

C  
Y  
C  
L  
E

2

ESTABLISHING  
A  
BASELINE

2005



# NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK IMPACT STUDY REPORT

CYCLE  
3

CYCLE  
4

CYCLE  
5



**ENSURING QUALITY QUALIFICATIONS**

Tel: 012 431 5000, Fax: 012 431 5147  
Postnet Suite 248, Private Bag X06, WATERKLOOF, Pretoria, 0145  
1067 Arcadia Street, HATFIELD, Pretoria, 0083

[www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za)  
saqainfo@saqa.org.za

Toll free number: 086 010 3188



Funded by the European Union  
under the European Programme for  
Reconstruction and Development

**THE VIEWS EXPRESSED ARE NOT  
NECESSARILY THOSE OF THE FUNDER.**

JUNE 2005  
ISBN: 0-9584572-6-3



**INVESTOR IN PEOPLE**

# National Qualifications Framework IMPACT STUDY Report 2

***CYCLE 2***



Establishing  
a baseline  
against  
which to  
measure  
progress of  
the NQF

### **Disclaimer**

This publication is intended to inform the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), its community of stakeholders and anyone interested in the development of National Qualifications Frameworks. The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of SAQA.

### **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, electric, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of SAQA.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### PREFACE

It is my privilege as Chairperson of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) to present you with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Impact Study Cycle 2 Report. This report is the second in a series of comparative measurements of the impact of the NQF on the South African education and training conducted by SAQA.

The Cycle 1 Report was released in 2004 and the Cycle 3 Report is due in 2007.

The NQF Impact Study is a world-first. No other country that has implemented an NQF, has as yet, attempted to measure the progress of their NQFs in such a comprehensive and empirical manner. As such, SAQA has set a standard for similar initiatives worldwide and has also provided South African policy makers with a rich source of information that can be used to inform future NQF developments.

On behalf of SAQA, I wish to express sincere gratitude to the European Union (EU) and HEDCO-Ireland for financial and technical support. We also commend the two international experts, Gary Granville from Ireland and Ron Tuck from Scotland, for their commitment to this project over the past three years. In addition, the SAQA Research Team is to be commended for conducting pioneering research that will be invaluable to future NQF development and implementation, both in South Africa, and the numerous other countries that are in the process of developing their own NQFs.

The views expressed in this report are those of the SAQA Research Team and emanate from the findings of the study and are not necessarily those of SAQA. The Research Team takes full responsibility for the research design and would welcome input for its strengthening.

Through the NQF Impact Study we wish to encourage critical engagement with the ways the NQF is being implemented so that the principles of the NQF can be attained in the interest of the majority of citizens.

Shirley Walters  
April 2005

National Qualifications Framework  
IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

## CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>2</b>
GENERAL .....	2
SAQA .....	2
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
THE PROJECT BRIEF.....	8
THE RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY .....	8
RESPONSES TO CYCLE 1 REPORT .....	10
CYCLE 2 PROCESS .....	11
REPORT STRUCTURE FOR CYCLE 2 OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY.....	12
<b>CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>13</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	13
DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN .....	13
IMPACT INDICATORS INDICATORS FOR THE NQF IMPACT STUDY .....	15
SAMPLING AND STRATIFICATION .....	16
INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT .....	18
DATA COLLECTION .....	18
DATA ANALYSIS .....	19
LEVELS OF IMPACT .....	20
FINDINGS REGARDING THE METHODOLOGY.....	21
SUMMARY.....	22
<b>CHAPTER THREE: SECOND CYCLE CONTEXTUALISATION .....</b>	<b>23</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	23
ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN NQF.....	23
REVIEWING THE NQF.....	24
<i>An integrated framework.....</i>	24
<i>NQF governance and reviews.....</i>	27
TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF NATIONAL QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORKS.....	31
<i>Purpose .....</i>	31
<i>Scope .....</i>	32
<i>Level of prescription .....</i>	32
<i>Incrementalism .....</i>	33
<i>Policy breadth .....</i>	33
A NEW NQF LANDSCAPE .....	34
<b>CHAPTER FOUR BASELINE FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	36
BASELINE FINDINGS OF THE NQF IMPACT STUDY.....	37
<i>Indicator 1: Number of qualifications .....</i>	38
<i>Indicator 2: Effectiveness of qualification design.....</i>	43
<i>Indicator 3: Portability of qualifications .....</i>	45
<i>Indicator 4: Relevance of qualifications.....</i>	47
<i>Indicator 5: Qualifications uptake and achievement.....</i>	50

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

<i>Indicator 6: Integrative approach.....</i>	52
<i>Indicator 7: Equity of access .....</i>	54
<i>Indicator 8: Redress practices.....</i>	57
<i>Indicator 9: Nature of learning programmes.....</i>	59
<i>Indicator 10: Quality of learning and teaching.....</i>	62
<i>Indicator 11: Assessment practices.....</i>	64
<i>Indicator 12: Career and learning pathing.....</i>	67
<i>Indicator 13: Number of registered assessors and moderators.....</i>	69
<i>Indicator 14: Number of accredited providers.....</i>	70
<i>Indicator 15: Quality assurance practices.....</i>	72
<i>Indicator 16: Organisational, economic and societal benefits.....</i>	76
<i>Indicator 17: Contribution to other national strategies.....</i>	78
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SECOND CYCLE SUMMARY AND FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>82</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	82
SUMMARY OF BASELINE FINDINGS.....	82
HIGH POSITIVE IMPACT BASELINE FINDINGS.....	83
MODERATE IMPACT BASELINE FINDINGS.....	83
MINIMAL/MIXED IMPACT BASELINE FINDINGS.....	84
NEGATIVE IMPACT BASELINE FINDINGS.....	86
IMPLICATIONS OF THE BASELINE FINDINGS FOR CURRENT DEBATES AND FUTURE RESEARCH.....	86
CONCLUSION.....	87
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: INDICATIVE FINDINGS FROM CYCLE 1.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: FINDINGS INTENDED TO INFORM THE CONDUCT OF FUTURE CYCLES.....</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3: CODES USED DURING QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS.....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>APPENDIX 4: PROJECT TEAM AND ADVISORY GROUP.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>APPENDIX 5: OVERARCHING ISSUES THAT REQUIRE FURTHER INVESTIGATION... </b>	<b>96</b>
<b>GLOSSARY.....</b>	<b>97</b>

