact Indicators. The development of the Research Questions and the categorisation of the draft Impact Indicators into four Sets were tools used by the team to facilitate the research process.

The relationships are described in Diagram 2.1:

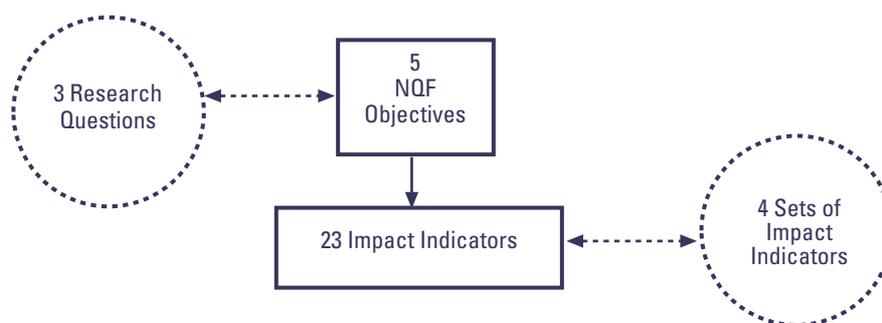


Diagram 2.1: Relationships within the research design

Examining the NQF Objectives

A tool for examining the NQF Objectives was devised by the Project Team. The three Research Questions were identified and elucidated, as a result of an extensive process of analysis:

Research Question 1: To what extent has practice changed as a result of the implementation of the NQF?

Research Question 2: To what extent have mindsets changed as a result of the introduction of the NQF?

Research Question 3: To what extent has the NQF enabled the development of education and training relevant to a changing world?

The three Research Questions reflect three different dimensions of the concept of a qualifications framework. While the essence of a qualifications framework is the enablement of learner progress and development, the international experience confirms that qualifications frameworks can also be used as drivers of policy and practice in education and training. In that context, the three reference points for the Research Questions – practice, mindset and relevance – each point to aspects of the NQF that impinge on both the personal (the learner) and the political (the education and training system). While each of the Research Questions can be seen to relate to all five of the NQF Objectives, there are significant differences in emphasis between them.

The posing of a question on practice gave an opportunity for practitioners and policy makers to reflect on the extent to which institutional practice, especially in workplaces and in education and training institutions, has changed or needs to change in order to realise these NQF Objectives.

The question regarding mindset is related to the social and political domains within which the education and training systems operate. The achievement of mindset change is perhaps the most important insofar as it is likely to shape practice and culture in a deeper and longer-lasting manner than institutional regulations or legislation.

The concept of relevance is a long-standing feature of international discourse and literature in education and training. The South African context gives the concept of relevance a potency that is not usually matched in international experience. In South Africa, relevance is bound up in the wider process of transformation and post-apartheid reconstruction, involving redress and parity of esteem.

The Research Questions were envisaged as lenses through which the NQF could be studied. Each lens provided a window into particular aspects of the NQF but, laid one on top of the other, the lenses could cumulatively provide a richer, fuller and multidimensional picture of the NQF in operation in different contexts.

The subsequent work of the Project Team was shaped by the identification of these three Research Questions. The Research Questions were not seen as research instruments in themselves. By clarifying the meaning of the successful implementation of the NQF Objectives, the application of the Research Questions to the NQF experience enabled the Project Team to generate draft Impact Indicators that could extract the necessary data.

Draft Impact Indicators

The overall aim of the Impact Study is to achieve the effective measurement of the impact of the National Qualifications Framework on the transformation of education and training in South Africa. The Research Questions gave a focus to this work and the project was conceptualised as a long-term, continuous and iterative process.

The first cycle of the NQF Impact Study was defined in terms of its capacity to (see Diagram 1. 1, Cycle 1):

- develop Impact Indicators that can be used for multiple measurements of the impact of the NQF in longitudinal comparative studies;
- describe the context against which the impact of the NQF is measured;
- pilot the research design and Impact Indicators; and
- produce a report on the findings emanating from the first cycle.

The identification of appropriate Impact Indicators was governed by constraints of usability and accessibility. The Impact Indicators had to be usable in the sense that too many Impact Indicators would merely confuse and obscure rather than illuminate the central issues. They had to be accessible both in the sense of being accessible for research purposes and also in the sense of being easily understood by a variety of end-users or readers.

The identification of Impact Indicators was a long and necessarily detailed process. Initially some 206 measurable sources of data were identified by the Project Team as containing valuable or potentially valuable information about the impact of the NQF. A process of reduction and categorisation of indicators, quantitative and qualitative, was then embarked upon.

The definition and selection of Impact Indicators was influenced by various considerations, which can be helpfully clustered in three broad groups of considerations: policy, scientific, and technical and practical. On the basis of these three main areas of consideration, and informed by the international literature on evaluation, the Project Team drew up the following list of principles to be used in the development of Impact Indicators.

Indicators, as far as possible, should be:

- diagnostic of current and future conditions, and suggestive of alternative actions rather than judgemental;
- few in number;
- quantifiable, in line with goals and objectives;
- used in the measurement of conditions at least partly under government control;
- free-standing, with a minimum of overlap with other indicators;
- part of a larger set of inter-related indicators that together provide more information than the sum of their parts;
- capable of providing understandable information about current or potential problems, for a broad audience, including policy makers, general public, press, and professionals;
- applicable to observed behaviour rather than perceptions;
- feasible in terms of timeliness, cost and expertise;
- inclusive of process indicators as well as input and output indicators, to ensure that focus is maintained on what can be done rather than what went wrong; and
- related to goals on which there is widespread agreement.

(based mainly on Bottani & Wahlberg, 1994)

Various definitions of indicators can be found in the literature. In most cases reference is made to 'success indicators'. The Project Team decided not to use the title 'success indicators' in an attempt to emphasise the possibility of finding both positive and negative evidence relating to a specific indicator. The following are some definitions of indicators:

- "...a statement describing the state of a system" (Johnstone, 1981 in Nuttall, 1994:79);
- "...an individual or a composite statistic that relates to a basic construct in education and is useful in a policy context" (Shavelson et al. , 1987 in Nuttall, 1994:80);
- "a policy-relevant statistic designed to provide information about the condition, the stability or change, the functioning, or the performance of an educational system" (Bottani & Tuijnman, 1994:48); and
- Impact Indicators do not reveal everything about education systems "...instead they provide a profile of current conditions at a glance" (Bottani & Wahlberg, 1994:2986).

In addition to the general considerations, principles and definitions of indicators listed above, it was important for the Project Team to agree on the meaning of 'impact', as the Impact Indicators were to form an integral part of the Study. It was decided that an 'open' interpretation of impact be accepted, one in which the effect and/or impression of the NQF on education and training could be measured without necessarily implying that the impact was positive. Impact was interpreted to include positive impact, moderate impact, no impact and negative impact. The 'type of impact' had to be based on the findings of the specific cycle of the Study, which in turn had to be based on a credible and tested research design, including a refined set of piloted Impact Indicators and representative sampling methods. Although the first cycle of the Study did not include such extensive data gathering, an attempt was made at least to trial a reporting process based on indicative results emanating from the application of the draft Impact Indicators³.

On the basis of the above discussion the Project Team suggested a definition of an Impact Indicator to be used in the context of the NQF Impact Study.

An Impact Indicator is...

a policy-relevant, quantitative and/or qualitative statistic designed to provide a profile of the current condition, the stability or change, the functioning, and/or the effect of the NQF on the transformation of education and training in South Africa.

The main purpose of the Impact Indicators was to give information to policy makers about the state of the education system to help them in policy analysis, policy evaluation and policy formulation. It was also important to note that the purpose of the Impact Indicators was not "...to create international rankings but rather to provide national policymakers with a broader understanding of factors influencing the quality of education..." (Bottani & Wahlberg, 1994:2986). The Project Team noted that it would be important to relate the Impact Indicators to indicators measuring the success of other national strategies⁴.

From the broad range of possibilities, the Project Team drew up an initial list of draft Impact Indicators. The viability and validity of these Impact Indicators were then tested through internal discussion and external consultation.

A scoping exercise was carried out to test the relationship of the draft Impact Indicators to the criteria or principles identified earlier. This process comprised three stages.

- The first stage was the ranking of each of the draft Impact Indicators based on their linkage to the Research Questions. This enabled the Project Team to revise the working draft of Research Questions and to eliminate some draft Impact Indicators.
- The second stage included a critical reflection of the considerations for selection, informed by a cross-tabulation with the criteria described above. This provided the Project Team with valuable data to inform the structure of the research activity. In particular, this process indicated that most of the draft Impact Indicators that had been identified were diagnostic in nature. Similarly, most of the draft Impact Indicators measured conditions that were, at least partly, under government control. It became apparent that overlap between specific indicators was pervasive but unavoidable; a strong inter-relatedness between the four Sets of Impact Indicators was also apparent.

3. See Table 4.7 at the end of Chapter 4.

4. The Project Team made an attempt to align the Study to a similar study linked to the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). Owing to time and other constraints this was not entirely successful. It is suggested that more attention be given to such alignments during future cycles of the Study.

The majority of the draft Impact Indicators were seen to provide understandable information and to measure observed behaviour, rather than perceptions. Practical considerations of time, cost and expertise were the main source of concern for the team, particularly insofar as those considerations applied to the first cycle of the Study.

- The third stage involved the establishment of focus groups with the direct and central participation of key NQF stakeholders. The purpose of this stage of the scoping process was to validate the choice of draft Impact Indicators within the NQF stakeholder community. A series of four focus groups (Western Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo Province) was organised in June/July 2003 at which some 32 participants from a range of stakeholders participated⁵. These stakeholders included technical and Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, private providers, consultants, Higher Education public providers and officials from the Departments of Education and Labour. Each of these focus groups were asked to test and interrogate the draft Sets of Impact Indicators drawn up by the Project Team. The focus group proceedings were noted and reports were drawn up on each, facilitating an overview of the appropriateness of the draft Impact Indicators.

The internal ranking and streamlining and the external interaction with the focus groups resulted in an improved bank of draft Impact Indicators. A total of 23 draft Impact Indicators was finally suggested; these indicators were categorised within four Sets, for ease of data manipulation:

	Draft Impact Indicators	Sets of Indicators
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7.	Number of qualifications Nature of qualifications Portability of qualifications Relevance of qualifications Qualifications in non-traditional areas Qualifications that promote redress Uptake of qualifications	<i>The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of South African society</i>
8. 9. 10. 11.	Admission practices Equity of access Learner support practices Learner achievements	<i>The extent to which learning opportunities have improved as a result of the implementation of the NQF</i>
12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17.	Nature of learning programmes Assessment practices Curriculum development Number of registered assessors and moderators Number of accredited providers Quality assurance practices	<i>The extent to which an outcomes-based approach has been taken up in education and training</i>
18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23.	Organisational environment Socio-economic context National strategies Career and learning pathing Integrative approach Socio-cultural context	<i>The extent to which South African society has accepted lifelong learning</i>

Table 2.1: Draft Impact Indicators for the NQF Impact Study

5. Representation from the stakeholder grouping is summarised in Appendix 5.

Each of the draft Impact Indicators is directly linked to one or more NQF Objectives (See Appendix 6). Four regional focus groups worked closely with the Research Unit to assess linkages and correlation with NQF Objectives. The relative frequency of draft Impact Indicators aligned with the NQF Objectives is broken down as follows:

- NQF Objective 1: 7 draft Impact Indicators
- NQF Objective 2: 16 draft Impact Indicators
- NQF Objective 3: 14 draft Impact Indicators
- NQF Objective 4: 14 draft Impact Indicators
- NQF Objective 5: 16 draft Impact Indicators

	NQF Objective	Main Impact Indicator Sets relating to Objective
1.	Create an integrated national framework for learning achievements	Set 1 ...qualifications address the education and training needs... Set 3 ...outcomes-based approach has been taken up... Set 4 ...South African society has accepted lifelong learning...
2.	Facilitate access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths	Set 1 ...qualifications address the education and training needs... Set 2 ...learning opportunities have improved... Set 3 ...outcomes-based approach has been taken up... Set 4 ...South African society has accepted lifelong learning...
3.	Enhance the quality of education and training	Set 1 ...qualifications address the education and training needs... Set 3 ...outcomes-based approach has been taken up... Set 4 ...South African society has accepted lifelong learning...
4.	Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities	Set 1 ...qualifications address the education and training needs... Set 2 ...learning opportunities have improved... Set 3 ...outcomes-based approach has been taken up... Set 4 ...South African society has accepted lifelong learning...
5.	Contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large	Set 1 ...qualifications address the education and training needs... Set 2 ...learning opportunities have improved... Set 3 ...outcomes-based approach has been taken up... Set 4 ...South African society has accepted lifelong learning...

Table 2.2: Relationship between the NQF Objectives and the Sets of draft Impact Indicators

Research procedures

The NQF Impact Study is designed as a longitudinal study. Data gathering will be repeated at regular intervals. The first systematic application of the research design is proposed for 2004. This data will form the baseline against which subsequent data sets will be compared. The periodic measurement of the impact of the NQF, using the same Impact Indicators with each application, will enable a comparison of the extent of the impact over time on education and training.

The reporting structure of the periodic measurements is modelled in the structure of the present report, incorporating contextualisation, data gathering and recommendations.

In the preparation of this report on the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study a number of specific research reports were undertaken. These are noted in summary form here:

	Research report	Description
1.	Instruments for piloting of draft Impact Indicators	Schedules of questions drafted for interviews and focus groups.
2.	External literature review	Literature review of publications of non-SAQA origin that describe (i) the context within which the NQF has been introduced and implemented and (ii) the mapping of the historical development of the NQF.
3.	Analysis of contextualisation interviews	Report on interviews with key individuals to determine the context within which the NQF has unfolded to date.
4.	Analysis of new qualifications on the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)	Analysis of a set of new qualifications on the NLRD to assess the extent to which these qualifications are portable, non-traditional and promote redress. A selection of quantitative data from the NLRD was also included.
5.	Analysis of employer interviews	Report on interviews with selected employers.
6.	Analysis of focus group interviews	Report on learner focus groups.
7.	Analysis of departmental interviews	Report on interviews with national and provincial DoE and DoL officials.
8.	Analysis of union interviews	Report on interviews and focus groups with trade union representatives.
9.	Analysis of provider interviews	Report on interviews with providers of education and training.

Table 2.3: Research reports

The research reports listed above are presented as annexures to this report and are available in electronic format only.

Components of the NQF Impact Study research methodology

The research methodology devised by the Project Team, applied in the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study and proposed for application at intervals from 2004 onwards, is described in this section. Each application consists of three key components: Contextualisation, Data gathering and Findings and Recommendations.

The first cycle of the Study incorporated a more extensive contextualisation component than that envisaged for future applications. This is necessarily so, given the need to describe the changing environment of the NQF from its inception to the beginning of 2004. While a combination of qualitative and quantitative research instruments is envisaged for all applications, the first cycle of the Study relied relatively more heavily on qualitative instruments than would be envisaged for the future. The importance of qualitative measures, especially at the early stages of a longitudinal study, lies in their capacity to make sense of, or to interpret, data and phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them. In a complex environment like that of the NQF, different stakeholders will

have different perspectives on and understandings of common issues. An important aspect of the focus group instruments, for example, in both the contextualisation and the data-gathering activities of the first cycle of the Study, was to allow for these various interpretations to surface. Largely pre-defined quantitative instruments, such as a questionnaire survey, could overlook the nuances prevalent in individual or group engagements with the NQF. Qualitative research can define preliminary questions, which can then be addressed in quantitative studies.

It is envisaged that a questionnaire survey will be a vital instrument in the application of the Impact Study methodology. No such survey was carried out in the first cycle of the Study, partly because of the early requirements for hypothesis testing and the identification of differentiated understandings among stakeholders. More pragmatic considerations of time and resources also applied. A tender for a survey was issued in the winter of 2003, but the responses from the field indicated that no survey could be successfully commissioned within the timeframe and budget then available. Instead, it was decided to carry out the first cycle of the Study entirely from within the resources of the Project Team and that the specifications for a survey would be built into the formal application of the Impact Study in 2004.

The three common components of the Impact Study to be addressed in each application are set out as follows:

Contextualisation

This will include a review of both SAQA and non-SAQA literature that covers at least the period since the previous measurement took place. (The first cycle measurement necessitated a more extensive contextualisation covering the period since the implementation of the NQF.) Contextualisation also includes a description of the role of SAQA as the main steering agency, a report on the current status of implementation achievements and the location of the NQF in an international context.

Annexure 3 provides an analysis of these interviews. Annexures 4 to 9 contain analyses of some sources of quantitative and qualitative data derived from research with stakeholder groups in the course of the first cycle of the Study.

Data gathering

This consists of data that relates to the draft Impact Indicators. The population will include representative samples from all the major stakeholder groupings⁶, including

- providers of education and training (public and private);
- employers (large enterprises and small-, medium- and micro enterprises (SMMEs));
- unions;
- learners; and
- government departments (mainly Education and Labour).

Research methods will include surveys, individual interviews, and focus groups. Instruments were developed through the first cycle of the Study and will be improved where necessary for future applications⁷.

Findings and recommendations

The findings resulting from each impact measurement will point towards the state of NQF implementation as identified at that specific time. The findings will be based on Impact Indicators, and will also present the type of impact measured in the specific cycle. The findings and recommendations may inform policy decisions in relation to the operation of the NQF and elements of the education and training systems. The recommendations will also inform future measurements, including the fine-tuning of the Impact Indicators and research instruments.

6. Also see Appendix 5 (Stakeholder representation for the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study).

7. The research instruments are included in Annexure 1.

Summary

As can be seen from the diagram below (based on Diagram 1.1), the first cycle of the Study entails the development and piloting of draft Impact Indicators, as well as the design of research questions and instruments to be employed in the research. It is envisaged that subsequent research cycles will be informed by the outcomes of the first cycle.

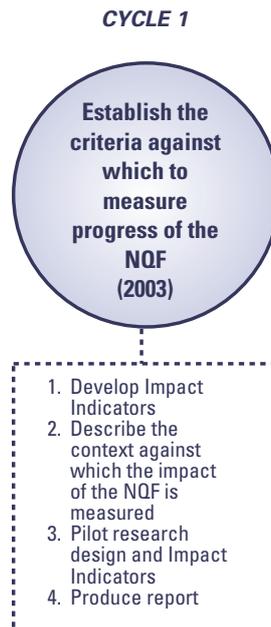


Diagram 2.2: Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study

The development of Impact Indicators was discussed in this chapter. In the next chapter, Chapter 3, the context against which the impact of the NQF is measured will be described.

CHAPTER THREE: FIRST CYCLE CONTEXTUALISATION

Introduction

This chapter sets out the context for the first cycle of the longitudinal NQF Impact Study, to assist readers in the interpretation of findings. The process of contextualisation is an integral part of the proposed methodology for the Impact Study and will be repeated in subsequent cycles of the Study.

The chapter covers:

- origins and development of the NQF;
- the role of SAQA;
- implementation achievements of NQF implementation; and
- NQF implementation issues.

The sources on which this chapter is based are:

- an external literature review⁸;
- reports and articles referred to in that review;
- a series of contextualisation interviews; and
- SAQA literature.

Origins and development of the NQF

The NQF is a distinctly South African phenomenon that has been developed in a unique political and historical context. The concepts and organising principles were drawn from similar developments in Scotland, England, New Zealand and Australia in the mid to late 1980s. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise the essentially South African nature of the NQF and its roots in opposition to apartheid. While the methodology of NQF construction drew on international experience (that South Africa was both a contributor to and a beneficiary of), the aims and purposes of the NQF in South Africa were broader and more ambitious than in any other country. This was true in two senses. First, the NQF was given a central role in the transformation agenda. Second, South Africa sought to build a fully fledged national qualifications framework more or less from scratch. In many other countries, NQF construction was a more incremental process, involving the alignment of partially developed sub-systems.

The idea of the NQF surfaced in South African policy debates at the beginning of the 1990s but has earlier roots. The following account is based largely on McGrath (1997), Pityana (1996), and NQF Overview (SAQA, 2000a).

The NQF traces its origins back to labour and education struggles of the early 1970s. At that time, black trade union demands for a living wage were repeatedly rejected by employers, on the grounds that workers were unskilled and had therefore unjustifiable demands. This in turn led to black workers seeing training as a means to achieving their demands for better wages. The struggle to persuade employers to accede to worker demands continued into the 1980s, and in 1989 the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) established a research group comprising workers and union officials to formulate recommendations on training. On the assumption that skills development would lead to better wages, an integrated proposal was formulated, based on a staged improvement in skills, linked to grading increments. The proposal stressed the need not only for basic education, without which workers would not be able to access the proposed system, but also for portability and national recognition of training so that workers would not be at the mercy of a single employer. In May 1991, the NUMSA Congress adopted the research group's proposals as policy. Shortly thereafter, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) also adopted the policy.