---

## DIAGRAMS

Diagram 1: Overview of the research design of the NQF Impact Study.....	8
Diagram 2: Research design of the NQF Impact Study.....	14
Diagram 3: Continuum of levels of impact for the NQF Impact Study.....	20
Diagram 4: Scope and prescriptiveness of NQFs.....	33

---

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

## **TABLES**

Table 1: Impact Indicators .....	.9
Table 2: Impact Indicators for the NQF Impact Study .....	16
Table 3: Quotas for Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study .....	17
Table 4: Shifts in thinking about the governance of the NQF .....	30
Table 5: Scope and policy breadth of NQFs .....	32
Table 6: Prescriptiveness of NQFs .....	32
Table 7: The shifting typology of the South African NQF .....	35
Table 8: Survey responses for Indicator 2 .....	43
Table 9: Survey responses for Indicator 3 .....	45
Table 10: Survey responses for Indicator 4 .....	48
Table 11: Survey responses for Indicator 5 .....	50
Table 12: Survey responses for Indicator 6 .....	52
Table 13: Survey responses for Indicator 7 .....	55
Table 14: Survey responses for Indicator 8 .....	57
Table 15: Survey responses for Indicator 9 .....	59
Table 16: Survey responses for Indicator 10 .....	62
Table 17: Survey responses for Indicator 11 .....	64
Table 18: Survey responses for Indicator 12 .....	67
Table 19: Survey responses for Indicator 15 .....	72
Table 20: Survey responses for Indicator 16 .....	76
Table 21: Survey responses for Indicator 17 .....	79
Table 22: Baseline findings per Impact Indicator Set.....	82

---

## **GRAPHS**

Graph 1: Quotas for Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study.....	18
Graph 2: Qualifications and Unit Standards registered on the NQF .....	39
Graph 3: Qualifications by NQF Organising Field.....	39
Graph 4: Qualifications by NQF Level .....	40
Graph 5: Unit Standards by NQF Organising Field.....	40
Graph 6: Unit standards by NQF Level.....	41
Graph 7: Comparison between “historical” and “new” qualifications by NQF Level.....	41
Graph 8: Comparison between “historical” and “new” qualifications by NQF Organising Field.....	42
Graph 9: Number of registered assessors by sector .....	69
Graph 10: Number of accredited providers by sector .....	70
Graph 11: Signed Memoranda of Understanding .....	73

---

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

**ANNEXURES**

- Annexure 1: Quantitative analysis of a selection of questionnaires
- Annexure 2: Analysis of ETQA interviews
- Annexure 3: Analysis of Departmental interviews
- Annexure 4: Analysis of Provider interviews
- Annexure 5: Analysis of Labour interviews
- Annexure 6: Analysis of Employer interviews
- Annexure 7: Quantitative overview of data on the NLRD
- Annexure 8: Analysis of responses from the national survey and qualitative analysis of qualifications on the NLRD
- Annexure 9: Questionnaire
- Annexure 10: Contextualisation (Cycle 1)
- Annexure 11: External Literature Review (Cycle 1)

*Note: A compact disc containing the full report as well as the annexures and other useful information can be found on the inside back cover. Alternatively, a request can be made to [saqainfo@sqa.org.za](mailto:saqainfo@sqa.org.za). In order to improve readability, references to annexures are abbreviated as follows: (1:17), which refers to Annexure 1, page 17, and so forth.*

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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

- NQF stakeholders and partners who participated in interviews, focus groups and a national survey. This includes: learners from a variety of sectors and levels; providers of education and training across all the bands, as well as secondary schools; businesses, both large and small; organised labour; education related agencies; quality assurance bodies, including some professional bodies; standard setting bodies; and government departments, particularly the Departments of Education and Labour.
- The European Union for the financial and technical support for this cycle of the study, as well as for the previous cycle completed in 2004.
- HEDCO-Ireland, with European Union support, for extending Mr Ron Tuck's contract.
- Mr Ron Tuck, who, with his wealth of NQF-related experience across the world, guided the Project Team during Cycle 2 and ensured that the results were well-presented in an accessible format.
- Prof Gary Granville, for valuable input and guidance as external reader.
- SAQA, for continuing to encourage intellectual scrutiny by dedicating time and resources to a long-term study of this nature in order to present decision makers and the South African public with validated empirical data of the current state of NQF development and implementation.
- Ms Auma Nnane, for providing the Project Team with administrative assistance and for the careful analysis of the quantitative data.
- The Education Foundation Trust, for conducting the national survey and the qualitative analysis of a selection of qualifications.
- Members of the NQF Impact Study Advisory Group for support and strategic guidance.