The mid-1970s also witnessed a demand for change in education, spearheaded by the non-governmental education sector. Protest was epitomised in the Soweto student uprising of 1976, which was followed by nation-wide student protest. There was a widespread view by the 1980s that the entire education system was discredited.

8. The external literature review is contained in Annexure 2.

The De Lange Commission (Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), 1981) was convened in response to continuing waves of unrest in schools. Race and culture were played down and the role of the market emphasised. The two principal strands of the De Lange Report's recommendations were privatisation and vocationalisation. McGrath summarised the implications of the De Lange Report as follows:

The Commission noted that educational expansion to achieve universal provision at historical white standards would not be financially feasible. Therefore, much of the proposed expansion of provision would be through cheaper (and lower status) non-formal education. Secondly, it recommended that the academic route should be limited to the small number going to university, the rest of students being given a more vocational provision. Thirdly, "environmentally handicapped" students (a euphemism for those still "tribalised") would be the first to be guided down vocationally-oriented paths. Fourthly, the system would not be desegregated at the school level and a recommendation that a single national department for all races be established was dropped before the resultant White Paper [1983]...

Taken together, these elements of the new dispensation suggested that educational provision was likely to remain highly segmented and dysfunctional. Whilst the majority of white students would still proceed down the academic route to tertiary education, the majority of Africans would continue to find themselves either out of schooling or channelled down vocationally-oriented tracks (SAQA, Annexure 2:8)⁹.

Despite repeated resistance to worker and student demands for change, the government of the day came increasingly to appreciate the inappropriateness and, ultimately, the unsustainability of its rejection of such demands. The Department of Manpower, through the National Training Board (NTB), embarked as far back as the 1980s upon a number of initiatives, notably the restructuring of the apprenticeship system into a competency-based modular training system run by autonomous industry training boards (ITBs). However, unions viewed the process as flawed, not only because it excluded workers, but also because the proposals emanating from the initiatives were narrowly focused on apprenticeship to the exclusion of basic education, which was seen as a point of access to the skills training.

Following the announcement in 1990 by President de Klerk that apartheid was to be disbanded, the Department of National Education entered a phase of policy reformulation. In 1991, the Department introduced two major policy initiatives: the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) and the Curriculum Model for Education in South Africa (CUMSA). The Democratic Alliance within the education sector was invited to participate in the process, but declined the invitation on the grounds that the initiative lacked legitimacy. Furthermore the ERS advocated three streams – academic, vocational, and vocationally oriented – a system the democratic alliance found unpalatable. The education employer sector did, however, participate in the process, advocating a seamless framework similar to that adopted by Scotland and New Zealand.

At the same time, intellectuals and students from the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) began to develop alternatives to the ERS. The National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) established the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI). The final reports based on 11 investigations into a wide range of educational topics were published in 1992 and 1993.

Parallel developments were taking place within the democratic trade union movement. After an extended conflictual relationship, the Department of Manpower and the trade union federations reconvened in 1992 in an attempt to renew the process. The unions succeeded in forcing a rethink of previous policies. Eight working groups, comprising trade unionists, employers and government officials, were convened to develop a new national training strategy. A national qualifications framework was first discussed in Working Group 2 and a consensus reached on the broad objectives of a new integrated framework.

9. As mentioned in the Table of Contents, abbreviated references will be made to annexures; for example, (Annexure 2:11) refers to Annexure 2 (External literature review), page 11. The annexures are available in electronic format only.

A common thread of the new policy ideas was the idea of a “ladder-like qualifications framework with credit transfer to foster learning and worker mobility” (DoE & DoL, 2002:5). There was a general belief in the desirability of a single ministry for education and training and a single body to oversee the development of the NQF. The concept of integration was absolutely central to the idea of the NQF.

The NQF was first formally proposed in the African National Congress (ANC) Education Department document, Policy Framework for Education and Training, in January 1994 (ANC, 1994). In April of that year, a National Training Board report, Discussion Document on a National Training Strategy Initiative expanded on the NQF concept as it impacted on training (NTB, 1994). The ANC’s Implementation Plan for Education and Training of May 1994 contained a chapter on an NQF (ANC, 1994). Towards the end of that same year, an Inter-Ministerial Working Group (IMWG) was mandated by the Ministries of Education and Labour to consider the implementation of an NQF. The 1995 White Paper on Education and Training set out the elements of a proposed NQF (SA, 1995a). On 4 October 1995, the South African Qualifications Authority Act enshrined the NQF in law (SA, 1995b).

However, it should be noted that some of the seeds of later contestation were in evidence from the outset. According to Greenstein (1995),

The Committee of University Principals (CUP)... sees the proposed NQF as an attempt to stifle academic freedom... Its motivation for rejecting the proposed legislation is based on an understanding that universities are different from schools and need not have a uniform syllabus... no attempts have been made to reconcile the differences between students with manual training and those with formal academic training who are working towards the same qualification (SAQA, Annexure 2:11).

Certain conclusions may be drawn from this account. First, although the South African NQF drew technically on developments in other countries (and in turn contributed to international developments), its political and social inspiration lay in the democratic struggle against apartheid and the goal of transformation. No other NQF has had to bear such a weight of expectation. Second, support for the idea of an NQF came from broad sections of society, including the trade union movement and the academic world, although not unanimously. Third, the idea of integrating education and training was central to the NQF concept, although it would prove to be a far from unproblematic notion as the NQF was developed.

The ideals and aims that were formed through these processes of debate were crystallised in the Objectives of the NQF, as set out in the SAQA Act (SA, 1995b). These Objectives were to:

1. create an integrated national framework for learning achievements;
2. facilitate access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths;
3. enhance the quality of education and training;
4. accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities; and
5. contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

The Objectives were very broadly stated. Understandably, there was a desire to express the aims of the NQF in ways that all stakeholders could support. However, to some extent this masked the disparity of views that existed about what implementation entailed. This was recognised by the Inter-Ministerial Working Group in 1995.

It is important to grasp differences of opinion that lie behind arguments for an “integrated approach” for when temporary consensus is reached in any negotiation process, it does not mean that differences miraculously disappear. Some stakeholders decide to “sit on the fence” for a while; some continue to push for interpretations and meanings that are congruent with their needs and interests; others withdraw and move to negotiation forums which better serve their interests. (HSRC, 1995:34).

On the other hand, the NQF was far from being a blank canvas. The same publication set out detailed ideas on assessment of competent performance, levels of progression, and rules for qualifications and unit standards. The Proceedings of the Conference on the National Qualifications Framework (HSRC, 1996) reveal that thinking was relatively advanced on outcomes-based education and training, qualifications and standards, the use of fields in a qualifications system, and quality assurance.

The role of SAQA

SAQA was established by the SAQA Act of 1995 (SA, 1995b). The Executive Officer was appointed in 1997. SAQA then embarked on a period of intensive developments, the chronology of which is set out in Appendix 2. The key tasks during this period were to (all references are to the SAQA Act):

- oversee the development of the NQF (Section 5.1.a.i);
- formulate and publish policies and criteria for the registration of National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) and the accreditation of Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs) (Section 5.1.a.ii);
- oversee the implementation of the NQF, including the registration of NSBs and SGBs, national standards and qualifications. This also includes steps to ensure compliance with provisions for accreditation and the international comparability of standards and registered qualifications (Section 5.1.i-iv);
- advise the Minister on matters affecting the registration of standards and qualifications (Section 5.1.c); and
- be responsible for the control of the finances of the Authority (Section 5.1.d).

SAQA developed two 'arms': Standards Setting and Quality Assurance. The sub-structures in the standards setting arm were the NSBs and the SGBs, while the sub-structures in the quality assurance arm were the ETQAs¹⁰. The third key deliverable was the development of the NLRD.

The nature of SAQA's role has been the subject of debate and discussion. Many respondents in the contextualisation interviews indicated that a major current advantage of SAQA overseeing the implementation of the NQF was that SAQA is an independent body. There was general consensus that this is a role that must be maintained and that it has proven to be important to the success of SAQA.

SAQA is associated with quality and is seen as independent, which leads to trust and respect for its perceived objective... SAQA stands at the heart of this system and has the passion to make it work (University Principal, Annexure 3:6).

However, some respondents had doubts as to whether independence is at all possible for an agency such as SAQA that is funded by government and answers to the Ministers of Education and Labour.

SAQA's independence is obviously a matter of perception and opinion. SAQA's responsibility to government, both with regard to finances and mandate, does not enable it to function independently of government. According to the Act, SAQA's role is to 'advise the Minister'. To some extent at least this does enable SAQA to take an independent position on relevant matters, but the Minister remains in a position to ignore any such advice.

Respondents also preferred SAQA to be a dedicated body that focuses only on NQF implementation. A number of respondents indicated that they were of the opinion that SAQA has moved beyond this role and is gradually becoming more administrative and bureaucratic.

The original role of SAQA was to develop the NQF, put the framework in place, propagate it and get the people on the ground to assist in making it work. That was SAQA in an overseeing role, which in effect said, "This is the policy, this is the path we are going to move – you make the regulations". Now SAQA has moved from overseeing to implementing. It has made itself not a guiding body as much as an administrative body (Member of Inter-Ministerial Working Group (IMWG), Annexure 3:6).

There was also a definite view that SAQA should be putting more emphasis on advocacy and awareness-raising.

NQF implementation achievements

A review of the various sources of evidence highlights a number of important achievements of NQF implementation.

10. For further details, see Appendix 3.

Development of policies and systems and associated capacity building

The Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework refers to “a formidable set of complementary policies, legislative instruments, strategy documents and plans aimed at replacing the apartheid legacy with an entirely new structure of provision, governance, funding, curriculum, assessment and certification fit for a 21st century African democracy” (DoE & DoL, 2002:7).

NQF implementation achievements were also recognised by the European Union (EU) Mid-Term Review (the EU being a major source of donor support for SAQA).

The project had a high degree of policy relevance at its inception, focusing on the NQF as a primary lever for thoroughgoing systems reform and as the lynchpin for a broad range of education and training policies designed to increase the volume and quality of trained manpower. The project has retained its relevance during the subsequent period of national policy implementation by successfully demonstrating its capacity to change the embedded paradigms of education and training through managing a broad-based stakeholder participation process in building the new system.

The project has successfully overcome extensive initial resistance to the concept and practical implications of an integrated system of education and training. Resistance from the Higher Education sector remains an unsolved problem – as does the construction of a fully operational Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system. The most significant unsolved issue is financial sustainability (EU, 2002:6).

While there are issues to be addressed about the structures and systems that have been introduced, any subsequently refined system will be based strongly on the processes and procedures developed in the first period of NQF construction. No country has built its NQF without substantial debates and alterations to original structures and processes. This is an essential part of a system-wide learning process. The fact that the architecture may now be subject to modifications does not detract at all from the substantial achievements in policy and system development.

Awareness of key NQF concepts

Awareness of key NQF concepts has been developed and these concepts have become an integral part of education and training debates and practice. As one contextualisation interview respondent put it:

So the NQF has forced us to reflect on notions of quality... From an almost laissez-faire, idiosyncratic conception of what is good enough, you now have to begin to connect your notion of what is good enough to a more general notion of what is good enough (University Principal, Annexure 3:11).

Similar comments were made about awareness of: why mobility is important; integration of education and training as a goal; and outcomes-based approaches to education and training. Evidence suggests that awareness of these concepts has increased dramatically as a result of NQF implementation. This is not to imply that there is universal agreement around these concepts or that they have always become firmly rooted in practice. However, in a historical perspective, developing widespread awareness of a set of concepts, which are so antithetical to the dominant concepts of the apartheid system, is in itself an important achievement.

This is also reflected in the language people use. NQF-related terminology and the related structural and legislative changes have become part of public discourse. As one contextualisation interview respondent observed:

I think it's become part of the language of this country... No teacher any longer talks about curriculum without saying it's NQF Level X. I think it's embedded (University Principal, Annexure 3:13).

Shaping aspirations and actions

According to a senior DoE official, the NQF has radically reshaped the aspirations that people have for education and training in South Africa:

Prior to the advent of the NQF there was no sign of an education and training system; there was darkness in a sense. Now people believe there is education. It is an important achievement to have such a symbolic coming together of the minds (Annexure 3:13).

Stakeholders also refer to the NQF as a useful grid for managing national interventions. For example, it is used as a conceptual framework to show possibilities for mobility.

Now we have a system where you know that whatever qualification you have, it will be recognised in terms of mobility (SAQA manager, Annexure 3:12).

It has also become increasingly important as a tool for identifying gaps, weaknesses or development needs.

Here is a framework, which, if you use it well, will enable you to accomplish whatever it is that you do. So, if there is a coherent way in which one is able to assess what the human resource challenges and needs for the country are, then it's possible, by a framework of this kind, to plot the movement of people towards achieving what is required in terms of that strategy.

It also helped to bring to the fore the weaknesses of the system as it was at the time, filled with dead ends and idiosyncratic ways of establishing relationships, almost at the whim of an authority (University Principal, Annexure 3:13).

NQF implementation issues

The implementation of the NQF has also thrown up a number of issues, which are discussed below.

Purposes and expectations of the NQF

As mentioned before, the Objectives of the NQF as set out in the SAQA Act are to:

1. create an integrated national framework for learning achievements;
2. facilitate access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths;
3. enhance the quality of education and training;
4. accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities; and
5. contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

As the Study Team noted, the first Objective is "an obvious outcome of the NQF, for which only SAQA in collaboration with its partners has legal responsibility, and is well on the way to being realised" (DoE & DoL, 2002:65). However, the other four Objectives are ones to which the NQF only contributes.

The government intends the NQF to make a major impact on all of these, but the goals themselves – access, mobility, progression, quality, redress and development – are wider and deeper than the NQF. They describe the major part of the permanent combined agendas of the Ministries of Education and Labour, and require a range of other actions, including appropriate laws and policies, institutions, budgetary allocations, infrastructure development, professional development for teachers and trainers, and provision of learning resource materials (DoE & DoL, 2002:65).

This has not always been fully understood by stakeholders in South Africa, giving rise to unrealistic expectations of the NQF and a tendency to lay the responsibility for the slow pace of transformation at the door of the NQF.

Given its origins and scope, many South Africans have justifiably high expectations of the NQF in the transformation of education and training. However, the NQF was never intended to achieve transformation on its own and could not do so. Some South Africans may have looked to the development of the Framework itself... to bring major progress towards access, redress and progression. If so, this may explain their disappointment at the rate of implementation since 1995 (DoE & DoL, 2002:66).

This theme was also picked up in the contextualisation interviews. One respondent, for example, argued that

...the short-term pressure on political structures to demonstrate quick fixes is a major threat to some of the longer-term principles of the NQF (SAQA manager, Annexure 3:15).

Christie argues that qualifications frameworks play a role in improving knowledge and skills levels, but that it should not be assumed that if you get the framework right everything else will fall into place:

We knew that the NQF was not a curriculum model. We understood it as a framework that would allow different curricula to work within it, to meet the needs of different situations and different sets of learners, while achieving equivalence in outcome. We never assumed that a credit framework was more than that. I feel concerned when we talk so much about the credit framework and the unit standards and so on without really recognising that the framework says nothing about curriculum... Quality isn't only assured by an assessment system. Don't be seduced into thinking that the NQF is the answer to quality. Quality cannot simply be achieved through a framework (Christie, 1997:89-90).

Lugg takes up this theme from a different standpoint, emphasising the crucial role of deep professional development. She argues that "informing educators about [the NQF] will not bring about changes in their practice nor in the quality of the learning system", that the "systematic involvement through research and professional development of practitioners" is required, and that "whether the NQF can fulfil its transformative role will depend in large part on the skills, preparedness and commitment of educators" (Lugg, 1997:137-138).

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is another example of a significant objective, assumed to be achievable through the development of the Framework, but which in fact is heavily dependent on factors outside the NQF itself, such as targeted government funding and the development of a guidance and information infrastructure (DoE & DoL, 2002:87).

Young sees this overemphasis on what NQFs can achieve in isolation from other initiatives as part of an international trend on the part of governments to use qualifications as drivers of educational reform. He suggests that this may be because government agendas

...have less to do with improving the quality of education and more that a NQF provides a government with an instrument for making educational institutions more accountable and quantitative measures for comparing different national systems (Young, 2003:228).

He argues that the focus on accountability leads in turn to other problems:

Qualifications offer an ideal instrument to a reforming government, as they appear to serve a dual purpose. They not only provide incentives for individual learners but can be used as a mechanism for making educational institutions accountable. The educational problem however is that these purposes can act against each other. More emphasis on accountability leads to tighter specification of outcomes – a trend in all qualification-led reforms. Promoting learning however, whether among high achievers or among those with previous experience of school failure, requires teachers (and learners) to have the confidence to take risks and learn from them; in other words it requires qualifications that are less specified in advance. Furthermore, a greater emphasis on qualifications defined in terms of outcomes puts pressure on institutions and workplaces to give more time to assessment and less to the teaching and learning activities that might in the longer term lead to more people gaining qualifications (Young, 2003:228).

This theme has been developed by South African commentators, including Allais.

On the one hand the NQF is driven by the goals of social justice, egalitarianism, redress, and empowerment, and on the other hand by concepts of flexibility, mobility, and re-trainability (for example, Muller, ... while the rhetoric within which the NQF has been developed in South Africa can be located firmly within the former transition (to democracy), the content of the NQF in fact is more derivative of the latter transition (to a neo-liberal economy)...the euphoria of the transition to democracy has to a large extent disguised the real nature both of the broader economic policies of the new South African government, and also more specifically of its education policies (Allais, 2003:307).

Allais argues that the 'neo-liberal economic' agenda has led to the introduction of outcomes-based education and that is at odds with important educational values. However, this position is asserted, rather than argued. It is founded on equating outcomes-based education with qualifications based on a specific approach to the development of unit standards. However, as the Study Team and others have argued, outcomes and standards may be developed in relatively loose or tight fashion, depending on the purpose of the qualification. There is no necessary link therefore between outcomes-based education and the consequences described by Young and Allais.

Two distinct but related concerns have been identified in this section. One is that there are widespread and unrealistic expectations of what an NQF can achieve in isolation from other policies and initiatives. The second is that the 'real' objectives of the NQF are different from its explicit objectives. It could be argued that the means of resolution of both issues is the same: that the government must make explicit what the NQF is expected to achieve and the purposes for which it will be used. A democratically elected government is entitled to use qualifications for the purpose of accountability if it so chooses. However, it should make transparent what these purposes are and open up the possibility of debate on potential conflict between particular purposes. Also, the NQF must be seen as an element (albeit a central one) of a wider plan for the transformation of education and training. Such a plan must address issues of infrastructure and professional development.

Leadership and resourcing by government

A major recommendation of the Study Team Report was that the Departments of Education and Labour should assert their leadership of the NQF.

Many submissions to the Study Team felt that there was less than full commitment to the NQF on the part of government... Lack of leadership, an absence of strategic and operational planning, and uncertainty over the respective responsibilities of SAQA, DoE and DoL were among the issues raised most frequently in the submissions we received. SAQA itself was held responsible and therefore blamed for wrong priorities or delays, even in some matters over which it had no control (DoE & DoL, 2002:66).

Stakeholders also drew attention to government under-funding of NQF development.

The submissions express disappointment that SAQA is not given sufficient financial and political support by the government to advance NQF implementation, and as a result is unable to carry out its functions as effectively as the importance of the NQF demands. The poor funding from the fiscus and the perceived poor support and leadership of the NQF from the Departments of Education and Labour are viewed as an indication that the government gives low priority to the NQF in the broader scheme of things. The DoE is regarded as having responsibility for leadership but is not considered to be exercising it. The scale of its grant to SAQA is regarded as evidence of failure to take the NQF seriously (DoE & DoL, 2002:24).

These findings led the Study Team to suggest a need for an overall national plan for NQF implementation that will match resources with NQF Objectives.

The DoE and DoL, together with SAQA, have an opportunity to operationalise the goals in an overall integrated plan for NQF implementation, including short- and medium-term targets and resourcing requirements. Such a plan would give much needed focus to the attainment of NQF objectives and make clear the respective responsibilities of all parties in the process and how they link together (DoE & DoL, 2002:67).

The Study Team went on to recommend that an

NQF Strategic Partnership be established in law, to comprise the senior executives of the Department of Education, the Department of Labour and SAQA, to ensure clear strategic leadership of NQF implementation, to approve and monitor the National Plan on NQF Implementation, and to resolve differences (DoE & DoL, 2002:135).

SAQA agreed that the Departments of Education and Labour should assert their leadership of the NQF:

Close co-operation between the Departments of Education and Labour and SAQA to exercise strategic leadership of NQF implementation is imperative. Leadership and a clear division of responsibilities are indeed crucial at all levels of implementation. SAQA welcomes the adoption of this principle by the Study Team (SAQA, 2002b:6).