The SAQA Research Team  
Ronel Heyns, Ron Tuck, Seamus Needham and James Keevy  
April 2005

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### 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
DSSD	Directorate for Standards Setting and Development
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 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 strategy
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
IMWG	Inter-Ministerial Working Group
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
NABABET	National Board for Adult Basic Education and Training
NACWC	National Access Consortium Western Cape
NATED	National Education Department
NBFET	National Board for Further Education and Training
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

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

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report is the result of the second cycle of a longitudinal research project commissioned by SAQA. The project 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 five objectives of the NQF.
2. The first cycle was concerned with establishing the criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF.
3. The specific objective of this second cycle of the project was to establish the baseline against which to measure progress of the NQF.
4. This report summarises comments that were made on the First Cycle Report. While responses were generally approving in respect of methodology, a helpful critique was also noted.
5. One of the outcomes of Cycle 1 was the development of 17 Indicators that would form the basis for making comparisons over time. These Indicators are:

Impact Indicator	Definition
<b>Set 1: The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of learners and South African society</b>	
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 extent of achievement 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
<b>Set 2: The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes address the education and training needs of learners and the South African society</b>	
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 (RPL), 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

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

**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 (HRD), National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) and Tirisano

6. In order to establish evidence for the baseline, data collection responsibilities were divided between the SAQA project team and an external contractor. Five sources of evidence were used:

- The 17 Indicators were used to develop a survey questionnaire, administered by the SAQA team and completed by a sample of stakeholders (determined on a purposive quota sampling basis)
- The same questionnaire was administered by the external contractor
- Interviews and focus group meetings were held, involving 122 stakeholders across the nine provinces
- A quantitative analysis of qualifications and unit standards currently registered on the NQF was conducted, using the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)
- A qualitative analysis of qualifications in three sectors was conducted by the external contractor

7. The report presents a contextualisation of the NQF and current debates to provide a narrative within which the outcomes of the Impact Study can be interpreted. The key issues are shown to cluster around the themes of *integration* and *leadership and management*. A typology of NQFs is presented, based on the work of international experts. The key elements of this typology are purpose, scope, degree of prescriptiveness, incrementalism, policy breadth, and system features. The typology can be used as a conceptual tool to throw light on the developments of the South African NQF.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

8. The evidence from the five sources was collated in respect of each Indicator. An evaluation was then made of the level of impact achieved in respect of each Indicator.

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

<b>HP: High positive impact</b>	The research evidence shows a marked positive change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF
<b>M: Moderate impact</b>	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
<b>MM: Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
<b>N: Negative impact</b>	The research evidence shows a marked negative change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF

9. The NQF was found to have had a high positive impact in the following areas:

- Nature of learning programmes (#9)
- Organisational, economic and societal benefits (#16)
- Contribution to other national strategies (#17)

Key strengths were: positive impact of an outcomes-based approach to education: learner motivation increased by certification; greater emphasis on application of knowledge and skills, clarity of learning

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

objectives, enhanced learner autonomy, and a strengthening of quality assurance of programmes; employee empowerment, enhanced self esteem for learners, more awareness of learning opportunities, improved responsiveness on the part of providers; clearer learning pathways; and an alignment with broader national strategies.

10. The NQF was found to have had a moderate positive impact in the following areas:

- Number of qualifications (#1)
- Relevance of qualifications (#4)
- Equity of access (#7)
- Quality of learning and teaching (#10)
- Assessment practices (#11)
- Career and learning pathing (#12)

Workplace qualifications were seen as particularly relevant. There was criticism of school, university and teacher education qualifications. There was general agreement that qualifications were open to all sectors of society. Encouraging developments in Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) were reported, although there were still concerns about the complexity and cost of RPL procedures. More attention was being paid to the needs of learners and to the professional development of education and training practitioners. The quality of assessment had improved, although there were concerns about cumbersome processes. The development of career and learning pathways had also improved.

11. The NQF was found to have had a minimal or mixed impact in the following areas:

- Effectiveness of qualification design (#2)
- Qualifications uptake and achievement (#5)
- Number of registered assessors and moderators (#13)
- Number of accredited providers (#14)
- Quality assurance practices (#15)
- Redress practices (#8)
- Portability of qualifications (#3)
- Integrative approach (#6)

12. The findings on qualifications design, although limited to three sectors (Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming) suggests that the broader principles of the NQF are supported. The following focus areas were identified as being relevant to qualifications design:

- Career mapping and pathways
- Improved access through flexible entry requirements and RPL
- Portability and transfer of credits, particularly within specific sectors, but also across sectors
- Articulation of qualifications with each other
- Standardisation of qualifications
- The integration of theory and practice
- Responsiveness and relevance to workplaces
- Employability, entrepreneurship and social transformation

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

13. The level of uptake and achievement is still low, partly because it takes time for learners to complete programmes leading to qualifications, but also because of the slow progress in registration of assessors and moderators and accreditation of providers. These problems in turn are attributed, by the majority of respondents, to deficiencies in the quality assurance system. There is strong support for the idea of quality standards and a belief that quality assurance is improving.
14. The key problems affecting quality assurance are said to be:
  - Lack of progress with Memoranda of Understanding
  - Legislative anomalies, giving rise to dual accreditation
  - Lack of trust
  - Overlapping responsibilities of Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs)
  - Distorting influence of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) on the system
  - The Department of Education's (DoE) "lack of understanding of non-formal education"
  - Quality assurance mechanisms being set up for the sake of compliance rather than to improve quality
  - Uncertainty about the need for registration with the DoE
15. Portability of qualifications continues to be seen as problematic. Respondents identified two key problems:
  - The quality of qualifications is still often felt to reside in the institution rather than in the standards
  - Institutional practices - the unwillingness of certain sectors of education or training to trust the qualifications gained in other sectors
16. It is also thought that there has been little progress on redress. This is largely attributable to the lack of impact of RPL. While learners are starting to be able to obtain NQF credits through RPL, they do not yet seem to be able to use these credits as a route into further and higher education.
17. The findings on an integrative approach echo those on portability and redress. Moving between academic and vocational qualifications remains difficult; there is no parity of esteem for vocational education; and co-operation between formal education and the world of work and training remains limited.
18. The findings on portability, redress, and integrative approach suggest a need, stressed in the international literature, to consider 'institutional logics' and develop 'communities of trust'.
19. There was no instance where the bulk of the research evidence, associated with a specific Indicator, showed a marked negative change across the education and training system. As a result no Indicator was rated as negative. This is not say that no negative evidence was found, but rather that such evidence was dispersed across the indicators with no particular indicator being completely influenced by it.
20. Further research is recommended in respect of some Indicators, particularly those where the detail of institutional practice and the quality of the learners' experience needs to be understood more clearly.
21. The results of the Impact Study suggest that there are four key areas for development (possibly with some associated research):
  - Simplification of assessment
  - Clarification and simplification of responsibilities for quality assurance
  - Development of communities of trust
  - Clarification of the integrative intentions of the NQF

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

#### The project brief

This report is the result of the second 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 NQF 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 first cycle was concerned with establishing the criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF. The specific objective of this second cycle of the project was to establish the baseline against which to measure progress of the NQF.

This chapter sets out the research design of the Impact Study, summarises the outcomes of Cycle 1, and outlines the structure of this Cycle 2 Report.

#### The research design of the NQF Impact Study

This research design is illustrated in the diagram below.

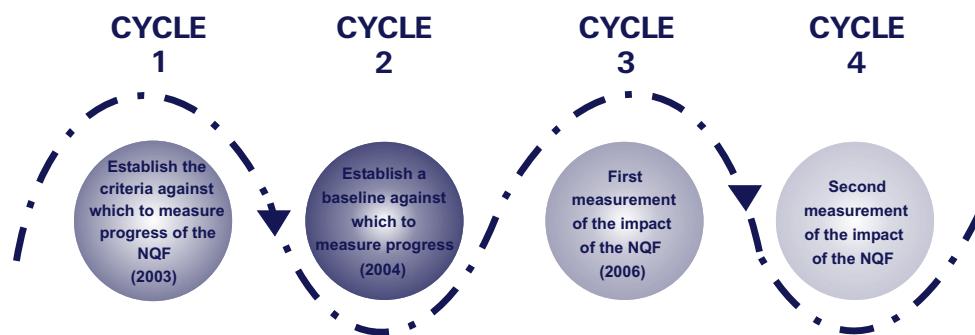


Diagram 1: Overview of the research design of the NQF Impact Study

The NQF Impact Study is bounded by certain assumptions and limitations. First, the NQF objectives are taken as a given. There is no attempt to evaluate the rationale for these objectives or to question whether these are the most appropriate objectives for South Africa.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

Second, the Study is undertaken in the knowledge that definitive judgements on the attainment of NQF objectives cannot be made with any degree of finality for a number of years. Cycle 1 produced only indicative findings. Cycle 2 has resulted in some clear findings but in many cases, stakeholders are still saying that it is 'too soon to say'.

Third and this is a related point - the emphasis in Cycles 1 and 2 has been on establishing firm foundations for a long-term longitudinal study. The drawing of firm conclusions is becoming more important but will only be fully achieved once the Cycle 3 results (planned for 2007) are compared with the Cycle 2 baseline data.

The specific objective of the first cycle of the project was to establish the criteria against which to measure the progress of the NQF. It 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 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. The annexures to the Cycle 1 report contained the detailed data in respect of the various elements of the research, including the application of research methods with stakeholder groupings. Some indicative findings were presented in the Cycle 1 Report and these are reproduced in Appendix 1.

The research methodology proved generally effective. A process of contextualisation was undertaken, drawing on available sources of external evidence. Twenty-three Impact Indicators, based on the five NQF objectives, were piloted through a process of consultation with stakeholders. Their fitness for purpose was tested, leading to a revised set of seventeen Impact Indicators as set out below.

Set 1: The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of learners and South African society	
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
Set 2: The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes addresses the education and training needs of learners and South African society	
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
Set 3: The extent to which quality assurance arrangements enhance the effectiveness of education and training	
13	Number of registered assessors and moderators
14	Number of accredited providers
15	Quality assurance practices
Set 4: The extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a culture of lifelong learning	
16	Organisational, economic and societal benefits
17	Contribution to other national strategies

Table 1: Impact Indicators

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

A full list of findings intended to inform the future Cycles of the Impact Study is set out in Appendix 2.

### Responses to Cycle 1 Report

The First Cycle Report was launched at the SAQA Chairperson's Lecture in September 2004. The Lecture, delivered by Professor Granville, was entitled 'National Qualifications Framework and the Shaping of a New South Africa: Indications of the NQF in Practice'. He outlined the methods and findings of the Impact Study, arguing that it was a predominantly democratic evaluation. He went on to discuss the dangers of instrumentalism, the changing national and international context of implementation, and the assessment of levels of impact.

Professor Jonathan Jansen responded first, arguing that the NQF promised what it could not achieve, was compromised from the beginning by the separation of the two Departments (Education and Labour), lacked a credible theory of action, and was engulfed by a powerful bureaucratic apparatus. With regard to the NQF Impact Study he said:

The Impact Study project of SAQA is easily one of the most sophisticated measurement and monitoring systems that I have yet witnessed to emerge in South Africa. Its sophistication lies in its self-critical posture and its consciousness of the limits and potential of impact studies, especially in its more quantitative conception.