SAQA also supported the proposal for a National Plan, but wished to reinforce the Study Team's conclusions on resourcing by adding an eighth principle to those espoused by the Study Team, namely "NQF development and implementation must be adequately resourced by government" (SAQA, 2002b:6).

The absence of a National Plan is felt within SAQA to be significant. One respondent in the contextualisation interviews, for example, argued that NQF implementation could only be successful

...if we have a strategic and nationally aligned plan where everyone in the education system is dedicated towards the achievement of the NQF (SAQA staff member, Annexure 3:8).

The Consultative Document did not comment directly on the Study Team's critique of governmental leadership. However, it considered and substantially amended the Study Team's proposal for an NQF Strategic Partnership.

The Departments could not agree to a tripartite structure with SAQA as the third party since the constitutional and statutory responsibilities of the state departments and the statutory body (SAQA) were not the same (DoE & DoL, 2003:37).

Instead, it was proposed to establish an inter-departmental NQF Strategic Team to perform the strategic leadership role and provide a bridge between SAQA and the two departments.

Conceptualisation of integration

As noted above, the integration of education and training was a critical element in the conceptualisation of the NQF. Christie (1997) agrees that integration was one of the central tenets in the NQF design. She argues that it was assumed that both sectors, education and training, would be engaged with, shaped by and changed through the process.

The integration issue was linked from the outset to debates about outcomes and competence. The HSRC summarised the crucial debate about notions of competence as follows:

"Training-minded" participants were concerned about the inclusion of theoretical or academic [competence] and felt that competence might "not reflect sufficiently" the measurable demonstration of performance standards in explicit behavioural terms..."Education-minded" participants were concerned about whose standards would be used to determine competence and didn't want education to "become the handmaiden of the economy" (HSRC, 1995:36).

The debates on integration continued after 1994, as is noted in a 1996 discussion document (Ministerial Committee for Development Work on the NQF, 1996), which suggests that the notion of integration had been hotly contested:

Essentially, the debate divided itself into two schools of thought, namely one which wanted no distinction drawn between education and training and one which wanted them to exist in parallel tracks, joined by some kind of umbrella body, a far more tentative approach towards the integration of education and training...The education sector was concerned that education would lose its "soul", that it would become narrow in focus, concentrating only on teaching that which was required by the world of work – training, in other words. At the centre of their concern was the fear that education standards would decrease rapidly if training was to prescribe to education...The training sector, on the other hand, was afraid that the integration of education and training would lead to unreasonable demands for "high" academic standards in the training world; an imposition, it was claimed, that would make it difficult, if not impossible, for those who trained workers to adjust rapidly to employment demands when required (Ministerial Committee for Development Work on the NQF, 1996:18).

The creation of an integrated education and training system and the establishment of a single Ministry for that purpose were proposed by the National Training Strategy Initiative report, the ANC Policy Framework and the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) base document. However, a single Ministry was not created in 1994. Moreover, the concept of an integrated system was replaced by the idea of an 'integrated approach' to education and training.

Education and training are each essential elements of human resource development. Rather than viewing them as parallel activities, the Ministry of Education believes that they are in fact closely related. In order to maximise the benefits of this relationship, the Ministry is committed to an integrated approach to education and training, and sees this as a vital underlying concept for a national Human Resource Development (HRD) strategy.

An integrated approach implies a view of learning which rejects a rigid division between “academic” and “applied”, “theory” and “practice”, “knowledge” and “skills”, “head” and “hand”. Such divisions have...helped to reproduce very old occupational and class distinctions...and have been closely associated in the past with the ethnic structure of opportunity and power (DoE & DoL, 2002:67).

However, the conceptualisation of ‘the integrated approach’ is regarded by many as inadequate. The Study Team argued:

Despite the apparent identity between major policy goals of the two departments [DoE and DoL], they seem to have made no attempt to analyse in further detail how the integrated approach to education and training should be operationalised, especially in areas where the departments do not see eye to eye...

SAQA has had no option but to engage with the concept even in the absence of clear policy direction. Some of the most vehement debates about the NQF have occurred when the integrated approach has had to be translated into level descriptors, qualifications descriptors and the specification of unit standards. Compromises have invariably emerged, but less heat might have been generated and much time gained if there had been clearer policy guidance from the outset (DoE & DoL, 2002:68).

The Study Team reaffirmed the value of an integrated approach and presented the concept of a ‘continuum of learning’.

The Study Team emphasises the importance of the rationale for an integrated approach sketched in the Education and Training White Paper. The concept preserves the valuable notion of a single inter-connected learning system, which has been of fundamental importance to the transformation process... But at the risk of going over old ground, we affirm that an integrated approach should not mean erasing all differences between education and training or making all qualifications fit a single set of criteria (except for the minimum necessary requirements). The perceived threat of such an idea of integration has given rise to fears, expressed in many submissions to the Study Team, that the essential, distinct purposes of education and training may be undermined.

As the White Paper suggests, education and training are best seen as representing a continuum of learning. While general and vocationally oriented programmes of learning have different purposes, these purposes overlap and can be profitably linked within a single framework. For one thing, many qualifications fall into neither the education or training camps but are combinations of both. For another, learners need increasingly to move from one to the other, and one of the important contributions of the NQF is to make this happen more efficiently and coherently...

An integrated approach to education and training must mean therefore that each is able to impact on the other for the benefit of the learner. Vocationally oriented qualifications need to include elements of general education, so learners become equipped both for employment and further study. Similarly, learners in general or academic education need to develop skills that will enhance their employability. There are obvious dangers of task drift if vocational qualifications become too narrow and of academic drift if they become too general (DoE & DoL, 2002:68).

The Consultative Document, however, takes a different tack:

SAQA's policy documents apply to all learning contexts, thus emphasising the integrative purpose of the framework. They acknowledge the diversity of learning contexts, but start from the premise that the NQF's learner-centred, outcomes-based paradigm is applicable to all (DoE & DoL, 2003:7).

In the Consultative Document it is argued that a design flaw in the NQF led to “the distinct purposes of the constituencies responsible for institutional and workplace learning, including professional practice, [not being] sufficiently acknowledged”:

SAQA's regulations and policies assume that the integrated framework will have one set of level descriptors and one set of qualification types. ... But the blurring of the distinction between learning achieved in the occupational context and learning achieved through institutional learning programmes has proved to be equally serious. The debate about “whole qualification” and “unit standards-based qualifications” stood as a proxy for these issues (DoE & DoL, 2003:8).

The Consultative Document points to a “demarcation” in practice between the two modes of learning that represents a “structural fault line in SAQA’s current architecture”, and argues that “the SAQA architecture is not holding”.

A belief that there are two epistemologically different modes of learning is shared by a number of stakeholders. For example, one contextualisation interview respondent commented:

Advocates of integration in education and training really ignore the fundamental difference [in their] epistemological basis. They can’t integrate the two in the sense that people talk about it. The framework [NQF] has been challenged not to look at education in one way, but to look at education broadly. The sooner we start recognising it the better. The features of training are fairly easily measurable. You can judge behaviour by looking at people, but it is not the same with education (Senior DoE Official, Annexure 3:12).

The Consultative Document makes a number of recommendations in order to “fully accommodate the differences between typical learning purposes associated with institutions and the workplace” in the next period of NQF implementation. The report discusses three modes of learning: “discipline-based” (institution-based), “occupational context-based” (workplace-based), and “career-focused/ general vocational”. The Consultative Document argues that “it may well be necessary to consider fit for purpose level descriptors for each learning mode that are nevertheless sufficiently compatible with one another, level by level, that they assist the articulation of qualifications within and between pathways” (DoE & DoL, 2003:13). A view of the relationship between learning pathways across the three bands of the learning system is proposed as the conceptual scheme on which the new organisation of the NQF could be built. The result would be that the NQF changes from a progression up one column to three possible paths of progression up three columns.

Thus, while the Study Team had argued against a ‘one size fits all’ model for all types of learning, they proposed the concept of a continuum of learning. By contrast, the Consultative Document appears to suggest a demarcation of modes of learning with links created between them.

Stakeholder participation

Isaacs and Nkomo (2003) argue that “consultation and negotiated consensus are key factors in all aspects of the development of the NQF” and therefore must precede any major decisions made in terms of SAQA’s mandate. Isaacs notes that consultation and co-operation are statutory requirements:

We have a further complication, and this is about what happens to bodies specified by current Acts that perform the functions of the NQF. Here the [SAQA] Act is very clear. It talks about consultation and co-operation. SAQA cannot just go off on its own and define how things will be. So very often you have to discount the time in which we can do things because of these important sections of the [SAQA] Act to which we have to adhere (Isaacs, 1998:22).

The same authors argue that extensive consultation and negotiation have brought perceived benefits as well as perceived disadvantages:

This adherence to the principle of transparency of development and operation has ensured that SAQA is perceived as a trustworthy organisation. However, it has also been cited as the major cause of what has been termed by some as “implementation at a snail’s pace” (Isaacs & Nkomo in Annexure 2:27).

The Study Team noted that “SAQA takes pride in the extent to which citizens nominated by their constituencies have voluntarily contributed their time and skills as NSB members”. However, their report argues that “the need for full stakeholder representivity on all bodies involved in the implementation is seen as a major reason for the slowness of the design and registration process”.

The Study Team argued that “the stakeholder principle should be strongly upheld but appropriately applied”.

The stakeholder principle is essential for legitimacy, accountability and quality. However, the identity and role of stakeholders needs to be clarified. Stakeholders and specialists are not necessarily different people, but there is a distinction between the technical processes of design and the political function of screening to ensure that NQF criteria are met (DoE & DoL, 2002:iii).

SAQA argued in its response that the Study Team's principle was already being observed.

The distinction between the technical process of qualifications design and the political function of screening to ensure that NQF criteria are met is implemented through the existing NSBs and SGBs, which have different compositions (SAQA, 2002b:8).

NQF architecture and processes

Many detailed concerns have been expressed about NQF architecture and processes, especially as they relate to standards setting and quality assurance. These debates are ongoing, with the Consultative Document accepting much of the Study Team's analysis but offering quite different solutions. Within this report, it is possible only to summarise the main positions taken.

The submissions to the Study Team raised concerns about the structural design of the NQF and the standards setting and quality assurance processes. The standards setting process was seen as too cumbersome and inflexible. It was said that there had been a proliferation of quality assurance structures with unclear lines of responsibility and different approaches to quality assurance, causing confusion and putting pressure on providers and ETQAs alike.

The Study Team recommended that new standards setting bodies should become responsible for the technical quality, consultation, accountability and leadership functions currently undertaken by NSBs. The NSBs should be disestablished in a properly phased manner, with care being taken to retain in the NQF system the experience and expertise of NSB members. The Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), Council on Higher Education (CHE), DoE and DoL should be formally recognised as standards setting bodies for their defined areas of interest. They should be charged with making transitional arrangements for the currently recognised SGBs (which would lose that status), for the work being undertaken under their auspices, and for the retention of SGB members' expertise within the system.

The Study Team noted that SAQA had adopted a principle of separating standards setting from quality assurance on the grounds that combining them could lead to conflicts of interest. The Study Team considered that any benefit was outweighed by the heavy demands that the separation of functions made on the limited capacity of both sets of organisations and by the organisational confusion that had been experienced. The Study Team argued that standards setting bodies should generally have responsibility for quality assuring their own standards. Standards setting and quality assurance should therefore, wherever possible, be the responsibility of a single body. The CHE and the SETAs should quality assure the standards they generate. In the case of schooling, technical colleges and general Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) standards, however, UMALUSI¹¹ should undertake quality assurance.

SAQA made a detailed response to the Study Team's recommendations on standards setting and quality assurance. On standards setting, SAQA's view was that the best compromise position might be the strengthening of SAQA's Directorate for Standards Setting and Development (DSSD) and the creation of advisory panels (both proposed by the Study Team). DSSD sub-directorates should be created to fill the gap left by NSBs. SAQA also wished to see professional bodies with ETQA status also being recognised as standards setting bodies. SAQA questioned whether it would in reality have the role of final arbiter if all ETQAs were given standards setting rights. It also made criticisms of the Study Team's detailed proposals on the allocation of specific functions to particular bodies.

The Consultative Document proposed a different architecture from that set out in the Study Team Report. The recommendation that NSBs be disbanded was supported. The Inter-departmental Team also agreed that there should be new structures that would perform both standards generation and quality assurance functions. Three Qualifications and Quality Assurance Councils (QCs) were proposed:

- TOP QC (Trade, Occupational and Professional Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council)
- GENFET QC (General and Further Education and Training Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council)
- HI-ED QC (Higher Education and Training Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council)

11. Umalusi is the ETQA for General and Further Education and Training.

Summary

The period since SAQA's establishment has seen significant progress in the implementation of the NQF. The idea of the NQF has become generally accepted. There is widespread awareness of NQF concepts and these are shaping educational discourse and practice. An impressive range of policies and procedures has been put in place and new organisational structures created. Even if some of these arrangements require revision in the light of stakeholder reactions to the first period of implementation, they nevertheless constitute a foundation of practice and experience on which to build.

The following implementation achievements and issues have been presented in this chapter:

NQF implementation achievements:

- development of policies and systems and associated capacity building
- awareness of key NQF concepts
- shaping aspirations and actions

NQF implementation issues:

- purposes and expectations of the NQF
- leadership and resourcing by government
- conceptualisation of integration
- stakeholder participation
- NQF architecture and processes

As the Study Team noted, conflict and contestation are a normal part of complex national development programmes. The important thing is to learn from such experiences. All the evidence suggests that South Africa is prepared to learn and go forward. Indeed, because of the open and transparent processes of review and debate in South Africa, the international community is also learning from South Africa's experience.

CHAPTER FOUR: FIRST CYCLE PILOTING OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND DRAFT IMPACT INDICATORS

Introduction

This chapter has two purposes, namely to:

- evaluate the draft Impact Indicators used during the first cycle of the Study for their usefulness in terms of whether they would provide substantial evidence about the impact of the NQF on the education and training system at a particular point in time; and
- present a brief overview of preliminary findings from the research undertaken for the first cycle of the Study.

The first cycle of the Study was carried out in the period July to November 2003. The primary aim of the first cycle was to test the validity and reliability of the overall research approach, including the draft Impact Indicators that had been generated. A secondary aim was to gather some indicative data on the substantive issues relating to the implementation of the NQF. The achievement of these aims would make it possible for the research design and draft Impact Indicators to be fine-tuned before formal application, while also enabling policy makers to respond to the indicative data that would emerge.

The NQF is predicated on the existence of an engaged set of stakeholders. Similarly, the Impact Study is centred on the engaged participation of the same stakeholders. Each stakeholder grouping brings a specific perspective and experience to bear in relation to the NQF. The chief stakeholder groups identified for participation in the Impact Study are:

- providers of education and training (public and private, including large, and small-, medium- and micro enterprise (SMME) providers);
- employers (large and SMME);
- unions;
- learners; and
- government departments (Education and Labour).

For the first cycle of the Study, in the stakeholder grouping of the employers, only large employers were approached, but small samples of all the other stakeholder groupings participated. In the provider stakeholder grouping, for example, public and private, Higher Education and Training (HET), Further Education and Training (FET), General Education and Training (GET), and SMME providers were engaged in the Study. (Refer to Appendix 5, Stakeholder Representation for the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study, for a breakdown of the sample.)

Specific research was undertaken as part of the first cycle of the Study as set out in Table 2.3 of this Report.

Assumptions and limitations of the first cycle of the Study

As a first cycle of the Study, the 2003 research experience was explicitly non-representative. For reasons of time and resources, the Project Team consciously decided not to carry out a representative sampling of the target groups for the research. Instead, the objective was to test the draft Impact Indicators with a small range of population samples from among the identified stakeholder groupings.

As noted in Chapter 1 of this report, the Study operated within certain parameters. These are set out below.

- The Study did not attempt to evaluate the rationale, aims or Objectives of the NQF as such. These remained as a given, and the Study was concerned only with the impact that the NQF, as it is perceived and operated, has had on practice and relevance of, and mindset in relation to, education and training in a transitional environment.
- The Study was undertaken in the knowledge that evaluative judgements on the attainment of the NQF Objectives could not be made with any degree of finality for several years.
- The report on the first cycle of the Study was concerned with the development of Impact Indicators, the establishment of the research design and the piloting of the Impact Indicators; the actual gathering of indicative findings from substantive data was less important than the piloting of the draft Impact Indicators and the research design.

Evaluation of the draft Impact Indicators

The first cycle of the Study incorporated the gathering of both qualitative and quantitative data. The former were secured through an extensive set of interviews and through a series of focus group encounters within the various stakeholder groupings. Quantitative data were gathered largely through information gleaned from the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD).

Nine specific research reports generated for the first cycle of the Study are presented in detail in a series of annexures accompanying this report¹². These reports record the analysis of the indicator-testing with various stakeholder groups and other sources of data.

The indicator Sets are used as an organising mechanism; i. e. , the evaluation of the draft Impact Indicators and the subsequent discussion of the findings will be done per indicator Set. Reporting and discussion is structured as follows:

- a brief discussion of the purpose of each Impact Indicator Set;
- a discussion on indicative findings emerging from the first cycle of the Study; and
- an evaluation of each draft Impact Indicator within the indicator Set for usefulness for future applications of the research approach proposed in this report, including brief comments on possible improvements.

For ease of reference, the draft Impact Indicators have been numbered from 1 to 23. However, this sequence does not suggest that one indicator is more important than any of the others. In the discussion, some draft Impact Indicators were combined as the responses to the indicators often overlapped with other indicators in the same Set or with indicators in other Sets. In the evaluation of the draft Impact Indicators, the need to reshuffle and/or combine draft Impact Indicators emerged. At the end of the discussion of each indicator Set, general observations in this regard are noted.

Draft Impact Indicator Set 1

The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of South African society

Set 1 of the draft Impact Indicators intended to determine how qualifications could address the education and training needs of the system at a particular time. The indicators identified deal with the number of qualifications, as well as the nature of qualifications and the extent to which qualifications address issues of portability and redress, including the availability of non-traditional qualifications for non-traditional target markets, as key underpinning principles of the NQF. In addition, the relevance of qualifications in terms of the needs of the South African society was tested. Finally, this indicator Set sought to determine the uptake of new qualifications.

The following indicators are included in Set 1:

1. Number of qualifications
2. Nature of qualifications
3. Portability of qualifications
4. Relevance of qualifications
5. Qualifications in non-traditional areas
6. Qualifications that promote redress
7. Uptake of qualifications

Number and Uptake of qualifications (1 and 7)

The NQF has been designed to accommodate various types of qualifications as well as the numerous links between these qualifications, and between qualifications and unit standards. Before the initial findings that relate to this Impact Indicator are presented it is useful to give a brief description of the different types of qualifications on the NQF.

12. See Table 2.2 in Chapter 2 for a listing of these reports. Annexures have not been formally published, but have been included on the CD.

In the first place, the NQF accommodates both qualifications and unit standards:

- A **qualification** is described as “a planned combination of learning outcomes with a defined purpose or purposes, including applied competence and a basis for further learning” (SAQA, 2000b:8). Current regulations stipulate that a qualification may lead to a total of 120 or more credits on the NQF.
- A **unit standard** is described as “registered statements of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria, describing the quality of the expected performance” (SAQA, 2000b:8).

In the second place, qualifications may be unit standards-based or non-unit standards-based, specifying only the exit level outcomes and assessment criteria:

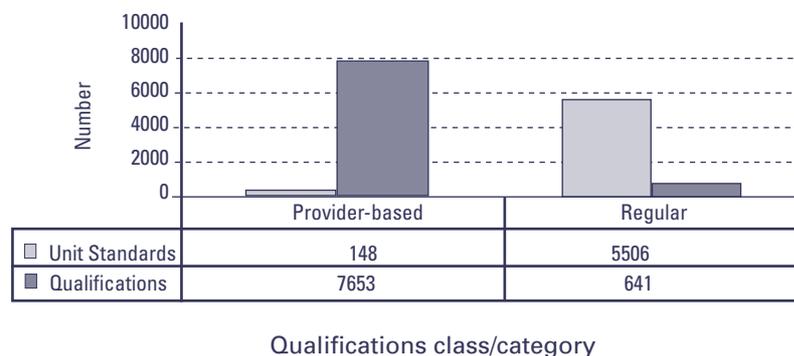
- **Unit standards-based qualifications** are, as the name implies, made up of a specific grouping of unit standards so that specific rules of combination for a qualification are adhered to – this refers mainly to the fundamental, core and elective components of the qualification. These qualifications also have their own sets of outcomes and assessment criteria, but are characterised by the matrix of unit standards that are attached to them.
- **Non-unit standards-based qualifications** specify only the exit level outcomes and assessment criteria and are not made up of distinct unit standards. These qualifications are described by broad exit level outcomes and assessment criteria to ensure that a planned combination of learning outcomes is presented.

Unit standards are always based on specific outcomes and associated assessment criteria.