A second response was delivered by Mr Botshabelo Maja, who discussed the key debates that shaped the design of the NQF and how to contextualise impact within these debates in a way that would avoid simply 'perpetuating our own logic'. He then focused on the fourth set, namely '*the extent to which South African society has accepted lifelong learning*'. In his view, this set is a key and central indicator to the NQF process (after piloting in Cycle 1, this set changed to '*the extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture*'). The core of the NQF system, he said enable South Africa and its citizens to participate competitively in an ever-changing globalised world.

Subsequent to the Chairperson's Lecture, a paper was produced by Mr Edward French entitled 'Those Unheard ... A Review of the Presentations on the Occasion of the Chairperson's Lecture'. It contained a thoughtful and well-argued critique of the Impact Study. He argued that 'the lecture's very self-awareness, its magisterial grasp of all the issues, its understanding of ironies and limitations, anticipated voices of protest, of difference, even of eager support and assent ..and in this way it silenced them.'

Mr French questions why the Impact Study did not address the fundamental political and legislative issues that have influenced its development.

The question is: would a Machiavellian analysis of the management of the play of power and influence around the NQF not be revealing, and of great importance to an impact study? For example, if there is justice in Professor Jansen's point that the impact of the NQF has been limited because the NQF has become unnecessarily complicated, which (stakeholder) pressures, arguments and interests have pushed it in that direction?

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

The paper also poses some methodological questions for the Impact Study:

There was general admiration for the team's ... professionalism and thoughtfulness in their approach to the NQF Impact Study. However, although Professor Granville mentions many complexities, potential pitfalls, value orientations to be guarded against and so on, in the last resort he (and the team) could be said to opt for an approach that could be called technicist or managerialist (with reservations). Such approaches tend to aim to be apolitical and "value-free". Their main source of evidence would seem to be market opinion and self-report questionnaire surveys. What one misses is any weighing up of alternative approaches to the study. Professor Jansen (very politely hiding the fact that he is doing so) implicitly recommends some interesting alternatives. At the heart of his recommendation is the use of studies of how the NQF is being implemented, or evaded, in terms of the practices, institutional arrangements and individual responses. For example: How have curricula been changing, and to what extent is the change due to the NQF? How is assessment being managed? How have previously marginalised learners been taken up in education and training in ways that recognise and valorise new knowledge? In what ways are different forms of knowledge being allowed to flow together into qualifications? Such questions are implicit in the sets of indicators, but it may be that cumulative, persuasive, in-depth narratives of the multiple, varied real-life responses to the transformative challenge of the NQF, backed by national, regional and sectoral statistics, would be more telling than indicators?

Two other papers have been produced as an offshoot of the NQF Impact Study. An Integrated National Framework for Education and Training in South Africa: Exploring the Issues (Heyns and Needham, 2004) traces the debate on the concept of the integration of education and training and identifies the key systemic blockages to the conceptualisation and implementation of an integrated system.

The relevance of the NQF Impact Study to Qualifications Framework Development in SADC (Tuck, Hart and Keevy, 2004) reviews the international debate on national qualifications frameworks and begins to develop a typology of NQFs.

### Cycle 2 Process

Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study aimed to establish a baseline against which to measure the progress of the NQF. Although the research design and methodology are discussed at length in Chapter 2 of this report, a brief summary is included here, particularly for those readers who may prefer to move directly to Chapters 3 or 4.

The seventeen Impact Indicators, developed during Cycle 1, were used to develop a questionnaire (see Annexure 9) that was completed by randomly selected NQF stakeholders such as providers of education and training, the Departments of Education and Labour, employers, organised labour, quality assurance and standards setting bodies, and learners. In order to ensure adequate triangulation of these responses five different modes of investigation were used:

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

- (1) The SAQA Research Unit interviewed 122 stakeholders across the nine provinces - the interviews and focus groups were transcribed and analysed (see Annexures 2-6);
- (2) Of the 122 individuals interviewed, 77 also completed the questionnaire - their responses were captured and analysed (see Annexure 1);
- (3) An independent provider was contracted to conduct a national survey, using the same questionnaire - 501 responses were captured and analysed independently from the SAQA interviews (see Annexure 8);
- (4) Quantitative analysis of all qualifications on the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) was undertaken by SAQA (Annexure 7); and
- (5) Qualitative analysis of qualifications in three sectors (mining, tourism and construction) was carried out by an external provider (also part of Annexure 8).

The research evidence has been included in full in the Annexures to ensure transparency and facilitate replicability. The project team comprised not only members of SAQA's Research Unit but also two international experts: Ron Tuck, previously Chief Executive of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, and Professor Gary Granville, Head of the Education Faculty in the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. The role of the international experts was to provide external professional scrutiny. An Advisory Group, comprising SAQA members and management, oversaw the work of the project team. The Advisory Group met on three occasions during Cycle 2.

### Report Structure for Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study

Chapter 2 describes the methodology adopted by the Project Team in gathering the baseline data.

Chapter 3 outlines the origins of the NQF and describes current issues of NQF implementation both in South Africa and internationally. It defines a context for interpreting and using findings from the NQF Impact Study.

Chapter 4 sets out the findings, i.e. the data that will serve as the baseline for future Impact Study Cycles.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions of the second Cycle.

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

A series of eleven annexures accompany the report. These underpin the findings by giving more detailed accounts of the analyses by SAQA and the external contractor. Annexure 9 contains the questionnaire used for the national survey. The annexures are available in electronic format only, as they contain detailed information that may not be useful to all stakeholders. The views expressed in the annexures are not necessarily those of SAQA.

## CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

---

### Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and process of the NQF Impact Study, including:

- development of the research design;
- Impact Indicators for the NQF Impact Study;
- sampling and stratification;
- instrument development;
- data collection;
- data analysis;
- levels of impact; and
- methodological findings.

### Development of the research design

In 2003 SAQA embarked on a longitudinal study to measure the impact of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) on the transformation of education and training in South Africa. This study was planned in a number of continuous cycles. The first cycle, which was completed in 2004, focused in particular on the development of a research design that could be used in consecutive cycles. Over a period of some 14 months the project team interrogated the five NQF objectives in order to develop a set of criteria, referred to as 'Impact Indicators'. This process included a wide range of interviews and focus groups with NQF stakeholders in order to make sure that the research design, with the Impact Indicators as a nucleus, was well accepted and agreed by stakeholders, and also sufficiently robust to allow for the research design to be repeated in following years.

The research design of the NQF Impact Study comprised the following components (adapted from SAQA, 2004):

- The five NQF objectives form a fixed point of reference to allow the research design to evolve yet remain relatively stable.
- The research design would be longitudinal and comparative in nature, being repeated in consecutive cycles.
- The second cycle would be used to establish a baseline against which subsequent measurements would be compared.
- Three common components to be included in each application of the research design are:
  - *Contextualisation* - the purpose of the contextualisation is to outline the origins of the NQF and to describe current issues of NQF implementation both in South Africa and internationally. It defines a context for interpreting and using findings from the NQF Impact Study.
  - *Data gathering* using structured sampling methods.
  - *Development of findings and recommendations* based on the analysis of the data gathered, and related to the context and the period in which the study takes place.
- An 'Impact Indicator approach' would be used to facilitate the gathering of appropriate data, the analysis of such data and the findings and recommendations that would emanate from each cycle.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

The research design is illustrated in the diagram below:

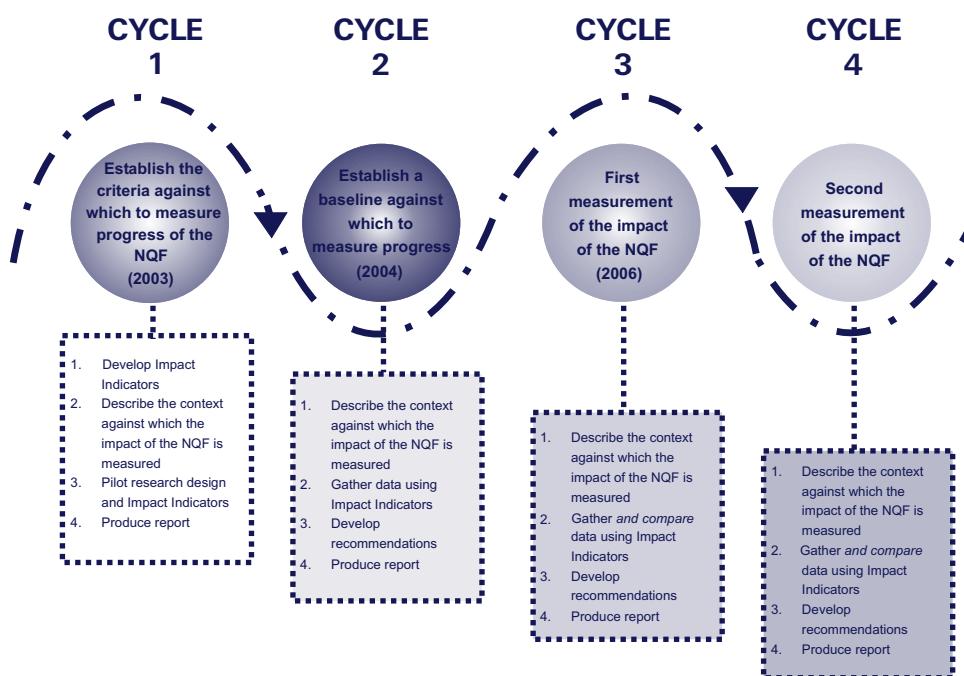


Diagram 2: Research design of the NQF Impact Study

Three important considerations underpin the research design: *replicability*, *cost-effectiveness* and *credibility* (also see Tuck *et al*, 2004). If the NQF Impact Study is to consistently deliver policy relevant statistics that provide a profile of the condition of NQF implementation over an extended period of time the research design must be easily replicable, relatively inexpensive and, most importantly, credible. These aims have been pursued as follows:

### **Replicability**

- use of a consistent set of Impact Indicators;
- publicly accessible evaluation instruments; and
- full description of methodology employed.

### **Cost-effectiveness**

- use of available and accessible data sources, such as the NLRD and a database of respondents and their constituencies; and

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

- accessible data formats, such as MS Access that can be maintained over time.

### Credibility

- transparency and openness to review; and
- use of independent external contractors.

### Impact Indicators for the NQF Impact Study

An agreed definition of an Impact Indicator in the context of the NQF Impact Study was generated on the basis of a review of international and South African literature on similar measurements, particularly in the education and training context. The definition was also informed by the extensive piloting and revision phases with education and training stakeholders. For the purposes of the Study:

An Impact Indicator is defined as 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 (SAQA, 2004:16).

The following is a list of the Impact Indicators that were developed during the first cycle of the study:

Impact Indicator	Definition
<b>Set 1: The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of learners and South African society</b>	
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 extent of achievement 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
<b>Set 2: The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes addresses the education and training needs of learners and the South African society</b>	
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 (RPL), 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

<sup>1</sup>Examples include, but are not limited to, Bottani and Tuijnman (1994) and Bottani and Wahlberg (1994).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### 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 (HRD), National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) and Tirisano

Table 2: Impact Indicators for the NQF Impact Study (SAQA, 2004:61)

The 17 Impact Indicators form the nucleus of the NQF Impact Study research design and were used as the basis for the development of research instruments.

### Sampling and stratification

The first cycle report contained recommendations pertaining to the future cycles of the study (see Appendix 2). All of these recommendations were implemented with the exception of the recommendation that "Representative sampling must form part of subsequent cycles of the Impact Study".

The project team faced a dilemma: how to balance the available resources with this seemingly unobtainable status of using 'representative sampling'. The work of Lutz (1983) proved particularly helpful to explore this issue, explaining that a number of approaches to sampling are possible, ranging from *simple random sampling* where every respondent is given an index number and index numbers are picked at random until the sample size is reached; *systematic random sampling* where respondents are selected using a set interval from a population list, e.g. every 20<sup>th</sup> case; *clustered random sampling* where the initial random selection of geographical areas (clusters) is followed by a survey of all or of a sample in the cluster; *quota sampling* where interviewers find respondents who fit into predetermined categories until their quotas are filled; and *stratified random sampling* where the population is first divided into a number of strata according to some characteristic, chosen to be related to the major variables being studied.

According to Lutz, *stratified random sampling* is particularly useful when sub-populations vary considerably. The strata should be mutually exclusive (every element in the population should be assigned to only one stratum) and collectively exhaustive (no population element can be excluded). A sample size is determined for each of the strata as though it were a separate population. There are two possibilities:

- proportionate allocation - a sampling fraction is used in each of the strata that is proportional to that of the total population, e.g. Gender
- disproportionate allocation (optimum allocation) each stratum is proportionate to the standard deviation of the distribution of the variable, large samples are taken in the strata with the greatest variability to generate the least possible variance

<sup>2</sup>[www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/samp](http://www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/samp) and [en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org)

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

It became increasingly apparent that even a limited attempt at obtaining samples that would be representative of all sectors and groupings on a proportional basis would be impossible.

It was also important to keep the repeatability of the study in mind. An alternative approach would be to select unique groupings of populations that are reasonably accessible. According to Crouch (2000:10) it may be possible to measure how the system is perceived to be working in general, but warns against making any inferences regarding the populations or sub-populations unless the sample sizes are large enough.

It was decided that the sampling approach for the NQF Impact Study would need to be based on pragmatic considerations. The need to develop a research design that would be repeatable was deemed more important than representing all sectors and groupings on a proportional basis. It was therefore decided to use purposive quota sampling. The Cycle 1 recommendation to make use of representative sampling only (SAQA, 2004:79) has not proved to be feasible and would most probably continue to be problematic in future cycles.

The second recommendation from the Cycle 1 report suggested that the inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders, such as providers, employers, learners, unions and government departments be maintained, but also be broadened to include more Small, -Medium, Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) and professional bodies.

It was further decided that data collected according to the stakeholder categories would be sufficient to determine the impact of the NQF. Even so, it was accepted that although generalisations across the population as a whole would be possible, strata-specific generalisations would be inappropriate. The following example illustrates the point:

- it may be possible to say that, in general, assessment practices have improved - based on a significant number of positive responses to related questions, supporting qualitative evidence (from interviews) and quantitative support (such as survey data);
- it will not be possible to say that, based on just the responses from the employers, that employers in general are of the opinion that assessment practices have significantly improved.

The suggested categories and quotas, as recommended in the Cycle 1 Report, are listed in the table below:

Category	Strata	Suggested quota	Actual quota
Providers <sup>1</sup>	GET band (including ABET and secondary schools)	100	143
	FET band	50	79
	HET band	40	49
Businesses	Large	50	71
	SMME	50	39
Organised Labour	Education	10	10
	Other	30	32
Quality Assurance bodies	ETQAs	60	54
	Professional bodies	18	32
Standards Setting bodies	NSBs	36	32
	SGBs	30	38
Government departments	DoE	10	26
	DoL	10	18
Subtotals		494	623

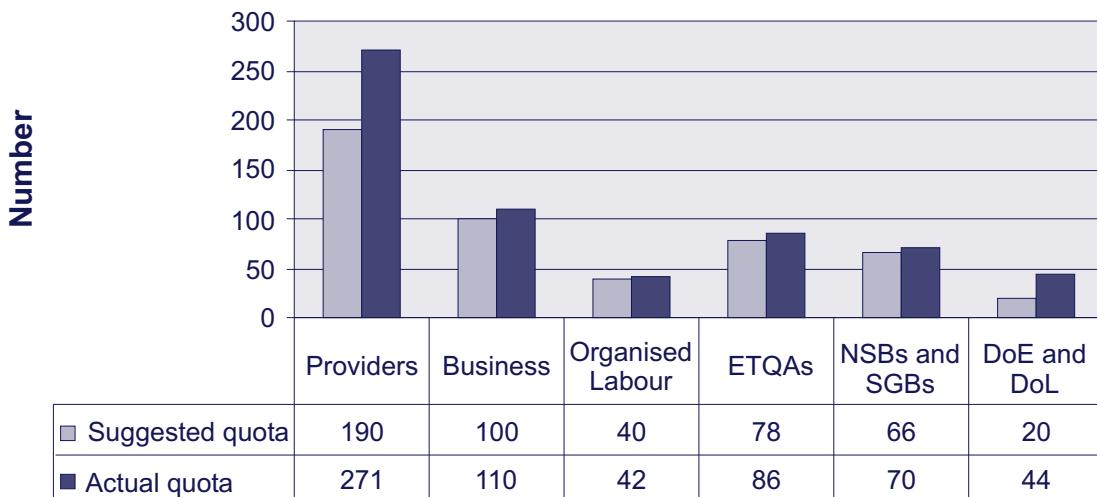
Table 3: Quotas for Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study

<sup>1</sup>The study did not focus on the schooling sector below NQF level 1, or below the General Education and Training Certificate. However, it did look at Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), including the three sub-levels leading to the achievement of a qualification at NQF level 1, or ABET level 4.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

In total, 623 individuals participated in the interviews, focus groups and the completion of the questionnaires. The graph below gives an overview of the different categories that were represented and the extent to which the quotas were achieved:



Graph 1: Quotas for Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study

The choice for the particular categories and strata was based on the need to represent all NQF stakeholders (those individuals and organisations that make use of the NQF) and partners (government departments and quality assurance bodies that participate in NQF implementation). Based on the Cycle 1 results, it was expected that the provider category would be the largest.