In the third place, the distinction between qualifications and unit standards that existed prior to the NQF and those that have been developed through the SAQA standards setting processes have resulted in two distinct classes or categories of qualifications:

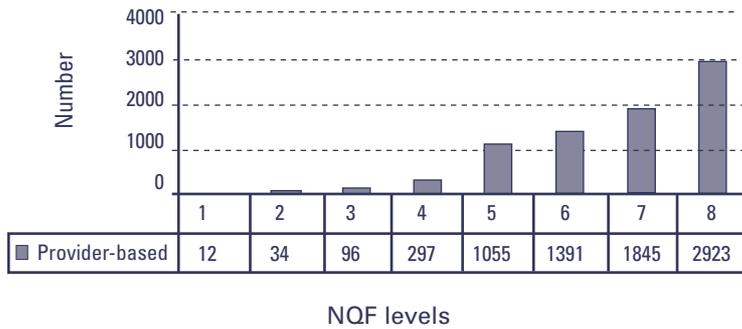
- **Provider-based qualifications and unit standards** are qualifications and unit standards that existed prior to NQF implementation. These qualifications and unit standards were registered by providers between July 2000 and June 2003. This interim process was initiated at the early stage of NQF development mainly in an attempt to accommodate the huge numbers of existing qualifications and unit standards. It was also an attempt to give existing providers the opportunity to gradually align their qualifications and unit standards to the NQF requirements, specifically the outcomes-based format. All those qualifications that were previously intermly registered have been fully registered on the NQF until June 2006.
- **Regular (not provider-based) qualifications and unit standards** are qualifications and unit standards that were developed through the SAQA standards setting processes (Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) and National Standards Bodies (NSBs)).

Based on the explanation above, it is possible to present some indicative findings of the number and nature of qualifications. Graph 4.1 below shows a comparison between the number of qualifications and unit standards according to their class/type. The graph indicates significant movement towards unit standard development. There is a slower movement towards regular qualifications, where the number of provider-based qualifications remains significantly higher than the regular qualifications. It should be noted, however, that provider-based qualifications are represented as separate instances for each provider at which they are offered, while regular qualifications are represented only once.

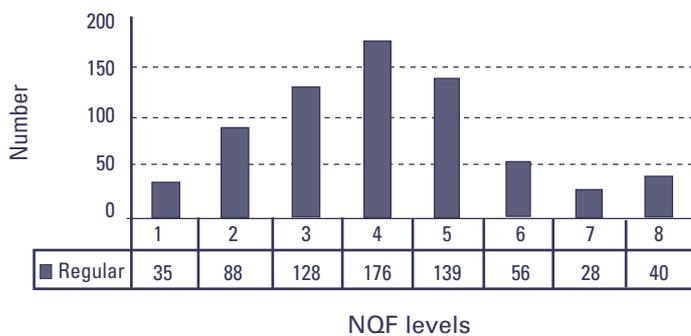


Graph 4.1: Qualifications and unit standards

Graphs 4.2 and 4.3 below present the number of qualifications according to their class and the NQF level. Movement in qualification development away from the higher NQF levels (as reflected in the provider-based qualifications) to NQF levels 4 and 5 (as reflected in the regular qualifications) can be seen. It should again be noted, however, that provider-based qualifications are represented as separate instances for each provider at which they are offered, while regular qualifications are represented only once.

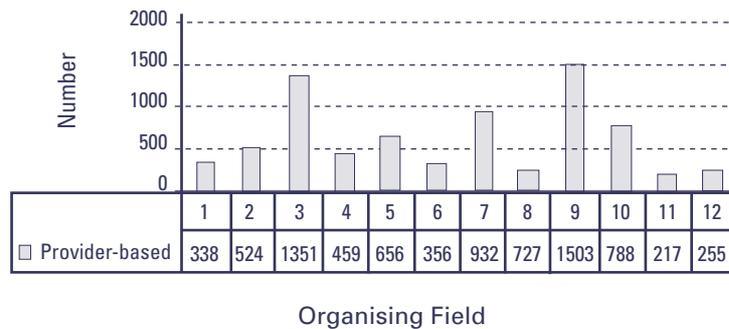


Graph 4.2: Provider-based qualifications and NQF levels

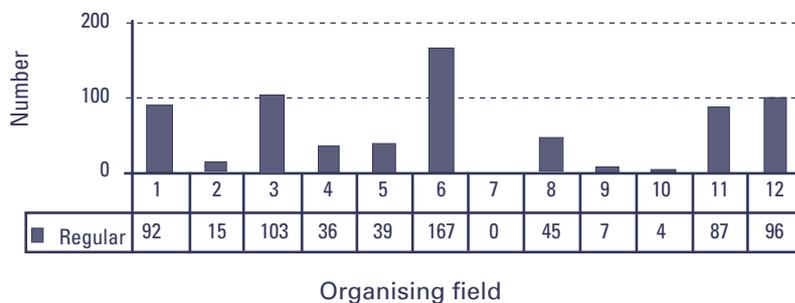


Graph 4.3: Regular qualifications and NQF levels

Graph 4.4 presents the number of qualifications according to their class and the 12 NQF Organising Fields¹³.



Graph 4.4: Provider-based qualifications and Organising Fields



Graph 4.5: Regular qualifications and Organising Fields

The preceding graphs all report on the number of qualifications registered on the NQF but do not address the uptake of qualifications. The Project Team found it extremely difficult to obtain valid and reliable data on the uptake of qualifications. Various attempts were made, including a quarterly evaluation of Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA) data that included 17 ETQAs, but excluded 16 ETQAs. A snapshot of numbers of learners taking up the qualifications offered by the 17 ETQAs shows that a total of 52,666 learners

13. There are 12 NQF Organising Fields (also described in Appendix 3):

- (1) Agriculture and Nature Conservation
- (2) Culture and Arts
- (3) Business, Commerce and Management Studies
- (4) Communication Studies and Language
- (5) Education, Training and Development
- (6) Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology
- (7) Human and Social Studies
- (8) Law, Military Science and Security
- (9) Health Sciences and Social Services
- (10) Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences
- (11) Services
- (12) Physical Planning and Construction.

have been registered in the 17 ETQAs to date. Some 35,000¹⁴ of these are currently in the system, 11,000 pursuing regular qualifications and unit standards, while 24,000 are pursuing provider-based qualifications. This excludes many learners within the Higher Education band and is not representative enough to merit a more detailed analysis.

All data presented in this section are purely indicative, as more substantial data will only be available once representative sampling has taken place.

Nature of qualifications (2)

Comments in relation to the nature of qualifications were tentative and not very extensive. Such comments tended to address issues of 'fitness-for-purpose' and the relative nature of qualifications in terms of status or of practical applicability. Thus, a union view was that, while there is a greater demand for a combination of practical experience and educational theory, what people learn in universities is still different from what is done in the workplace, and there is no link between the two (Annexure 8:5).

Departmental comments suggested that although many unit standards have been developed, the process has been fragmented and not planned thoroughly.

The amount of resources and energy we have put into developing them is not commensurate to the returns we got from the whole exercise (Annexure 7:5).

However, other respondents noted the shift in orientation and focus in new qualifications.

With the whole focus on careers and entrepreneurship [and] job creation, it's about education for a purpose. It's not just education for education's sake. Previously I would say – "I have a BSc. and I'm happy with it" – that's a status, whereas now it's about the qualification fit for a purpose (Annexure 9:33).

Speaking in general terms, one employer queried how effective the NQF could be in effecting change:

...a qualifications framework should never be an answer necessary to all needs. I think we can go hugely wrong because you will get it over-regulated, very fragmented, very detailed, very timeous processes to keep that in place (Annexure 5:6).

Portability of qualifications (3)

Preliminary analysis of the NLRD¹⁵ focused on the Impact Indicators Portability of qualifications, Qualifications that promote redress and Qualifications in non-traditional areas. Some 591 unit standards-based qualifications were identified on the basis of the search procedure; 64 of these were analysed in detail¹⁶. This analysis suggests that the interpretation of portability varied significantly within qualification descriptors (Annexure 4:5). Three broad categories were discerned. These are:

- those qualifications that have seriously attempted to provide details of their portability by specifying precise articulation possibilities and career path options;
- those that make reference to portability in a generic fashion, often just repeating 'marker phrases' from the SAQA Act, without specifying articulation routes; and
- those that seem to misinterpret portability as the flexibility for the learner to enter and exit the qualification process rather than to carry their qualification on to other routes.

Some of the employer interviews indicated concerns with the portability issue, chiefly in relation to educational institutions articulating with workplace learning. A recurring concern among employers was with multiplicity of qualifications and complexity of the system: "We need strong generic standards that can be used for various qualifications" said one employer (Annexure 5:5).

14. Rounded figures.

15. Annexure 4 (Analysis of new qualifications on the NLRD).

16. Portability (26); Redress (22); Non-traditional areas (16).

One provincial Department of Education (DoE) official expressed a commonly reported perception: “I think we are still meeting a lot of challenges with regard to mobility and progression. The principles are well stated but in terms of practice there are problems” (Annexure 7:6). In relation to non-traditional qualifications, evidence was present in departmental interviews of an awareness of positive growth and change, but overall consciousness among respondents of developments in non-traditional areas was low. The exception was in the case of learnerships, which, as a non-traditional approach, gained more support from employers.

Among the learners in the focus groups, the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and Higher Education learners indicated some awareness of new qualifications. However, no great consciousness of pathway opportunities within the NQF was expressed by any of the learner groups – one FET learner stated that “[our] courses do lead to employment but we don’t need these courses anyway, as people without these courses can get the same jobs” (Annexure 6:6). In this, the learner may have been expressing a perception still current but likely to change as the transition period from the old to a new system gains momentum.

Providers, in their interviews, devoted considerable thought to the treatment of portability. Concerns were expressed, not so much about portability between qualifications per se as about the structures to enable portability, the parity of esteem between education and training and the mismatch between institutionally based education (input-based) and workplace training (outcomes-based). The following comments by providers in the course of the interviews illustrate some of these concerns:

NQF does not enable learners to learn and transfer credits because the status of the credits we issue are sent to NLRD. NQF has not facilitated the portability of standards (Annexure 9:6).

The [Sector Education and Training Authorities] SETAs are developing them [qualifications] but there is no articulation with formal learning (Annexure 9:6).

Another provider interviewee commented:

We are stuck because institutions have not demonstrated willingness to recognise this [the equivalence between institutions]. We need to have a credit matrix that is formalised and managed outside the institutions’ autonomy to allow or not. The issue of equivalence of institutions and the power play between the institutions is a disadvantage to the learners. The policies are exclusionary (Annexure 9:6).

There was a high degree of agreement among providers that the qualifications themselves were conducive to portability – “...in terms of the outcomes, both specific outcomes or exit-level outcomes of qualifications, I think there is portability and mobility...” (Annexure 9:6). However, the interpretation of the term “portability” seemed to differ significantly among respondents (a point noted earlier in relation to the NLRD analysis). Most treatment of portability in the provider interviews tended to focus on issues of collaboration and communication between workplace learning sites and educational institutions.

One departmental interviewee summed up the possibilities and excitement that the NQF can provide:

For the first time, we saw a system that was going to allow learners to move from bands and across, vertically and horizontally. That articulation was very important (Annexure 7:6).

Qualifications in non-traditional areas and Qualifications that promote redress (5 and 6)

In terms of promoting redress, two broad criteria were applied to the NLRD data – qualifications that focused on redress for the individual and qualifications that targeted the redress of past social or community-based discrimination.

In practice, it would appear that very few qualifications have consciously taken on this latter goal, concentrating instead on the provision of opportunities for individuals who have been previously excluded. An example of a qualification that has raised the issue of redress is The National Certificate in Coaching Science where it is noted that a qualification is beneficial to society in general (Annexure 4:12).

Using the same research procedures (as described in Annexure 4), 15 of the 591 identified qualifications were analysed for their treatment of redress issues and it was found that all use a fairly standardised formula of words to describe their engagement with the concept of redress – “provide access... for those previously denied ...” (Annexure 4:5). It is noteworthy that all of the qualifications examined for redress are offered at levels 4 or 5 on the NQF.

The redress dimension to the NQF gained no spontaneous recognition among learners, except insofar as it applied to access: thus one ABET learner's comment: "the cost is low and anyone can join regardless of race, gender or creed" (Annexure 6:6). Regarding redress, the point was made in a Department interview that the NQF could only play a small role in this major element of transformation and that perhaps too much hope and expectation had been invested in this Objective. Another Department interviewee noted, nevertheless, that "... the standards that have been set by the NQF, I think as I said, to a very, very large extent, they redress a lot" (Annexure 7:6).

Employers tended to see redress as being addressed largely through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and learnerships. One employer struck a cautionary note, echoing other comments about the unrealistic expectations that can be placed on the NQF:

Yes it gives people access to a qualification. If you think giving people qualifications is redress, then yes – but what does that actually mean? The job hasn't changed, the pay hasn't changed (Annexure 5:6).

A union interviewee supported this sentiment: "the qualifications in themselves cannot do anything about redress" (Annexure 8:7). However, the NPDE (National Professional Diploma in Education) and ABET qualifications were cited by union respondents as examples of qualifications that directly addressed the issue of redress.

The comments of providers in relation to redress ranged from specifying particular qualifications to advocating mechanisms that will enhance redress. A concern was expressed that an unintended outcome of the NQF could be to make redress more difficult, effectively to exclude certain people, if standards and requirements were set that were inappropriate for the target group. All respondents indicated support for the principle of redress but only a few indicated that they had put mechanisms in place to enable redress to occur. One respondent described a situation that echoed the comments of many providers:

The programmes we are offering are promoting redress. We offer short courses and one-year courses. Not all of them are in unit standards. There is some confusion there so not all of them are in place. Where there are unit standards the providers are trying very hard to work towards unit standards (Annexure 9:12).

Relevance of qualifications (4)

Relevance as a concept was, like redress, frequently associated with RPL. Union respondents tended to be sceptical of the relevance of qualifications (Annexure 8:6). They expressed concern about a perceived lack of alignment between NQF and other grading systems:

... the current grade in the industry does not talk to the NQF. Which is the issue – let's come up with appropriate grading results of the industry that link to the NQF (Annexure 8:6).

Employers tended to make positive comments about the relevance of qualifications within the NQF. The two areas most frequently mentioned in this context were the ABET sector and the introduction of learnerships. One employer cited an example from the engineering industry, where traditional apprenticeships already ensured the relevance of qualifications: nevertheless "we have developed a new one under the [SETA]... that is one place where we can say the NQF has worked for us already" (Annexure 5:6).

Most comments received from providers indicated that the respondents believed that qualifications are (or will be and should be) relevant. Reasons given ranged from the usefulness of unit standards in developing learning materials and assessment tools to a focus on skills needs for the workplace (e. g. to become 'facilitators' rather than 'teachers') and the extent to which qualifications enabled learners to have career paths at an early age. The needs of industry were cited as an important benchmark for relevance of qualifications and the employability of learners. Also, respondents indicated that the reconfiguration of qualifications (for interim registration on the NQF) has enhanced relevance.

Yes they are relevant. I like the reformulation into outcome-based education. The unit standards are problematic but also useful if they are properly written as they can be clear and they can be nice instruments with which to write learning material and to write assessments accurately (Annexure 9:7).

Some respondents also noted that their qualifications are market-driven or market-related and therefore could be considered relevant. One respondent noted:

As private providers we concentrate on the courses that are needed so that we are able to have many students. My personal opinion is that industry must dictate what is necessary at the end of the day. You might do something that they do not think is appropriate and find that the students end up not getting a job (Annexure 9:8).

The reservations expressed about relevance were for the most part related to qualifications as prescribed by the old National Education Department (NATED) Core Syllabus. By contrast learnerships and new and non-traditional qualifications were cited as strong examples of relevant qualifications, including qualifications in ancillary nursing, HIV and AIDS, health and welfare, craft design, transport, sports and movement studies.

Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 1

Table 4.1 below presents the draft Impact Indicators organised within the first Set, the sources of evidence, and an evaluation of each draft Impact Indicator for future application of the research when comparisons will become possible through periodic measurements of the same Impact Indicators.

The draft Impact Indicators are listed in the first column, with the primary sources of evidence in the second column (these are all available as annexures). In the third column an evaluation of the 'fitness for purpose' of each draft Impact Indicator is made. The evaluation is based on the evidence presented in this section and includes a short explanation to support the decision.

SET 1

The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of South African society

	Draft Impact Indicator	Sources	Fitness for purpose?
1.	Number of qualifications	NLRD	Yes
2.	Nature of qualifications	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/ Union interviews; Focus groups other Impact Indicators in this Set, standard-setting and qualifications	Yes Responses tended to overlap with with the exception of responses on design; Overlap with Impact Indicator 22: <i>Integrative approach</i> .
3.	Portability of qualifications	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/ Union interviews; Focus groups; Analysis of new qualifications registered on the NLRD	Yes Evidence of differing understandings of the term 'portability'.
4.	Relevance of qualifications	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/ Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes Some overlap with Impact Indicator 5: <i>Qualifications in non-traditional areas</i> .
5.	Qualifications in non-traditional areas	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/ Union interviews; Focus groups; Analysis of new qualifications registered on the NLRD	Yes Almost no response from learners, unions and employers. Useful data from providers and departments. Interpreted broadly to include non-traditional learners and approaches, i.e. learnerships and short learning programmes. This led to some overlap with comments about redress.
6.	Qualifications that promote redress	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups; Analysis of new qualifications registered on the NLRD	Yes Responses tended to overlap with Impact Indicators 8: <i>Admissions practices</i> and 9: <i>Equity of access</i> . Very few comments related to qualifications.
7.	Uptake of qualifications	NLRD	Yes

Table 4.1: Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 1

It emerged that all the draft Impact Indicators identified in this Set are appropriate and fit for purpose. In some cases the responses to a particular Impact Indicator overlapped with other Impact Indicators in this Set (for example, Impact Indicators 4 and 5: *Relevance of qualifications and Qualifications in non-traditional areas* respectively – see above) as well as with Impact Indicator 22: *Integrative approach*, in Set 4.

Also, Impact Indicator 6: *Qualifications that promote redress* overlapped substantially with Impact Indicators 7 and 8 (*Admissions practices* and *Equity of access* respectively). Impact Indicator 6 could possibly be rephrased and combined with Impact Indicators 7 and 8.

Draft Impact Indicator Set 2

The extent to which learning opportunities have improved as a result of the implementation of the NQF

Set 2 of the draft Impact Indicators intended to determine whether learning opportunities have improved. These Impact Indicators therefore dealt with admissions practices, particularly in terms of equity of access to education and training.

Also, linked to improved access is the desired successful throughput of learners; therefore learner support practices were explored, specifically to determine whether such practices are improving as a result of the implementation of the NQF. Finally, successful throughput is often measured by learner achievements. The last Impact Indicator in this Set intended to analyse and interpret the quantitative data related to learner achievements.

Learning opportunities are difficult if not impossible to quantify. A learning opportunity is a function of personal disposition and individual perception as much as systemic provision. Nevertheless, in the international context, qualifications frameworks are inextricably linked to the promotion of lifelong learning and the creation of improved learning opportunities for all. The South African NQF is no exception to this.

The following indicators are included in Set 2:

- 8. Admission practices
- 9. Equity of access
- 10. Learner support practices
- 11. Learner achievements

Admission practices and Equity of access (8 and 9)

Employer and provider respondents emphasised the importance of RPL and improved access for non-traditional learners.

The one big thing that must be 100% in place to help in advancing the people is the RPL access. That is a big issue at this stage. There are good people in industry that are delivering the goods but they do not get recognition... It must happen and it can happen (Annexure 5:8).

Some employer comments identified a role for the NQF in improving learning opportunities – “it is the structure and the requirement of the NQF that helps you put in place the standards for the learning support” (Annexure 5:9).

However, a number of employers noted that learner support practices were not driven by the NQF: they were in existence before:

Nothing much has changed there ... it was like that before (Annexure 5:9).

We developed our own coaching and mentoring training programmes that were launched before we became aware of NQF principles (Annexure 5:9).

From the worker-learner focus group perspective, it was felt that employers did not always provide support to workers, as illustrated by one worker’s comment:

...this company, they don’t care about ourselves, and when you say you are concerned about training...the first question they would ask you is “who is going to do your job?” Now where you are going – you are going nowhere! (Annexure 6:7).

Union interviewees noted that the NQF has contributed to the awareness of multiple access routes to Higher Education. They also noted that RPL was an important mechanism for access improvement but were concerned that it was still very limited and only benefited informed people.

The dominant role that the matriculation certificate¹⁷(matric) has traditionally held was a key reference point for many respondents in addressing admission practices and equity issues. The development of multiple access routes to Higher Education was frequently cited. One union interviewee stated:

NQF debunked the notion of matric access into Higher Education and different pathways. That is brilliant (Annexure 8:8).

The providers noted in some cases that former practices had been updated and improved in the context of the NQF.

There have been a number of changes, especially in the last few years, where we really have moved. We are now offering lectures at night and [are] engaged in in-service training for those without proper matric (Annexure 9:16).

Yes, definitely – you know in the past I just think of how people [were] just turned [away] purely on that matric certificate... “Look”, we [are] saying, “it’s not only the matric certificate.” So we give them additional points [for work experience] if they don’t have a strong matric, it actually boosts them up a little bit to gain entry (Annexure 9:15).

Other provider respondents indicated that their admission practices had not changed significantly, the reasons cited being structural and practical, particularly in terms of funding from the National Department of Education (DoE).

The Matriculation Board does not allow you to register students without a matric certificate. You can go on and take the student but they will not give you money for the student (Annexure 9:15).

We are still in a cloud of confusion and trying to adjust to these changes. We are not there yet. It would be premature to say that it [the NQF] has already contributed (Annexure 9:16).

Learners in two ABET focus groups referred to placement tests which enabled some applicants to enter learning programmes at a higher level than their formal qualifications. The evidence of one ABET learner reveals the empowering nature of this experience:

I have come back to class and have been accepted despite having a Standard Two [Grade Four]. I was given a placement test and am now doing ABET level 4. Despite being out of school for 20 years, I am able to keep pace at work with matriculants... (Annexure 6:7).

The FET focus group noted a frustration with the lack of mechanisms for RPL in achieving access:

We have a problem with doing N3 [technical college qualification] courses because when we approach a university, they tell us that the N3 is not a proper matric and that we cannot be admitted (Annexure 6:7).

One departmental interviewee voiced disappointment with the rate of change in equity of access:

This is where we have done tremendous injustice to the NQF. I think we have not been able to build a facilitative framework that allows people access and gives them a picture of how they are going to travel the journey and progress...we have set a multitude of possibilities but they are not translated and cannot be translated into a picture that will assist our people to access education and training (Annexure 7:7).

17. The matriculation certificate is a school-leaving certificate.

Learner support practices (10)

Most provider respondents indicated that admission practices and learner support systems had been developed since the introduction of the NQF. Greater diversity in student intake into education was noted, which reflected race, gender and nationality issues (Annexure 6:7). A number of providers also indicated that the statutory requirements stipulated by SAQA and other implementing agencies had led to changes in learner support.

Other providers were unclear as to what effect, if any, the NQF had on pre-existing practices, making comments like “not sure whether it is because of the NQF...” and “not linked to NQF – this would have happened in any case” (Annexure 9:17). Similarly, union interviewees identified time-to-study and financial assistance as positive forms of support for learners, but neither could be directly attributed to the NQF.

Learner achievements (11)

In terms of learner achievements, some interesting observations were made by providers, notably by a representative from a school. The thrust of the comment was that standards had fallen or had drifted towards mediocrity with the introduction of Outcomes-based Education (OBE). One of the reasons suggested for this was the incompatibility between an outcomes-based system and the previous input-based system.

There is a marked increase in failure. The standards are not the same and the two systems are incompatible... (Annexure 9:18).

Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 2

Table 4.2 below presents the draft Impact Indicators organised within indicator Set 2, the sources of evidence, and an evaluation of each Impact Indicator for future application of the research when comparisons will become possible through periodic measurements of the same Impact Indicators.

SET 2 The extent to which learning opportunities have improved as a result of the implementation of the NQF

	Draft Impact Indicator	Sources	Fitness for purpose?
8.	Admissions practices	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/ Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes Useful information but substantial overlap with Impact Indicator 9: <i>Equity of access</i> .
9.	Equity of access	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/ Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes RPL featured prominently as a means whereby equity of access could be achieved.
10.	Learner support practices	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/ Union interviews; Focus groups	Useful information received but some doubt expressed as to whether there is a direct and valid link with NQF implementation.
11.	Learner achievements	NLRD	Yes Not much data at this stage. Possibly belongs with Set 1, Impact Indicator 7: <i>Uptake of qualifications</i> .

Table 4.2: Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 2

Three of the draft Impact Indicators (8, 9 and 11) seem to be appropriate and fit for purpose to determine the impact of the NQF on the transformation of education and training. However, Impact Indicators 8 and 9 could possibly be collapsed into one – to deal with improved access. The fourth Impact Indicator, 10: *Learner support practices*, whilst providing useful and interesting responses, could not clearly be linked to the implementation of the NQF. Possibly, this Impact Indicator could be dropped.

Draft Impact Indicator Set 3

The extent to which an outcomes-based approach has been taken up in education and training

The following concepts were explored. First, draft Impact Indicator Set 3 clearly links an outcomes-based approach to education and training as a key underpinning principle of the NQF. Therefore, the nature of learning programmes, in relation to the extent to which an outcomes-based approach has been adopted, had to be explored. Secondly, integral to a particular education and training philosophy is the way in which curricula are designed and learning is assessed. Two Impact Indicators in this Set specifically deal with these aspects. Thirdly, skilled human resources are required for an effective education and training system – therefore, the number of registered assessors and moderators needed to be determined. Finally, quality as a central concept of the NQF finds its expression in the ways in which education and training providers are conscious of and are working towards attaining quality processes that will enhance and support provisioning of education and training. The number of accredited providers provided evidence of the extent to which education and training providers have achieved a common understanding of the concept ‘quality’.

The following indicators are included in Set 3:

12. Nature of learning programmes
13. Assessment practices
14. Curriculum development
15. Number of registered assessors and moderators
16. Number of accredited providers
17. Quality assurance practices

Nature of learning programmes (12)

The outcomes-based approach to education and training is a defining feature of the NQF. It has also been a controversial feature. The South African debate in relation to outcomes reflects the international debate, in which the different traditions of education and training have displayed markedly different responses.

The comments of the Departments of Education and Labour officials at local and national levels were similar in terms of their perception of the uptake of this approach in learning programmes: there was agreement that the outcomes-based model had been overwhelmingly adopted in programmes. However, one Departmental voice demurred: “I do not see it [outcomes-based approach] in Higher Education, I do not see it sufficiently in the workplace” (Annexure 7:8). There was less certainty, also, about the quality of the learning programmes or the depth to which the outcomes-based approach had penetrated practice and methodologies.

Other constituencies of interest also commented occasionally on what they perceived to be the poor quality of programmes: “What other institutions did was take their old programmes and massage them slightly, because there was a lot of money involved in the process... the quality was lower and was to a large extent a reconfiguration of existing courses” (Annexure 8:9). Other evidence related to assessment practices and the strong reliance on assessment in the outcomes-based approach.

Most provider-respondents indicated strong support for an outcomes-based approach to education and training. The support ranged from technical support in the sense that unit standards facilitate the development of learning material and assessment tools to support for the sharper focus on what the outcome of a learning programme should be. While a few respondents indicated that the reformatting of qualifications was the result of the need to comply with the SAQA directives, a number felt that this had enhanced their programmes and teaching. Mention was made of a ‘mind-shift’ among academics towards seeing the advantages of an outcomes-based approach.

There is definitely a shift. People are more aware of the need to plan teaching and learning approaches and assessment strategies. They have become more explicit and it is a starting point. I think we need to do quite a lot of work to ensure that the system is more focused, that the ground rules become clearer (Annexure 9:20).

We are transforming and going into outcomes-based format. But the majority of programmes are still traditional programmes and are not outcomes-based. You know, again it’s difficult, because it depends on how you define “outcomes-based”. We’ve always had the outcomes in our programmes but in general I would say we still have got a traditional approach. But that is changing, as we are changing from traditional programmes (Annexure 9:21).

However, a few respondents equated an outcomes-based approach to a unit standard-based approach, indicating that they did not have unit standards. The implication in this line of thought would appear to be an interpretation that other programmes might not be outcomes-based. At the very least, this would indicate that ambiguities and uncertainties still exist in relation to the meaning of an outcomes-based approach in education and training. Employers tended to affirm that an outcomes-based approach was the norm in their training programmes. Thus, replying to a question as to whether their in-house learning programmes were in outcomes-based format, one employer stated:

Yes, because we have a learning policy that says they have to be. If someone external applies for training, that is one of the requirements. They have to have their learning material transformed into [an outcomes-based format] (Annexure 5:11).

Assessment practices (13)

Many respondents made explicit or implicit connections between outcomes-based approaches and assessment practices. One employer stated:

I think there has been a distinct difference in the way they [trainers] teach. The mind of the trainer had to move from “what I would like to teach” to “what I must first be able to do”. There is a focus on outcome. The fact there are now people called “assessors” has almost professionalised the image, to put it that way. So, yes, that’s made a difference (Annexure 5:13).

The learners in focus groups did not explicitly refer to their experience of an outcomes-based approach, as such. Their comments were all the more real and revealing in that they referred to their lived experience rather than rhetorical or technical constructions. The learners tended to approach the topic from the perspective of the balance between theory and practice in their learning programmes. The ABET learners, for instance, emphasised their pre-existing skills:

I worked for 16 years for a firm. I had skills but could not read or write. Now I am able to do that. By seeing an advert and learning to write a CV, I was able to find a new job and I’m now recognised for my skills (Annexure 6:8).

These learners also confirmed that they were informed about course outcomes to be demonstrated at the beginning of the course and of module outcomes throughout the course. These are conventional characteristics of an outcomes-based approach.

Most provider-respondents indicated a serious engagement with transforming assessment practices. While not all respondents felt that new assessment approaches could be attributed to the introduction of the NQF, most felt that their assessment practices had changed for the better.

At the moment, we are busy writing assessment policies to address the outcomes-based approach...we do not restrict the student by saying you need a semester mark to get entrance into an exam. Everybody should have the opportunity (Annexure 9:22).

Firstly, we do assessment against unit standards; secondly, assessment in relation to outcomes; thirdly, exam-based assessment in conjunction with other forms of assessment (Annexure 9:22).

Yes the NQF has influenced us. Our whole programme has totally changed... we never did peer assessment in the way we are doing it now; we never did group work; we never even had criteria for portfolio work (Annexure 9:22).

Yes, they [assessment practices] are completely in line with the NQF (Annexure 9:22).

Curriculum development (14)

Most provider-respondents commented that their curriculum development was a result of the NQF, initially arising from the need to submit their qualifications for interim registration on the NQF. Subsequently they have found the process useful and influential in terms of their current reconfiguration processes. One interviewee, when asked if the NQF had contributed to an understanding of new curriculum design and its features, replied:

Yes definitely. We would have had very little change. It has rattled cages (Annexure 9:24).

A recurring concern that was raised is the extent to which the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC of the CHE) allows public Higher Education institutions to develop curricula. One provider voiced frustration with the fact that where they try to adapt curricula (or develop an extended curriculum for greater access) the proposals are refused and the programmes are not approved.

An FET respondent felt that colleges were not able to engage with the curriculum-development processes initiated by the National Department of Education. Where there is engagement with other authorities, the colleges have been able to get more involved.

A key area of impact of the NQF was seen by respondents to be teaching and learning practices. Most respondents felt that their teaching and learning practices had improved considerably as a result of the introduction of the NQF (school respondents were an exception to this). Particular points mentioned were the development of a teaching role as 'facilitator' and the use of unit standards as a basis for teaching.

We have changed our presentation of classes and our assessments to try and align ourselves with the unit standards... It has forced us to become more structured (Annexure 9:26).

It is not only the need in terms of content but also the end in terms of the methodology and pedagogy of the programme (Annexure 9:25).

The overall impact was summed up by one provider-respondent:

It's about the outcomes, it's about competency, it's about the end result. Previously the starting point was content driven... a change of paradigm is that the role of the lecturer is more one of facilitation (Annexure 9:26).

Number of registered assessors and moderators and Number of accredited providers (15 and 16)

The importance of skilled human resources for an effective education and training system has been noted. In that context, the development of a strong cohort of skilled and professional assessors and moderators is indicative of the relative strength and vibrancy of the NQF system.

Quality assurance practices (17)

Both DoE and DoL officials commented extensively on quality assurance practices, expressing some concerns, especially in relation to the roles of the quality assurance bodies and the inflexible and complicated quality assurance processes that are associated with the NQF.

...there are serious complaints that we receive as provincial office, Department of Labour, from the people, from different kinds of stakeholders, as to the complexity with regards to them having to submit application forms for accreditation (Annexure 7:9).

I do not understand it [quality assurance] and I have been trying to explain it to people (Annexure 7:9).

Providers also commented extensively on quality assurance. The need for quality assurance was often associated with the need to be accredited (private providers) but in most cases the respondents also felt that their quality processes had enhanced their provisioning. One significant comment related to parity of esteem – quality assurance was seen as a benchmark against which trust in other institutions' systems and processes could be developed.

Employers stressed the importance of compliance with quality assurance requirements:

They want quality assurance arrangements; they want quality management systems in place (Annexure 5:12).

Others noted that in Higher Education, an outcome of the NQF was that it had formalised quality assurance processes that had been informal.

It is a much needed system to have a registered qualification that is quality assured. It is useful for reference and for the security of the student as well. It is useful for providers to ensure that it is at the correct level and that the qualification [is] part of the South African system (Annexure 9:26).

There is a quality cycle process for curriculum development but the quality assurance office is continuously involved in the process (Annexure 9:27).

It is a very transparent way of working. It is also difficult, as you need the involvement of stakeholders who have education at heart, as there are no incentives... This is totally different from the past (Annexure 9:27).

A professional body respondent made the distinction between 'quality as an individual measurement or standard and quality as a collective standard', strongly endorsing the latter concept.

I certainly endorse the notion of quality in a collective sense, meaning the benefit goes to the majority, not the individuals... A collective approach to quality cannot be achieved through qualifications but needs to be supported by the framework (Annexure 8:13).

Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 3

Table 4.3 below presents the draft Impact Indicators organised within indicator Set 3, the sources of evidence, and an evaluation of each Impact Indicator for future application of the research when comparisons will become possible through periodic measurements of the same Impact Indicators.

SET 3 The extent to which an outcomes-based approach has been taken up in education and training

	Draft Impact Indicator	Sources	Fitness for purpose?
12.	Nature of learning programmes	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes Overlap with Impact Indicator 14: <i>Curriculum development</i> , except with providers who clearly distinguished the two.
13.	Assessment practices	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes
14.	Curriculum development	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes Useful information received, but only providers were able to distinguish between <i>Curriculum development</i> and Impact Indicator 12: <i>Nature of learning programmes</i> .
15.	Number of registered assessors and moderators	No reliable data source	Yes
16.	Number of accredited providers	No reliable data source	Yes
17.	Quality assurance practices	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes

Table 4.3: Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 3

In general, most of the draft Impact Indicators in this Set were seen to be appropriate and fit for purpose. However, apart from the provider grouping, no clear distinction was made by the other stakeholder groupings between Impact Indicator 12: Nature of learning programmes and Impact Indicator 14: Curriculum development. These two Impact Indicators could possibly be collapsed. Also, an additional Impact Indicator has been identified – *Teaching and learning practices*¹⁸. In the original Set *Teaching and learning* was seen to be implicit, but in the responses to the draft Impact Indicators in this Set, it gained prominence and could possibly be included in the revised Set.

18. Additional Impact Indicators are discussed in Chapter 5.

Draft Impact Indicator Set 4**The extent to which South African society has accepted lifelong learning**

The purpose of Set 4 was to determine the extent to which the education and training environment has changed towards the achievement of lifelong learning pathways. The nature of the organisational environment, both for people who are employed and for learners in full-time study, was seen to be important. Further, the extent to which the implementation of the NQF contributes to other national strategies such as the Human Resource Development and Skills Development Strategies was explored by Impact Indicators 18 and 23 (*Socio-economic context* and *Socio-cultural context* respectively). Impact Indicator 20: *Career and learning pathing* specifically tried to determine whether the ideal is being put into practice; i.e., whether the implementation of the NQF is contributing to improved career and learning pathways. Finally, the extent to which an *Integrative approach* (Impact Indicator 22), as a central tenet of the NQF, was operationalised was examined.

Respondents commented extensively on the changing meanings of education and training in society at large. The extent to which changes were attributed to the NQF varied but to a greater or lesser extent the NQF was identified as a key shaper of these changes.

Learners, in their focus groups, were asked to comment on one general question: whether their current education would equip them to play an active role in addressing socio-economic and cultural development issues in South Africa. One ABET group provided a range of answers that are reflected here:

Yes – I watch the news and read the newspapers. (Annexure 6:9).

The future is big where I'm working. I saw an ad for 300 artisans in New Zealand (Annexure 6:9).

They said at work they are impressed with a Standard Two worker like myself (Annexure 6:9).

We need to be proud as a South African (Annexure 6:9).

University learners noted that “education is developing our socio-economic development” and “those who are working and studying towards chemistry will lift our economic status and our currency can be higher if South African industry employs people from within the country” (Annexure 6:9).

The following indicators are included in Set 4:

- 18. Organisational environment
- 19. Socio-economic context
- 20. National strategies
- 21. Career and learning pathing
- 21. Integrative approach
- 23. Socio-cultural context

Organisational environment (18)

The term ‘organisational environment’ was variously understood by respondents. The impact of an awareness of lifelong learning was vividly described by one employer, who stated:

You must understand that the NQF brought a whole new philosophy and focus in learning. I am sure there was always lifelong learning but it was not tangible, visible and manageable... We are trying to have learning systems that almost reflect the picture of “from sweeper to engineer”. The practical working environment is also integrated with lifelong learning (Annexure 5:14).

Another employer acknowledged the changed perceptions towards learning but wasn't sure how much of the change was the result of the NQF:

I'm not saying it's because of the NQF, when I started here we never had a development plan ... in the past we never had that (Annexure 5:14).

Union respondents also identified significant developments in organisational culture. Comments suggest a move towards a greater focus on the training of employees, specifically in larger companies.

It has been easier considering that in the past most companies and government departments were reluctant to provide training. And the NQF has played an important role in creating these training opportunities for the people (Annexure 8:11).

One union respondent also noted that the NQF had made a significant impact on Higher Education:

The NQF has shaken HE [Higher Education] institutions and encourages a focus on skills development (Annexure 8:11).

Among providers, the organisational impact was poorly understood. However, some specific observations were made:

We [are] looking at restructuring our training department at the moment... in order to continue operating as trainers (Annexure 9:29).

The NQF has done a lot for our organisational environment, as we have had to reconsider the positioning of our institution and programmes (Annexure 9:29).

Socio-economic context and Socio-cultural context (19 and 23)

The potential role of lifelong learning in society was noted by a number of respondents. For instance, one union respondent commented that

I think another thing for an ordinary person that is not involved with SAQA and its sub-structures, one may see the difference and be able to say – “No, I’m attending classes in the afternoon. I’m attending classes on Saturdays” – which was not there [in the past]’ (Annexure 8:11).

Employers supported this view in a more general sense:

Yes there is now more access to learning, with a consistent approach to learning. The principles of the NQF, if applied appropriately, will change the socio-economic face of the country (Annexure 5:15).

I believe that better trained employees leads to “job ownership” and pride of accomplishments, and that this will impact directly on our productivity levels (Annexure 5:15).

A frequent response was to the early stage of development of the NQF and, for this reason, any impact on socio-economic matters could not be verified. An employer noted that “it’s too early to make an assessment but the strategy has certainly not created jobs”. Other employers commented in similar terms:

It will eventually, but it is a long change process (Annexure 5:15).

A departmental commentator was critical of the rate of progress:

What we have been able to do is push standards and learnerships and extended public work programmes. All these provide quick fixes to meagre salaries. There is no sustainability, no progression and no growth. In that regard we failed big time, we have betrayed the masses of the people. We have had five years to implement it but all we are getting is an increase in the number of the young being unemployed and destitute... Something is not right (Annexure 7:10).

Among providers, the socio-economic context was almost always understood to mean employment possibilities or employability. Again, many respondents noted that the NQF was only one of a number of influences in this field.

One of the things we are doing is educating more people, bringing more people into jobs... I always tell our business, when we fight about this, “remember, this is your social responsibility as well” (Annexure 9:30).

Some providers felt that the NQF is making a contribution to a changed socio-cultural environment, specifically where indigenous knowledge is valued and integrated into learning programmes.

The NQF will contribute to transformation of indigenous knowledge systems where there is a lot to learn and integrate into systems (Annexure 9:33).

You come across a lot of the outcomes that sort of look at multi-cultural, multi-lingual... I think it's starting to work itself into curricula (Annexure 9:33).

Other providers, however, were dubious about the relationship, if any, between the NQF and culture:

It has a lot more to do with the [Human Resource Development] HRD Strategy or Skills Development Strategy than [with] the NQF directly (Annexure 9:33).

No, not really – cultural issues are difficult to deal with. Unit standards do not accommodate cultural differences (Annexure 9:33).

Culture is not about the NQF. It is just culture (Annexure 9:33).

Among employers, the importance of the cultural dimension was recognised, but as with other stakeholder respondents, the interpretation of culture varied greatly and the precise role of the NQF in cultural matters was unclear to many.

It has the potential to [develop the socio-cultural environment]... you can't claim that by implementing NQF you have had an important [impact] on socio-culture: it's one of the things that have the potential to... (Annexure 5:17)

I see now there is a culture of studying [here]... definitely there is a whole change in the learning culture. In the past you hardly have heard of anybody studying after hours... (Annexure 5:17)

Departmental comments noted that a cultural dimension was actually central to the conceptualisation of the NQF but that too much attention had been given to economic development at the expense of socio-cultural development.

I believe that the establishment of the NQF was a fundamental mechanism to ensure that the learning of people was recognised on an equal footing... The establishment of this tool and this mechanism brought about a lot of hope and excitement for people (Annexure 7:12).

National strategies (20)

The role of the NQF in the transformation of South African society is generally seen as a potentially vital one, but as only one of a number of other national strategies. However, some concerns were expressed about legislative incoherence, and the complexity of the various requirements. The common response of many interviewees was to locate the NQF in terms of the other initiatives and once again to emphasise the long-term nature of the process. Employers, for instance, made the following comments in relation to the NQF and other national strategies:

Too soon to comment – I would hope so (Annexure 5:15).

Yes, the NQF is closely aligned to the other strategies and informs the regulations and implementation of these strategies (Annexure 5:15).

The key areas of the NSDS are very similar, e.g. lifelong learning. The NQF is not contradictory to the NSDS and HRD. The NQF is used as a medium (Annexure 5:15).

Among providers, some respondents gave examples of consciously trying to link education and training with other national strategies. Others cited in-house processes for the purpose of internal compliance with the Skills Development, Employment Equity and HRD strategies. Learnerships were frequently cited as contributing to the NSDS.

People are beginning to make linkages between education and training and job creation. I do think the NQF has contributed to this (Annexure 9:30).

Our academic plan makes a specific statement about contributing to the HRD of the country in terms of the priority and the professional development of our graduates and also the workforce development of adult learners (Annexure 9:30).

We adhere to everything; even with the HRD strategy we have to submit profiles and everything... (Annexure 9:30).

I would not say consciously, but I think implicitly we do and it is there already because we look at the National Skills Development Strategy and we look at those skills that have been identified and we design programmes that will meet those needs (Annexure 9:30).

Most commentators were aware of the links between NQF and other skills development strategies and there was a wide recognition of the potential for complementary progress.

Career and learning pathing (21)

There was a general recognition of the contribution that the NQF could make towards clearly defining progression routes within careers. In some cases it was seen as enhancing previous practice and provision.

A number of employers commented that again it was too early to say what effect, if any, the NQF has had on career pathways:

To some extent career pathing has always existed. Learning pathing has been more clearly defined as a result of the NQF (Annexure 5:16).

Providers tended to highlight the market-relatedness of qualifications to enhance learner prospects for employment. Most were optimistic about their learners' career and learning pathways. It was noted that ordinary learners are now more aware of their pathway options and the various exit points.

ABET is a way of getting learners into some sort of career path (Annexure 9:32).

The objective of the training of young people is for them to have a career path...a career path is not just training and training... (Annexure 9:32)

Integrative approach (22)

An integrative approach to education and training is central to the conception of the NQF. However, interviewees frequently had difficulties understanding the questions that were put in relation to this dimension. Some interpretations focused on partnerships and relationships between institutions; some on the integration of theory and practice, and some rejected the idea of an integrated approach itself. (The placement of this indicator in a Set relating to lifelong learning may also have caused confusion).

Providers gave mixed responses to this topic. Some were concerned with institutional responses and some with the working of the theory into practice.

I think some of the old public universities will have a difficult time adjusting to this. It is interesting that they find the whole SAQA/NQF thing extremely threatening to their autonomy (Annexure 9:33).

Maybe NQF is losing its original vision... We have moved far away from the vision. Maybe the conceptualisation of NQF was idealistic (Annexure 9:33).

SAQA, DoE and DoL are not engaging sufficiently on what to do about this. There is a major difference between vocational and academic training (Annexure 9:33).

Respondents from both DoE and DoL showed a strong awareness that the NQF had attempted to integrate approaches of education and training. However, they generally noted that there was very little evidence of the successful achievement of this aim.

Whereas people are aware of the principles, they are not putting [them] into practice (Annexure 7:11).

The major vision of the NQF was to link education and training. These two are inseparable because you can't have theorists that cannot apply their knowledge and vice versa... I think we just need to balance the two, balancing is critical (Annexure 7:11).

Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 4

Table 4.4 below presents the draft Impact Indicators organised within Set 4, the sources of evidence, and an evaluation of each Impact Indicator for future application of the research when comparisons will become possible through periodic measurements of the same Impact Indicators.

SET 4

The extent to which South African society has accepted lifelong learning

	Draft Impact Indicator	Sources	Fitness for purpose?
18.	Organisational environment	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes Overlap with Impact Indicator 19: <i>Socio-economic context</i> , particularly from the employer grouping.
19.	Socio-economic context	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes Overlap with Impact Indicator 18: <i>Organisational environment</i> .
20.	National strategies	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes Many respondents felt it was too early to comment.
21.	Career and learning pathing	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes
22.	Integrative approach	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes This Impact Indicator may fit better in Set 1: <i>The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of the South African society</i> .
23.	Socio-cultural context	Provider/Departmental/ Employer/Union interviews; Focus groups	Yes Strong overlap with Impact Indicator 19: <i>Socio-economic context</i> , except for provider comments.

Table 4.4: Summary of draft Impact Indicator Set 4

As before, most of the draft Impact Indicators seemed to be appropriate and fit for purpose. There was strong overlap between Impact Indicators 18, 19 and 22. These indicators could possibly be collapsed into one. Impact Indicator 22: Integrative approach seems to fit better in Impact Indicator Set 1: *The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of the South African society*.

Summary of tentative levels of impact for selective draft Impact Indicators

In future applications of the research design, the NQF Impact Study will provide a comprehensive summary of the type of impact that has been achieved per Impact Indicator. As the central aim of the first cycle of the Study was to develop Impact Indicators and pilot the research design, all findings were of an indicative nature. Given this, the following table provides a summary of the tentative levels of impact for selected indicators according to evidence from the indicative findings.

It is suggested that the types of impact recorded below encompass the following range:

<i>High positive impact</i>	The research evidence shows a marked change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF.
<i>Moderate positive impact</i>	The research evidence is mixed and/or may be contradictory but shows some change across the education and training system that is, on balance, positive.
<i>No impact</i>	The research evidence shows that no impact has been made.
<i>Negative impact</i>	The research evidence is mixed and/or may be contradictory but is, on balance, negative.

A further statement that is unrelated to the range of impact above would be *inconclusive*, where the evidence is not sufficient to show any conclusive form of impact. Table 4.5 demonstrates the range of impact described above, using selected draft Impact Indicators as examples.

The levels of impact suggested above are only *tentative*. They have not been tested and will only be interrogated during the second cycle of the NQF Impact Study: *Establishing a baseline against which to measure progress*. The tentative levels may possibly be simplified to include only a 'yes' or 'no' statement, but are nonetheless presented here in an attempt to present the current indicative findings in a more summarised format.

To emphasise that the levels of impact presented below are based on *indicative findings*, the table does not contain all 23 draft Impact Indicators, but only a sample.

	Draft Impact Indicator	Range of impact	Evidence in Annexures (refer to list below ¹⁹)
3.	<i>Portability of qualifications</i>	<i>High positive impact</i> Concerns raised are outside the NQF domain and relate to institutions and disparity of esteem. Evidence suggests that the majority of the respondents agreed that portability of qualifications had improved, and that as a result there is a marked change across the education and training system.	(Annexure 5:5) (Annexure 6:6) (Annexure 7:5) (Annexure 9:5)
4.	<i>Relevance of qualifications</i>	<i>High positive impact</i> Although concerns were raised about the relevance of NATED qualifications, the majority of the evidence related to this Impact Indicator was positive and suggest a marked systemic change.	(Annexure 5:6) (Annexure 8:6) (Annexure 9:7)

19. Annexures are listed below to improve the readability of Table 4.5.

1. Instruments for piloting of draft Impact Indicators
2. External literature review
3. Analysis of contextualisation interviews
4. Analysis of new qualifications on the NLRD
5. Analysis of employer interviews
6. Analysis of focus group interviews
7. Analysis of departmental interviews
8. Analysis of union interviews
9. Analysis of provider interviews

References to annexures are abbreviated as follows: (Annexure 1:17), where 1 refers to Annexure 1, and 17 to page 17, etc.

	Draft Impact Indicator	Range of impact	Evidence in Annexures (refer to list ¹⁹ pg 56)
6.	<i>Qualifications that promote redress</i>	<i>Moderate positive impact</i> Concerns raised as to whether qualifications in themselves can promote redress were counterbalanced by examples of programmes that do offer redress. Although it was not possible to see a marked change across the system, the change, in balance, is seen as positive.	(Annexure 4:10) (Annexure 5:6) (Annexure 7:6) (Annexure 9:12)
8.	<i>Admissions practices</i>	<i>No impact²⁰</i> RPL was raised as a critical issue but is related to equity of access and not admissions practices. The Study did not identify any significant positive evidence of impact for this indicator.	(Annexure 5:8) (Annexure 6:9) (Annexure 8:8) (Annexure 9:15)
11.	<i>Learner achievements</i>	<i>Inconclusive</i> Evidence was too minimal to state impact.	Minimal evidence
12.	<i>Nature of learning programmes</i>	<i>High positive impact</i> Evidence of strong support in practice and mindset. There was agreement that the NQF had impacted positively on learner achievements and that a definite 'mind-shift' had occurred. Evidence based on the indicator suggested a marked shift across the education and training system.	(Annexure 5:11) (Annexure 7:18) (Annexure 8:9) (Annexure 9:20)

Table 4.5: Summary of tentative levels of impact for sample of draft Impact Indicators

Summary of indicative findings

It cannot be emphasised enough that the purpose of the first cycle of the Study was to develop, pilot and evaluate Impact Indicators and the research design. It was never intended that the Study should provide reliable findings and conclusions on the current status of NQF implementation achievements. All evidence obtained in the course of this Study is merely *indicative*. It should also be noted that, in relation to many aspects of NQF implementation, stakeholders feel that it is 'too soon to say' what the impact of the NQF has been.

With this strong caveat, indicative findings and comments are presented below.

- Movement in qualification development towards NQF levels four and five is notable.
- Portability of qualifications remains a significant issue to be addressed. Employers were concerned about the multiplicity of qualifications and complexity of the system. Providers thought that the qualifications themselves were conducive to portability. The biggest barriers to portability were the continuing divide between education and training and the continued existence of pre-NQF structures.
- Qualifications themselves can do little about redress. The most significant factor in redress is RPL, for which there is huge support. Data on RPL uptake is available; numbers are small but growing. Employers were positive about the relevance of NQF qualifications, especially ABET and learnerships. Providers were very positive about relevance, citing the usefulness of unit standards in developing learning and assessment tools and the focus on the skills needs of industry.

20. It was difficult to describe the range of impact of this indicator as it overlaps with other indicators, e.g. with respect to RPL which features in other indicators as well. The lack of data further contributed to the difficulty of making any form of unambiguous identification. This may point towards the removal of this Impact Indicator in future cycles of the Study.

- Admissions practices and learner support systems have been developing since the introduction of the NQF, although there are differing views on the extent to which there is a link with the NQF.
- There is little learner achievement data available. There are many learners currently in the system who have not yet completed their qualifications. This indicative finding supports the common perception amongst stakeholders that it may be too soon to measure the impact of the NQF.
- Most providers indicated strong support for outcomes-based approaches. While there were some examples of involuntary compliance, others felt that outcomes-based approaches had enhanced teaching and learning. Others equated outcomes-based approaches with a unit standards-based approach, indicating continuing uncertainty about the meaning of outcomes-based approaches. Some school respondents believed outcomes-based approaches were having a negative effect on achievement in schools.
- There is evidence of significant socio-cultural impact on the way people and organisations think and talk about and act upon lifelong learning.

Support for the NQF, therefore, remains strong, especially among employers and providers. It is not yet clear what the learner experience is or what learner views are, as many are still operating within the old system. There is evidence of many positive achievements beyond those identified in Chapter 3. Many new qualifications and associated developments, such as learnerships, are seen positively. There has been a beneficial impact on teaching, learning and assessment practices.

Two issues remain central. One is the question of integration. On the one hand, continuing disparity of esteem is seen as a barrier to portability and access. On the other hand, there is a feeling among some stakeholders that the imposition of inappropriate approaches is having a negative impact. Two further comments are offered here. First, the aspiration that the esteem in which qualifications are held should be unrelated to perceptions about the providing institution is now seen as unrealistic in most countries. The attainment of parity of esteem will therefore require measures to strengthen parts of the education and training infrastructure. Second, rightly or wrongly, the Consultative Document proposals are seen by many stakeholders as endangering the likelihood of attaining the level of integration necessary to address issues of portability and access.

The second issue is the widespread belief that RPL is completely central to the goals of redress and access. While there were some encouraging examples of good practice, in the view of most respondents progress is too slow.

Some other general findings may be worth noting. Many respondents made little or no distinction between the NQF and SAQA. This could be taken as evidence of SAQA's effectiveness and of stakeholder identification with SAQA. On the other hand, it might be construed as a sign that SAQA has too dominant a role in NQF construction.

There were clear warning signs about a build up of frustrations about the NQF. These were of two types. One, mainly on the part of providers, was about blockages in the system. The second, from employers as well as providers, was a strong concern about continuing systemic change. There was a sense, from many of the interviews, of stakeholders who had had nearly enough and who, if faced with any more system changes, might lose patience altogether.

Overall, the indicative findings both support and extend the findings of the Study contextualisation. The NQF has been successful in developing a strong base of policies and systems. It has had a profound effect on the way people think about education and training and on their aspirations for the future. It has become a tool for the identification of development needs and a grid for managing interventions. From the first cycle of the Study, there is also indicative evidence of positive responses to the new qualifications and reports of a beneficial impact on learning, teaching and assessment practices.

However, there are still many important issues to be addressed. Confusion over the meaning of an 'integrated approach' is still a significant problem. Stakeholders want to see NQF architecture and systems resolved quickly but in a way which holds true to the ideals of an integrated framework. The continuing education-training divide is a significant barrier to portability. Making more rapid progress in implementing RPL is a very high priority for stakeholders.

CHAPTER 5: FIRST CYCLE SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter 2 of this report set out the methodology for the first cycle of the Study. Chapter 3 presented the outcomes of a process of contextualisation of the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study. Chapter 4 presented both the indicative findings of the current status of NQF implementation and an evaluation of the fitness for purpose of each draft Impact Indicator.

This concluding chapter draws in particular on Chapter 4, in order to

- make proposals on rationalisation of Impact Indicators and recategorisation of Sets;
- offer some comments on the conduct of future studies; and
- summarise and discuss the implications of the indicative findings.

The effectiveness of the draft Impact Indicators

Chapter 4 contained a summary of the evidence generated by each draft Impact Indicator and an evaluation of their fitness for purpose, in terms of whether they generated useful information on the impact of the NQF.

This analysis revealed many examples of overlap across indicators. It is, of course, impossible (and undesirable) to compartmentalise discussion of complex issues. Respondents will always want to make links between different aspects of NQF implementation. However, it was clear that some Impact Indicators were so closely linked that it would make sense to combine them in future.

In the case of a few indicators, respondents found it difficult to make comments or did not believe that there was much of a causal link with the NQF. There were also important comments that respondents wanted to make that did not fit clearly into any indicator.

The following conclusions were drawn from the piloting of the draft Impact Indicators:

- a) Impact Indicator 2, *Nature of qualifications*, overlapped with other indicators, especially Impact Indicator 22, *Integrative approaches*. Some comments were received under Impact Indicator 2 on qualifications design and unit standards. A new Impact Indicator, *Effectiveness of qualifications design*, should be introduced. *Nature of qualifications* can now be omitted as the aim of this Impact Indicator is covered by a range of other indicators and is replaced by *Integrative approaches*.
- b) Impact Indicators 4 and 5, *Relevance of qualifications* and *Qualifications in non-traditional areas*, should be combined. Relevance is a broad concept that includes non-traditional qualifications. The new Impact Indicator should be called *Relevance of qualifications*, but its definition should include a reference to non-traditional qualifications.
- c) Impact Indicators 7 and 11, *Uptake of qualifications and Learner achievements*, should be linked as a single Impact Indicator. This would facilitate presentation of data on completion rates. The new Impact Indicator should be called *Qualifications uptake and achievement*.
- d) Impact Indicators 8 and 9, *Admissions practices* and *Equity of access*, should be combined. In the context of this Study, the former is largely a means to the latter.
- e) While Impact Indicator 6, *Qualifications that promote redress*, also overlapped with 8 and 9, it is proposed that this Impact Indicator remain freestanding, because of its significance as a social issue. It was found that qualifications themselves had little potential to impact on redress; other factors at the learner-provider interface were more significant. The Impact Indicator should be renamed *Redress Practices*.
- f) Impact Indicator 10, *Learner support practices*, was felt to be insufficiently linked to NQF implementation. It should be removed as a discrete indicator, but the definition of *Organisational, economic and societal benefits* should include learner support practices.

- g) Impact Indicators 12 and 14, *Nature of learning programmes* and *Curriculum development*, should be combined (and called *Nature of learning programmes*). Only providers were able to comment on the latter. The new combined indicator should have scope for comment on curriculum development.
- h) Impact Indicators 18, 19 and 23, *Organisational environment, socio-economic context, and socio-cultural context*, tended to draw similar responses. All three could be combined. The name of the proposed new Impact Indicator would be *Organisational, economic and societal benefits*.
- i) It is considered that Impact Indicator 20, *National strategies*, should be renamed *Contributions to national strategies* in the interests of clarity.

In the light of the findings of the first cycle of the Study, there are two obvious omissions from the list of Impact Indicators. First, no indicator dealt with design of qualifications and unit standards. This should be included in future.

Second, there was no indicator on the quality of learning and teaching, but there may be good reason to include it next time. Many respondents wanted to talk about teaching and learning issues. Also, given that the third NQF Objective is to *enhance the quality of education and training*, it would perhaps seem strange to omit it. On the other hand, it could be argued that NQF implementation impacts on the quality of learning and teaching quite indirectly and the more important influences are: calibre of staff recruited, quality of teacher training and continuing professional development, and quality of resources. On balance, though, it is preferable to include such an indicator and test it in the next cycle.

It is proposed, therefore, that the revised Set of Impact Indicators should comprise:

1. Number of qualifications
2. Effectiveness of qualifications design
3. Portability of qualifications
4. Relevance of qualifications
5. Qualifications uptake and achievement
6. Integrative approach
7. Equity of access
8. Redress practices
9. Nature of learning programmes
10. Quality of learning and teaching
11. Assessment practices
12. Career and learning pathing
13. Number of registered assessors and moderators
14. Number of accredited providers
15. Quality assurance practices
16. Organisational, economic and societal benefits
17. Contribution to other national strategies

The diagram below presents the sequential development of the Impact Indicators during the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study.



Diagram 5.1: Sequential development of Impact Indicators

Description of the revised Impact Indicators

In anticipation of the second cycle of the NQF Impact Study: *Establishing a baseline against which to measure progress*, a more detailed description of each of the Impact Indicators is given below.

Impact Indicator	Description	
Set 1: The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of learners and the South African society		
1.	Number of qualifications	The number of NQF-registered qualifications
2.	Effectiveness of qualifications design	The contribution that qualifications design makes to ease of access, mobility and progression of learners
3.	Portability of qualifications	The extent to which qualifications facilitate the mobility of learners horizontally, diagonally and vertically
4.	Relevance of qualifications	The relevance of qualifications in relation to the needs of workplace, industry and society at large, including 'non-traditional' qualifications (qualifications offered in new and emerging fields of learning)
5.	Qualifications uptake and achievement	The extent to which NQF-registered qualifications are offered and the attainment of such qualifications by learners
6.	Integrative approach	The extent to which qualifications promote an integrative approach to education and training and the nature of such qualifications
Set 2: The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes addresses the education and training needs of learners and the South African society		
7.	Equity of access	The ease of entry and access of traditional and non-traditional learners to education and training, including admission requirements and the Recognition of Prior Learning
8.	Redress practices	The extent to which redress practices, including the Recognition of Prior Learning, facilitate the award of credits and/or access of learners to learning programmes
9.	Nature of learning programmes	The expansion of learning opportunities and the impacts of learning programmes, including an outcomes-based approach, to curriculum development and learning and teaching
10.	Quality of learning and teaching	The extent to which learning and teaching practices are responsive to the needs of learners through improved teaching practices
11.	Assessment practices	The fairness, validity, reliability and practicability of the assessment of learning
12.	Career and learning pathing	The extent to which learning programmes support and enhance career and learning pathing
Set 3: The extent to which quality assurance arrangements enhance the effectiveness of education and training		
13.	Number of registered assessors and moderators	The number of skilled assessors and moderators required to support an effective education and training system
14.	Number of accredited providers	The number of education and training providers who meet the quality requirements of the system
15.	Quality assurance practices	The extent to which quality assurance practices enhance the quality of learning, teaching and assessment
Set 4: The extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture		
16.	Organisational, economic and societal benefits	The extent to which learner-centredness is embedded in organisational, economic and social environments in order to build a lifelong learning culture that empowers individuals and communities
17.	Contribution to other national strategies	The extent to which the implementation of the NQF supports and contributes to the achievement of national strategies such as the Human Resource Development, National Skills Development Strategy and Tirisano

Table 5.1: Description of the revised Impact Indicators

Revised Sets of Impact Indicators

The Impact Indicators were initially grouped into four Sets. The aim of this grouping was to link associated Impact Indicators, so as to make it easier to conduct interviews and collate and analyse data more effectively. In general, this was a useful approach, although two Impact Indicators, *Integrative approaches* and *Career and learning pathing*, were thought with hindsight to have been wrongly placed.

It is proposed that for the next cycle of the Impact Study the following sets should be used:

- Set 1: The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of learners and the South African society
- Set 2: The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes addresses the education and training needs of learners and the South African society
- Set 3: The extent to which quality assurance arrangements enhance the effectiveness of education and training
- Set 4: The extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture

The rationale for this approach is as follows. There are three key aspects of NQF construction that impact on access/mobility/progression; quality of education, and training, redress, and personal development. These are

- the development of qualifications;
- the development and implementation of learning programmes; and
- quality assurance arrangements.

It makes sense to differentiate the impact of qualifications development, learning programmes, and quality assurance because they are generally the responsibility of different agencies and organisations. These are also distinctions with which respondents can identify. Sets 1, 2 and 3 implicitly drew these distinctions; it is proposed that they become explicit. The key differences are that the definition of Set 2 is broadened to encompass all impacts of learning programmes, not just the expansion of learning opportunities and, similarly, that Set 3 covers all impacts of quality assurance arrangements and not just the contribution of quality assurance to outcomes-based approaches. Also, the association of outcomes-based approaches with the Set 3 Impact Indicators alone was found to be too narrow. Qualifications design and the delivery of learning programmes are also a reflection of outcomes-based approaches.

The fourth Set distinguishes – and therefore, highlights – questions associated with the wider long-term impact of the NQF. This is intended to ensure that the measurement of impact is not limited to the immediate and pressing issues of implementation but that it adopts a wider view.

This reflects a subtle but significant change in the proposed role of Sets in relation to Impact Indicators. They were originally devised to assist in making the research more manageable. The recategorisation now reflects a more coherent grouping of Impact Indicators, clearer distinctions between Sets, and a more straightforward alignment with NQF Objectives. Diagram 5.2 below illustrates this change²¹.

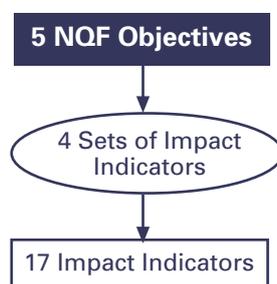


Diagram 5.2: Development in the research design

21. Diagram 5.2 can be compared with Diagram 2.1 in Chapter 2 where the Impact Indicator Sets were only used as an organising mechanism.

The allocation of Impact Indicators to Sets would be as follows:

	Impact Indicators	Sets of Indicators	
1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	Number of qualifications Effectiveness of qualifications design Portability of qualifications Relevance of qualifications Qualifications uptake and achievements Integrative approach	<i>The extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture</i>	
7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12.	Equity of access Redress practices Nature of learning programmes Quality of learning and teaching Assessment practices Career and learning pathing		
13. 14. 15.	Number of registered assessors and moderators Number of accredited providers Quality assurance practices		
16. 17.	Organisational, economic and societal benefits Contribution to other national strategies		
			<i>The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes addresses the education and training needs of learners and the South African society</i>
			<i>The extent to which quality assurance arrangements enhance the effectiveness of education and training</i>
		<i>The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of learners and the South African society</i>	

Table 5.2: Allocation of Impact Indicators to Sets

Each of the Impact Indicators is directly linked to one or more NQF Objectives (see Appendix 6). The relative frequency of Impact Indicators aligned with NQF Objectives is broken down as follows:

- NQF Objective 1:5 Impact Indicators
- NQF Objective 2:9 Impact Indicators
- NQF Objective 3:8 Impact Indicators
- NQF Objective 4:3 Impact Indicators
- NQF Objective 5:5 Impact Indicators

The relationship between NQF Objectives and the Sets of Impact Indicators would be as follows:

	NQF Objective	Main Impact Indicator Sets relating to Objective
1.	Create an integrated national framework for learning achievements	Set 1 ...qualifications address the education and training needs... Set 3 ... quality assurance arrangements enhance the effectiveness of education and training ...
2.	Facilitate access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths	Set 1 ...qualifications address the education and training needs... Set 2 ...learning programmes address education and training needs
3.	Enhance the quality of education and training	Set 1 ...qualifications address the education and training needs... Set 2 ...learning programmes address education and training needs Set 3 ... quality assurance arrangements enhance the effectiveness of education and training ...
4.	Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities	Set 2 ...learning programmes address education and training needs Set 4 ... wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture...
5.	Contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large	Set 1 ...qualifications address the education and training needs... Set 2 ...learning programmes address education and training needs Set 4 ... wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture...

Table 5.3: Relationship between NQF Objectives and Sets of Impact Indicators

The rationale for the relationships set out in the above table is as follows:

NQF Objective 1 is about the development of the framework itself; other Objectives express goals to which the framework is expected to contribute. Creating the integrated framework involves standards setting/qualifications design, including the integrative approach, and development and implementation of quality assurance systems. These functions correspond with Sets 1 and 3.

The essential contributions to facilitating access, mobility and progression (NQF Objective 2) are made by qualifications design and learning programmes (Sets 1 and 2). Quality assurance arrangements can impact on access and other elements, but this will happen more peripherally. The main relationship, therefore, is with Sets 1 and 2.

The quality of education and training (NQF Objective 3) is influenced by qualifications design, learning programmes, and quality assurance arrangements. There is a relationship therefore with Sets 1, 2 and 3.

NQF Objective 4 is concerned with redress. As noted above, qualifications (and by extension, quality assurance) have little potential impact on redress. The design and delivery of learning programmes (Set 2), however, have a strong link with redress. It is also essential to draw evidence from the wider social, economic and political context (Set 4).

NQF Objective 5 is about the personal development of learners, to which qualifications design (Set 1) and learning programmes (Set 2) have a strong potential contribution. It is also about social and economic development, which is addressed by Set 4.

Findings of Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study

The purpose of the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study was to:

Establish the criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF.

This included the:

- development of Impact Indicators (Chapters 2 and 5);
- description of the context within which the impact of the NQF is being measured (Chapter 3);
- piloting of the research design and Impact Indicators (Chapter 4); and
- production of the current report (*Report 1: Establishing the criteria against which to measure progress of the NQF*).

Even though the purpose of the Study never included the gathering of data, an attempt was made to present at least some of the indicative findings that presented themselves during the piloting of the Impact Indicators and the research design. A list of these indicative findings was presented at the end of Chapter 4. It cannot be stressed enough that these findings are only indicative. It would be erroneous to read anything more into these findings as random samples of stakeholders were chosen, with the intention of piloting the Impact Indicators and not to establish any form of baseline data.

The findings related to Cycle 1 of the Study are presented below:

1. Impact Indicators should continue to form the nucleus of the research design. Common understanding of the *definition of an Impact Indicator* will have to be maintained.
2. The 23 draft Impact Indicators have been sufficiently piloted and refined to present 17 revised *Impact Indicators* that can be used over time to measure the impact of the NQF. Minor adjustments to the Impact Indicators may be necessary during each application. The revised Sets of Impact Indicators should play a more prominent role during these measurements.
3. The links between Set 4 (*The extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture*) of the revised Impact Indicators and Impact Indicators 16 (*Organisational, economic and societal benefits*) and 17 (*Contribution to other national strategies*) will have to be made more explicit.
4. The main point of reference for the Impact Indicators, as well as for the Study in general, must remain the five *NQF Objectives*. These links must be maintained and strengthened in the following cycles of the Study.
5. The *research design*, based on the Impact Indicators and three common components, namely contextualisation, data gathering and the presentation of findings and recommendations in a report format, has been sufficiently piloted to be duplicated with minor improvements in following cycles.
6. The continued importance of *contextualisation* must not be underestimated. A wider selection of references, and less reliance on the Study Team Report and Consultative Document, will improve future contextualisation.
7. The *role of SAQA* forms an important part of the contextualisation of the Study, but can be broadened to include the roles of other key stakeholders.

8. The primary aim of the first cycle of the Study was to pilot the draft Impact Indicators themselves rather than the research instruments. The *specification and piloting of research instruments* is, therefore, a priority for the next cycle of the Study.
9. The *interview schedules* used in the first cycle of the Study worked effectively and could be used as the basis for interview specifications for the next cycle.
10. The attempt to analyse data on new qualifications design from the *National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)* was not entirely successful. This should be investigated further to ensure that useful data can be gathered timeously. The role of Critical Cross-Field Outcomes (CCFOs) in qualifications should also be investigated in more detail.
11. The use of quantitative methods such as self-administered questionnaires did not form part of the first cycle of the Study, as it was considered that piloting of Impact Indicators was best achieved by interviews and focus groups where there was an opportunity to explain and clarify concepts. The baseline study (Cycle 2) should incorporate the use of *questionnaire surveys as well as interviews and quantitative data from the NLRD and other sources*. The design of questionnaires will pose challenges in terms of clarity and comprehensibility. Therefore, the piloting of such questionnaires should be an early priority for the next cycle of the NQF Impact Study.
12. Consideration should be given to the *length of intervals between studies*. The original research design suggested two-year intervals. On reflection, these intervals may be too short. There may be insufficient change over such a short period to merit the expense of a study. The following intervals have been proposed: Cycle 2 in 2004, Cycle 3 in 2006, Cycle 4 in 2010, Cycle 5 in 2014, etc.
13. The Study will also have to consider the methodological implications of *measuring impact over time*. On the one hand, comparisons are most easily achieved by repeated use of the same Impact Indicators and research instruments. This would argue for constancy of Impact Indicators and this should be the general principle. On the other hand, new issues and factors may emerge and it will be important to ensure that the Impact Study retains relevance.
14. *Representative sampling* must form part of subsequent cycles of the Impact Study. Although the findings of Cycle 1 were always intended to be indicative, it was difficult to avoid using individual opinions and remain true to the collective voice during the analysis of responses from interviews and focus groups.
15. Inclusion of a wide range of *stakeholders*, such as providers, employers, learners, unions and government departments (mainly the Department of Education (DoE) and the Department of Labour (DoL), must be maintained and broadened to include more small-, medium- and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and professional bodies.
16. The allocation of *levels of impact* to each Impact Indicator (Table 4.6) is a first step towards reporting the impact of the NQF, but will need to be refined during the baseline study (Cycle 2).
17. Although the first cycle of the Study was conducted by SAQA, the research design allows for an external agency to conduct subsequent cycles. Even so, it is suggested that Cycle 2 (*Establishing a baseline against which to measure progress*) remain within the SAQA ambit with minimum outsourcing. On the other hand, outsourcing of further cycles (Cycles 3, 4, and so forth.) of the Study may improve acceptance of the research results in the wider stakeholder community.
18. The *relationship between SAQA and the NQF* is important. The extent to which the NQF Impact Study relates to SAQA must form an integral part of future cycles of the Study. A concerted effort must be made to distinguish between the impact of the NQF and the impact of SAQA even though SAQA is the main steering agency of the NQF.

19. Although *NQF architecture and processes* remain an important part of the contextualisation of future cycles of the Study, it is important that the Study is not drawn into a debate that at the time of measurement may be in the public domain, but that will offer very limited researchable evidence. Implicit in the research design and the Impact Indicators is an attempt to provide *a profile of the current condition, the stability or change, the functioning, and/or the effect of the NQF on the transformation of education and training in South Africa* to provide policy makers with a broader understanding of factors influencing the implementation of the NQF. In summary, the NQF Impact Study should avoid becoming involved in current debates on NQF architecture; rather the Study should report on the impact of the NQF.

Conclusions

The research methodology proved generally effective. A process of contextualisation was undertaken, drawing on available sources of external evidence. This resulted in the analysis presented in Chapter 3. Twenty-three Impact Indicators, based on the five NQF Objectives were piloted and supported by a process of consultation with stakeholders. The fitness for purpose of these Impact Indicators was tested through a piloting process based on gathering of quantitative data from existing sources, such as the NLRD, and a series of interviews and focus groups of stakeholders. The rationale for the development of the Impact Indicators and other aspects of research design was presented in Chapter 2.

The purpose of the first cycle of the NQF Impact Study was to *establish criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF* through the piloting of the draft Impact Indicators. An evaluation of the fitness for purpose of each of the Impact Indicators was made. It was found that most Impact Indicators generated useful information that could inform an evaluation of the impact of the NQF. These findings were set out in Chapter 4. The analysis of the fitness for purpose of the draft Impact Indicators enabled the development of proposals for rationalising the number of Impact Indicators and organising them into more coherent Sets. Other suggestions on the conducting of subsequent cycles of the Study were made.

As was stated at the outset of this Report, it is not possible to make definitive statements about the impact of the NQF without valid and reliable baseline and comparative data. The attempt at the end of Chapter 4 to present impact evaluations related to a selection of Impact Indicators points towards a much more comprehensive and detailed reporting mechanism that will be followed in future cycles of the Study.

The development of a system of longitudinal evaluation for a National Qualifications Framework is a highly complex task that has not been attempted anywhere else in the world. The completion of this first cycle of the Study represents the achievement of an important first step towards the development of such a system.

REFERENCES

1. Allais, S. (2003). The NQF in South Africa: a democratic project trapped in a neo-liberal paradigm? *Journal of Education and Work*, 16:3, pp. 305-324.
2. African National Congress. (1994a). *Policy Framework for Education and Training*. Johannesburg: Education Department of the African National Congress.
3. African National Congress. (1994b). *Implementation plan for education and training*. Johannesburg: Education Department of the African National Congress.
4. Bottani, N. & Tuijnman, A.C. (1994). The design of indicator systems. In: Tuijnman, A.C. and Postlethwaite, T.N. (Eds.). *Monitoring the standards of education*. Oxford: Pergamon, pp. 47-77.
5. Bottani, N. & Wahlberg, H.J. (1994). International educational indicators. In: T. Husen and T.N. Postlethwaite (Eds.). *The International Encyclopedia of Education*. Oxford: Pergamon, pp. 2894-2989.
6. Christie, P. (1997). The National Qualifications Framework: history and identity. In: *Reconstruction, development and the National Qualifications Framework. Papers presented at a conference held at the Elijah Barayi Memorial Training Centre, Yeoville, Johannesburg, 15-16 August 1997*. Johannesburg: CEPD and EPU University of the Witwatersrand, pp.87-92.
7. Council on Higher Education. (2003). Report on an interdependent qualification framework system. Report prepared by Michael Young (Institute of Education, University of London) for the CHE, September 2003.
8. European Union. (2002). Commentary on the Report of the Study Team on the implementation of the NQF. Addendum to EU mid-term review of SAQA. Internal SAQA document.
9. Greenstein, R. (1997). Introduction: the National Qualifications Framework and the policy process. In: *The National Qualifications Framework: critical reflections*. Johannesburg: Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand.
10. Human Sciences Research Council. (1981). *The HSRC Investigation into Education* (De Lange Commission). Pretoria: HSRC.
11. Human Sciences Research Council. (1995). *Ways of seeing the NQF*. Pretoria: HSRC.
12. Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Education and Training. (1996). *The proceedings of the conference on the National Qualifications Framework* held at the Technikon South Africa Conference Centre, Johannesburg, 22-24 April 1996. Pretoria: HSRC.
13. Isaacs, S. (1998). SAQA and the implementation of the NQF. In: *Reconstruction, development and the National Qualifications Framework. Papers presented at a conference held at the Elijah Barayi Memorial Training Centre, Yeoville, Johannesburg, 15-16 August 1997*. Johannesburg: CEPD and EPU University of the Witwatersrand, pp.19-26.
14. Isaacs, S. & Nkomo, M. (2003). South Africa's National Qualifications Framework: reflections in the seventh year. In: G. Donn, & T. Davies, *Promises and problems for Commonwealth Qualifications Frameworks*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.
15. Kraak, A. & Young, M. (Eds.). (2002). *Education in retrospect*. Pretoria: HSRC.
16. Lugg, R. (1997). The NQF, reconstruction and development. In: *Globalisation, Adult Education and Training*. London: Zed Books.
17. McGrath, S. (1996). Learning to work? Changing discourses on education and training in South Africa, 1976-96. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

18. McGrath, S. (1997). Education and training in transition: analysing the NQF. In: P. Kallaway, G. Kruss, A. Fataar, & G. Dom (Eds.). *Education after apartheid: South African education in transition*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, pp. 169-181.
19. Ministerial Committee for Development Work on the NQF. (1996). *Lifelong learning through a national qualifications framework: discussion document*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
20. National Business Initiative. (2003). *The NQF Support Link – Towards the development of an NQF instructional programme for FET colleges* (Draft document).
21. National Curriculum Development Committee. (1996). *NQF Working Document*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
22. National Research Foundation. (1999). *Key readings on SAQA and NSBs. Research on curriculum restructuring in Higher Education in South Africa*. Report of a research project commissioned by the NRF, Pretoria, October 1999.
23. National Training Board. (1994). *Discussion document on a National Training Strategy Initiative – A preliminary report by the NTB*. Pretoria: National Training Board.
24. Nuttall, D.L. (1994). Choosing indicators. In: OECD, *Making education count*. Paris: OECD, pp.79-96.
25. Pityana, M. (1996). The growth of the National Qualifications Framework. In: *Proceedings from the conference on the National Qualifications Framework*. Pretoria: Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Education and Training, pp.7-15.
26. South Africa. (1981). *Manpower Training Act*. No. 56 of 1981. Pretoria: Government Printer.
27. South Africa. (1995). *South Africa Qualifications Authority Act* No. 58 of 1995. Pretoria: Government Printer.
28. South Africa. (1996a). *National Education Policy Act* No. 27 of 1996. Pretoria: Government Printer.
29. South Africa. (1996b). *Mine Health and Safety Act* No. 29 of 1996. Pretoria: Government Printer.
30. South Africa. (1997). *Higher Education Act* No. 101 of 1997. Pretoria: Government Printer.
31. South Africa. (1998). *Further Education and Training Act*. No. 98 of 1998. Pretoria: Government Printer.
32. South Africa. (2000). *Adult Basic Education and Training Act*. No. 52 of 2000. Pretoria: Government Printer.
33. South Africa. (2001). *General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act* of. 58 of 2001. Pretoria: Government Printer.
34. South Africa. Department of Education. (1995). *White Paper on Education and Training: A Policy Framework*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
35. South Africa. Department of Education. (1996a). *Lifelong Learning through a NQF: Discussion document*. Pretoria: The Department.
36. South Africa. Department of Education. (1996b). *Lifelong Learning through a NQF: Comments received from stakeholders*. Pretoria: The Department.
37. South Africa. Department of Education and Department of Labour. (2002). *Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework*. Pretoria: The Departments.
38. South Africa. Department of Education and Department of Labour. (2003). *An Interdependent National Qualifications Framework System: Consultative Document*. Pretoria: The Departments.

39. South Africa. Department of Labour. (1996). *A New Integrated Human Resources Development Strategy for South Africa*. Input for the Green Paper to the National Training Board. Pretoria: The Department.
40. South African Qualifications Authority. (2000a). *The National Qualifications Framework: An Overview*. Pretoria: SAQA.
41. South African Qualifications Authority. (2000b). *The National Qualifications Framework and Standards Setting*. Pretoria: SAQA.
42. South African Qualifications Authority. (2002a). A Study of the Impact of the NQF – Concept Document. Internal SAQA document.
43. South African Qualifications Authority. (2002b). SAQA response to the NQF Review. Unpublished document submitted to the Departments of Education and Labour, 5 July 2002.
44. South African Qualifications Authority. (2003a). Response by the NQF Impact Study Working Group to An Interdependent NQF System. Internal SAQA document.
45. South African Qualifications Authority. (2003b). SAQA response to the consultative document. Unpublished document submitted to the Departments of Education and Labour, 31 October 2003.
46. South African Qualifications Authority. (2003c). Inter-NSB response to the consultative document. Internal SAQA document.
47. Young, M. (2003). National Qualifications Frameworks as a global phenomenon: a comparative perspective. *Journal of Education and Work*, 16:3, pp. 223-237.

APPENDIX 1: STRUCTURE OF THE NQF

NQF level	Band	Qualification Type	Learning Provider
8	Higher Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further Research Degree • Doctorate • Master's Degree • Professional Qualification • National First Degree (360 credits) • Higher Diploma • National Diploma (240 credits) • National Certificate (120 credits) 	Registered institutions (including universities, technikons, and colleges) accredited as Public or Private Higher Education and Training Providers in terms of the Higher Education Act (1997) and the Education and Training Quality Assurance Body Regulations (1998)
7			
6			
5			
Further Education and Training Certificate			
4	Further Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Certificate (120 credits) 	Registered institutions (including schools) accredited as Public or Private Further Education and Training Providers in terms of the Further Education and Training Act (1998) and the Education and Training Quality Assurance Body Regulations (1998)
3			
2			
General Education and Training Certificate			
1	General Education and Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Certificate (120 credits) 	Registered institutions (including schools) accredited as Public or Private General Education and Training Providers in terms of the Further Education and Training Act (1998) and the Education and Training Quality Assurance Body Regulations (1998)

APPENDIX 2: A CHRONOLOGY OF NQF STRUCTURES, OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS AND LEGISLATION

Introduction

The following is a chronological list of structures and official publications (mainly from SAQA) that are directly related to the development and implementation of the NQF²². The list does not include other numerous NQF-related structures, publications, discussion documents, policies and legislation.

1 April 1995 – 31 March 1997

- SAQA Act promulgated on 28 September 1995.
- SAQA Executive Officer assumed duties on 1 March 1997

1 April 1997 – 31 March 1998

- SAQA Director: Framework Development, Deputy Director and Assistant Director appointed by 1 January 1998
- SAQA Director: Framework Implementation, two Deputy Directors, 11 Assistant Directors appointed by 1 January 1998
- SAQA Deputy Director: Sub-directorate: Communication and Secretarial Services appointed by 1 January 1998
- National Standards Body (NSB) regulations promulgated 28 March 1998
- Draft Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA) Regulations submitted for public comment
- SAQA website established

1 April 1998 – 31 March 1999

- Twelve NSBs legally established
- NSB sub-committee established 9 December 1998
- Four Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) registered
- ETQA Regulations promulgated on 8 September 1998
- Unit standards for Pharmacist Assistant and qualifications and unit standards for Carpentry, Bricklaying, Tyre Manufacture gazetted in March 1999
- Unit standards for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) gazetted in June 1999
- NSB manual developed
- *Criteria and guidelines for ETQAs* published for public comment
- Agreement reached on procedures, roles and responsibilities of the contracting agencies and SAQA for the preliminary accreditation of private higher education institutions

1 April 1999 – 31 March 2000

- Twelve NSBs are fully operational
- A total of 30 SGBs registered
- Two ETQAs accredited
- National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) launched on 1 December 1999
- Three-year term of office of first Authority members ends on 31 May 1999 but extended to 30 November 1999
- Second Authority appointed from 1 December 1999.
- Decisions taken on 102 of 119 private higher education institutions applying for accreditation, with 71 of these granted preliminary accreditation
- *Guidelines and procedures for SGB funding* published (February 2000)

1 April 2000 – 31 March 2001

- *The National Qualifications Framework and Quality Assurance* published (May 2000)
- *The National Qualifications Framework and Curriculum Development* published (May 2000)
- *The National Qualifications Framework and Standards Setting* published (July 2000)
- Development of *Level Descriptors for the NQF Discussion Document* for public comment (11 October 2000)
- *The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) Discussion Document* for Public Comment (6 December 2000)

²² The information is extracted mainly from SAQA Annual Reports and Bulletins, which are available at www.saqqa.org.za

- A total of 65 SGBs registered
- A total of 12 ETQAs accredited
- Processed 1,502, accredited 111, and conditionally accredited 502 applications for accreditation of higher education programmes
- Accredited 327 of 361 institutions that applied for accreditation for higher education learning programmes
- Processed 4,540 applications for recognition of foreign qualifications and issued 3,000 Certificates of Evaluation
- A total of 39 new qualifications registered
- A total of 655 unit standards registered
- 5,324 interim registered qualifications recorded on the NLRD in outcomes-based format
- 138 717 learner records, 7,506 qualifications and 594 unit standards have been stored on the NLRD system
- Data relating to 3,053 short courses captured

1 April 2001 – 31 March 2002

- *Criteria and Guidelines for the Assessment of NQF-Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications* published (October 2001)
- *Criteria and Guidelines for ETQAs* published (October 2001)
- *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers* published (October 2001)
- *Quality Management Systems for ETQAs* published (October 2001)
- *Quality Management Systems for Education and Training Providers* published (October 2001)
- *Criteria and Guidelines for the Registration of Assessors* published (October 2001)
- *Draft Policy Document: Towards the Development of Level Descriptors for the NQF* published (3 December 2001)
- *FETC Policy document* published (2001)
- *General Education and Training Certificate (GETC)* published (2001)
- A forum for SAQA and accredited ETQAs established
- Southern Regional Office of SAQA established
- Piloted procedures for monitoring and auditing ETQAs
- Processed 4,755 applications for recognition of foreign qualifications and issued 3,200 Certificates of Evaluation
- One social sector ETQAs under evaluation
- 25 economic sector ETQAs accredited
- Two professional bodies (statutory) accredited, one under evaluation
- Three professional bodies (non-statutory) accredited, one under evaluation
- One education and training sub-system sector ETQAs accredited (this is the CHE/HEQC; the GENFETQA Council had not yet been appointed)
- SAQA reports that a number of other organisations including statutory and non-statutory professional bodies have applied for ETQA status and their applications are being processed
- By February 2002, SAQA had registered 106 SGBs and others were in process of formation
- 600 000 learner records have been transferred to NLRD from the HSRC Register of Graduates
- A total of 7,203 qualifications registered, including 6,808 interimly registered
- A total of 2,120 unit standards are registered
- SGBs are being assisted in becoming on-line users of the NLRD
- A total of 6,144 short courses have been recorded

1 April 2002 – 31 March 2003

- *Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the NQF* published (DoE & DoL, April 2002)
- *The Recognition of Prior Learning in the Context of the South African National Qualifications Framework* published (September 2002)
- *An Interdependent National Qualifications Framework System: Consultative Document* published (DoE & DoL, July 2003)

APPENDIX 3: NATIONAL STANDARDS BODIES, STANDARDS GENERATING BODIES AND EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALITY ASSURANCE BODIES

In the NQF all learning is organised into 12 Organising Fields. SAQA has established 12 National Standards Bodies (NSBs), one for each organising field.

- NSB 01: Agriculture and Nature Conservation
- NSB 02: Culture and Arts
- NSB 03: Business, Commerce and Management Studies
- NSB 04: Communication Studies and Language
- NSB 05: Education, Training and Development
- NSB 06: Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology
- NSB 07: Human and Social Studies
- NSB 08: Law, Military Science and Security
- NSB 09: Health Science and Social Services
- NSB 10: Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences
- NSB 11: Services
- NSB 12: Physical Planning and Construction

The functions of NSBs include:

- defining and recommending to SAQA the boundaries of the field and, within this, a framework of sub-fields;
- recognising or establishing Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) within the framework of sub-fields, and ensuring that the work of the SGBs meets SAQA requirements;
- recommending the registration of qualifications and standards to SAQA;
- overseeing the update and review of qualifications and standards;
- liaising with Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs); and
- defining requirements and mechanisms for the moderation of standards and qualifications.

NSBs do not generate standards or qualifications but rather oversee these activities at the sub-field level. The functions of SGBs include the following:

- generating standards and qualifications in accordance with the Authority requirements in identified sub-fields and levels;
- updating and reviewing standards;
- recommending standards and qualifications to NSBs; and
- recommending criteria for the registration of assessors and moderators or moderating bodies.

An ETQA may be established in a social sector, in an economic sector or in an education and training sub-system sector. The functions of ETQAs include:

- accrediting providers;
- promoting quality amongst constituent providers;
- monitoring provision;
- evaluating assessment and facilitating moderation among constituent providers;
- registering assessors;
- certifying learners;
- co-operating with relevant moderating bodies;
- recommending new standards or qualifications to NSBs or modifications to existing standards and qualifications;
- maintaining a database; and
- submitting reports to SAQA.

ETQAs assure the quality of delivery and assessment of registered standards and qualifications. In seeking accreditation from ETQAs, providers have to fulfil the following criteria:

- be registered as a provider in terms of applicable legislation;
- have a quality management system;
- be able to develop, deliver and evaluate learning programmes which culminate in specified NQF qualifications or standards;
- have the necessary financial, administrative and physical resources;
- have policies for staff selection, appraisal and development; for learner entry, guidance and support systems; for the management of off-site practical or work-site components; for the management of assessment;
- have necessary reporting procedures; and
- have the ability to achieve the desired outcomes using available resources and procedures.

APPENDIX 4: PROJECT TEAM, WORKING GROUP AND ADVISORY GROUP

The NQF Impact Study Project Team

Gary Granville (Ireland - Project Leader)

Gary Granville is Professor of Education and Head of the Education Faculty in the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. He is a member of the Higher Education Authority and of many national committees in the field of education and training. He was formerly (1985 – 1996) Assistant Chief Executive of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). His recent research activities have included national evaluation studies of aspects of vocational education and training for the Department of Education and Science, for the National Council for Vocational Awards (now FETAC) and for the National Tourism Certification Board (NTCB). He also has extensive experience in working on European Union (EU) projects and research networks, most recently as a member of the European COST research network on *Transferability, Mobility and Flexibility as Targets of Vocational Education and Training* (1997 – 2002). He acted as EU External Consultant with SAQA (2001). He has published extensively on issues of curriculum, vocational education and training, and education policy.

Ronel Heyns (SAQA)

Ronel Heyns is the head of the Research Unit of SAQA and is based in Pretoria. She is a teacher by profession, with 15 years teaching experience. During that time she taught primary and high school learners, as well as adult learners. She also developed courseware and tutor manuals and prior to her joining SAQA in November 2002, was the head of the academic department of the Technical College of South Africa (Technisa). Since joining SAQA, she has been involved and responsible for the research and development of policy documents for this organisation, including the most recent publications: *The Criteria and Guidelines for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning* (2004) and *The Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes* (2004). She has also published work on quality assurance, including co-authoring a chapter in *Quality in the Classroom* (Heineman). In addition, she teaches, on a part time basis at the University of Pretoria, specialising in assessment and quality assurance. Her MEd dealt with finding sustainable mechanisms for the implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in South Africa. She is currently completing her PhD at the University of Pretoria, focusing on assessment of learning.

Ron Tuck (Scotland)

Ron Tuck has been working in the field of education and training qualifications for 29 years. Following a period as a technical college teacher, he joined the Inspectorate in Scotland where he was responsible for professional advice to the Minister of Education on vocational education and training. He was involved in the development in Scotland of the world's first outcomes-based modular qualifications system. As HM Chief Inspector of Schools he led the process of policy development and implementation to integrate vocational and school qualifications with the introduction of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, which created a single qualifications framework, and also included higher education. As Chief Executive of the Scottish Qualifications Authority from 1997 to 2000, he led the implementation of the integrated school and vocational qualifications system. He was a member of the Ministerial Study Team that conducted a review of the NQF in South Africa. He is currently involved in supporting NQF developments in Botswana and Turkey.

James Keevy (SAQA)

James Keevy has been based in Pretoria at the SAQA Head Office since 2002 and is the Assistant Director: Research. He has been responsible for the research and development of the Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA) guidelines to support small-, medium- and micro enterprise (SMME) development: *Equitable Accreditation for SMME Providers of Education and Training* (2004) and the bi-annual publication of the *SAQA Bulletin* (a journal published by SAQA to encourage the academic community to contribute to the development of the NQF-discourse). Prior to this he taught high school learners, lectured in Physics at the South African College for Teacher Education and was responsible for managing in-service education and training at UNISA. He has been involved with a UNESCO initiative to develop south-to-south collaboration in education and training between SADC countries (2003-2004). James has a Masters Degree in Education and is currently completing his DEd at UNISA, which investigates the way in which power is exercised in the South African NQF-discourse.

Seamus Needham (SAQA)

Seamus Needham is based at the Southern Regional Office in Cape Town and is a Regional Coordinator: Research and Planning. Prior to this he worked for the National Access Consortium Western Cape and co-produced a research report *Towards a Centre for Extended Learning – A feasibility study on public institutions readiness to engage in workplace learning at a regional level*, which was published by Creda Press in 2003. He has been involved in adult education and training since 1993 and has extensive experience of service learning and workplace learning within a South African context.

The NQF Impact Study Working Group

Dr Loffie Naude (SAQA –Standards Setting & Development)

Geeva Pillay (SAQA –Quality Assurance & Development)

Vimala Ariyan (SAQA –Quality Assurance & Development)

Yvonne Shapiro (SAQA – NLRD)

Ntsiki Gumbe (SAQA – Strategic Support)

Xolani Nkosi (SAQA – Strategic Support - Research)

Tshidi Nokaneng (SAQA – Strategic Support - Research)

The NQF Impact Study Advisory Group

Samuel BA Isaacs (SAQA – Executive Officer)

Anne Oberholzer (SAQA – Deputy Executive Officer)

David Adler (SAQA Member)

Ken Mockler (SAQA Member)

Ken Hall (SAQA Member)

Shirley Steenekamp (SAQA Member)

Rahmat Omar (SAQA Member)

APPENDIX 5: STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATION FOR THE FIRST CYCLE OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY

Description		Number of individuals				TOTALS
		Context focus groups	Context interviews	Piloting interviews	Piloting focus groups (learners)	
Providers of education and training	Public	9	1	12 ²³	26	48
	Private	16	3	6	9	34
Employers		-	-	9	8	18
Unions		-	-	4	10	14
Government departments	Education	1	1	5	-	7
	Labour	-	1	4	-	5
ETQAs		2	2	-	-	4
Professional bodies		-	-	1	-	1
Other		4 ²⁴	14 ²⁵	1 ²⁶	-	19
TOTALS		32	22	43	53	150

The 82 individuals from providers that were involved in the first cycle of the Study represent the following bands:

- Higher Education and Training (22%)
- Further Education and Training (43%)
- General Education and Training (35%)

The 53 learners that were involved represent the following bands:

- Higher Education and Training (19%)
- Further Education and Training (38%)
- General Education and Training (43%)

Total provincial representation was as follows:

- Gauteng (46%)
- Western Cape (27%)
- Limpopo (7%)
- Eastern Cape (20%)

23. Including three schools.

24. South African Universities Vice-Chancellor Association (SAUVCA) (2), South African Council for Educators (SACE) (1), National Access Consortium Western Cape (NACWC) (1).

25. Member of Inter-Ministerial Working Group (IMWG) (1), Current SAQA members (2), SAQA staff (11).

26. Independent Examination Board (IEB) (1).

APPENDIX 6: LINKS BETWEEN THE NQF OBJECTIVES AND THE IMPACT INDICATORS

Twenty-three draft Impact Indicators (before piloting)

NQF Objectives	Linked Impact Indicators
Create an integrated national framework for learning achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portability of qualifications Qualifications that promote redress Number and nature of learning programmes Curriculum development National strategies Career and learning pathing Integrative approach
Facilitate access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of qualifications Nature of qualifications Portability of qualifications Relevance of qualifications Qualifications in non-traditional areas Qualifications that promote redress Admission practices Equity of access Learner support practices Assessment practices Organisational environment Socio-economic context National strategies Career and learning pathing Integrative approach
Enhance the quality of education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and nature of qualifications Portability of qualifications Relevance of qualifications Qualifications in non-traditional areas Qualifications that promote redress Uptake of qualifications Learner support practices Number and nature of learning programmes Assessment practices Curriculum development Number of registered assessors and moderators Number of accredited providers Quality assurance practices Organisational environment Socio-economic context Integrative approach

NQF Objectives	Linked Impact Indicators
Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and career paths	Portability of qualifications Qualifications in non-traditional areas Qualifications that promote redress Uptake of qualifications Admission practices Equity of access Learner support practices Assessment practices Organisational environment Socio-economic context National strategies Career and learning pathing
Contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large	Integrative approach Socio-cultural context Relevance of qualifications Qualifications in non-traditional areas Qualifications that promote redress Uptake of qualifications Admission practices Equity of access Learner support practices Learner achievements Assessment practices Quality assurance practices Organisational environment Socio-economic context National strategies Career and learning pathing Integrative approach Socio-cultural context

Seventeen revised Impact Indicators (after piloting)

NQF Objectives	Linked Impact Indicators
Create an integrated national framework for learning achievements	Effectiveness of qualification design Portability of qualifications Relevance of qualifications Integrative approach Quality assurance practices
Facilitate access to and mobility and progression within education, training and career paths	Number of qualifications Portability of qualifications Relevance of qualifications Qualifications uptake and achievements Equity of access Redress practices Quality of learning and teaching Career and learning pathing Assessment practices
Enhance the quality of education and training	Number of qualifications Effectiveness of qualification design Portability of qualifications Relevance of qualifications Nature of learning programmes Quality of learning and teaching Number of accredited providers Quality assurance practices
Accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and career paths	Equity of access Redress practices Organisational, economic and societal benefits
Contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large	Qualifications uptake and achievements Quality of learning and teaching Career and learning pathing Organisational, economy and societal benefits Contribution to other national strategies

GLOSSARY

Name	Acronym	Description
Consultative Document		A Department of Education and Labour response to the Study Team Report outlining proposed changes to the architecture of the NQF (2003).
Curriculum Model for Education in South Africa	CUMSA	A policy initiative introduced by the National Department of Education in 1991 that was seen to lack legitimacy by the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM).
Education Renewal Strategy	ERS	A similar policy initiative to CUMSA (noted above) that advocated three streams, academic, vocational and vocationally oriented.
Education and Training Quality Assurance Body	ETQA	These bodies are responsible for monitoring and quality assuring delivery of standards and qualifications registered on the NQF. They also accredit education and training providers.
Human Resources Development strategy	HRD	This strategy has five strategic objectives covering all aspects of human development so as to improve the quality of life and build South Africa's economy.
Impact Indicator		A policy-relevant, quantitative and/or qualitative statistic designed to provide a profile about the current condition, the stability or change, the functioning, and/or the effect of the NQF on the transformation of education and training in South Africa.
Mass Democratic Movement	MDM	Civil society groupings that formed one of three pillars of the anti-apartheid protests within South Africa.
National Education Policy Initiative	NEPI	This policy enabled national policy in education to be determined on issues such as curriculum frameworks, core syllabuses and education programmes, learning standards and examinations. Higher Education is excluded from this policy.
National Learners' Records Database	NLRD	SAQA's information management system that captures data <i>inter alia</i> on standard setting, quality assurance and learner records, including all qualifications registered on the NQF.
National Qualifications Framework	NQF	The NQF is a set of principles and guidelines by which records of learner achievements are registered to enable recognition of acquired skills and knowledge. This is an integrated system that encourages lifelong learning. The NQF is premised on five Objectives and is structured into eight levels and three bands.
NQF Impact Study		A longitudinal comparative study, commissioned by SAQA, that aims to achieve the effective measurement of the impact of the NQF on the transformation of education and training in South Africa.

GLOSSARY

Name	Acronym	Description
National Skills Development Strategy	NSDS	The NSDS seeks to address two priorities: (1) The increase of skills within the country so as to improve productivity and the competitiveness of South Africa's industry, business, commerce and services; (2) The inequalities in our society so as to make it more inclusive and to encourage greater cohesion.
National Standards Body	NSB	SAQA has established 12 NSBs, one for each organising field of the NQF. NSBs are made up of subject and sector experts. The NSBs recommend standards and qualifications to SAQA for registration on the NQF.
Sector Education and Training Authority	SETA	25 SETAs were established by the Minister of Labour to serve a discrete sector of the economy. SETAs are, among other things, responsible to prepare sector skills plans, promote learnerships, quality assure education and training providers and administer the levy grants system.
Sets of Impact Indicators		Groupings of the Impact Indicators originally devised to make the research more manageable, but which reflected a much more coherent grouping of the Impact Indicators towards the end of the Study.
South African Qualifications Authority	SAQA	Created to implement the NQF, SAQA is a statutory body subject to the joint ministerial authority of the Departments of Education and Labour. The key functions of SAQA are to oversee the development and implementation of the NQF. The three key deliverable areas of SAQA are standards setting (qualifications design), quality assurance and the NLRD.
Standards Generating Body	SGB	Registered bodies responsible for the generation of standards and qualifications in sub-fields, SGBs consist of key education and training stakeholders in the sub-field, drawn from interest groups and specialists.
Study Team Report		Departments of Education and Labour document that set out to review the implementation of the NQF (2002).