### Instrument development

A questionnaire was developed by SAQA and piloted with 15 experts. Some experts were knowledgeable on the NQF in particular, whilst others had experience in instrument development.<sup>4</sup> The individuals were selected with the following criteria in mind: representativity of the stakeholder groupings envisaged for the national survey; personal involvement with and knowledge of the NQF; expertise in the design of questionnaires and surveys. The individuals were asked to complete the questionnaire, but also to make comments on the questions and the overall usefulness of the questionnaire in a survey. The purpose of the exercise was to improve the draft questionnaire.

The questionnaire was amended substantially after this piloting and a workshop between the SAQA research team and the two international consultants involved with the project.

The questionnaire was edited for language and accessibility following which it was printed and used during the research. The same questionnaire was used both for the interviews and the national survey to ensure comparability of the results. The questionnaire is available as Annexure 9.

### Data collection

Keeping in mind that the NQF Impact Study is a longitudinal and comparative study and that quota sampling would be used, the Cycle 2 data collection comprised three components: stakeholder interviews and focus groups, analysis of qualifications on the National Learners' Records Database and a national survey.

<sup>3</sup> The study did not focus on the schooling sector below NQF level 1, or below the General Education and Training Certificate. However, it did look at Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), including the three sub-levels leading to the achievement of a qualification at NQF level 1, or ABET level 4.

<sup>4</sup> Experts included: Melissa King (Independent Examinations Board), Mamsie Sebolai (Association of Private Providers of Education and Training), Rachel Prinsloo (Technikon South Africa), Kathy Munro (University of the Witwatersrand), Dorette van Ede (Unisa), Anthea Saffy (AMPLATS), Rob van der Schyff (South African Breweries), Inge Dougans (Vacuflex an SMME provider), Gerard Smith (Construction SETA), Maire Kelly (NSB09 coordinator), Erik Halendorff (Assessment SGB), Tommy Baloyi (South African Council for Educators), Bennie Anderson (First National Bank) and Karlien Murray (Professional Accreditation Body).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### ***Stakeholder interviews and focus groups***

A SAQA research team completed 111 interviews and 12 focus groups across all nine South African provinces in the period June to November 2004. The interviews and focus groups were transcribed and thereafter analysed. A quantitative analysis was completed on MS Access and Excel. A qualitative analysis was performed with ATLAS.ti<sup>5</sup> using 91 codes premised on the 17 Impact Indicators.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Analysis of qualifications on the NLRD***

The SAQA NLRD manager was responsible for a quantitative summary of qualifications (including unit standards) and learner data on the NLRD as available on 31 January 2005.<sup>7</sup> This quantitative summary was supported by a qualitative analysis, performed by an independent expert, of a sample of qualifications on the NLRD.<sup>8</sup> The analysis aimed in particular to investigate the extent to which the current qualifications registered on the NQF addressed the education and training needs of learners and South African society (see Set 1 in Table 1). The qualitative analysis was limited to regular qualifications<sup>9</sup> in three particular sectors:

- Physical Planning and Construction
- Mining and Minerals
- Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming

The choice of the three sectors was based on the number and range of qualifications in each. The relative distinctiveness of each sector as well as accessibility to key stakeholders also informed the decision.

Nine qualifications were randomly selected from the Physical Planning and Construction Sector, six from the Mining and Minerals Sector and three from the Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming Sector.

### ***National survey***

An independent research company was contracted to administer a national survey on behalf of SAQA.<sup>10</sup> The analysis of their findings was reported to SAQA and was used together with the stakeholder interviews, focus groups and the NLRD analysis in the Cycle 2 Report. The external nature of the survey contributed to the validity of the final report as triangulation between the independent survey findings and the findings of the SAQA interviews and focus groups was possible. These are commented on extensively in Chapter 4 of this report.

Over and above the fact that the 17 Impact Indicators formed the nucleus of the data collection and subsequent analyses, a common instrument was also used. The development of the instrument was discussed in the previous section.

### **Data analysis**

The three empirical data sources (stakeholder interviews and focus groups, analysis of NLRD data and results of the national survey) were analysed independently:

SAQA was responsible for analysing stakeholder interviews and focus groups, through the open coding of transcripts with qualitative analysis software (ATLAS.ti). Codes were based on the Impact Indicators, but also reflected the various nuances of the relevant questions in the questionnaire (see Appendix 3 for a full list of all the codes). Coding was followed by a grouping of relevant codes per stakeholder category, into summaries and initial separate analyses (see Annexures 2-6).

<sup>5</sup> ATLAS.ti is qualitative analysis software that is a particularly useful tool when significant quantities of text need to be analysed ([www.atlasti.de](http://www.atlasti.de))

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 3

<sup>7</sup> See Annexure 7

<sup>8</sup> See Annexure 8

<sup>9</sup> Regular qualifications are defined as those qualifications that have been developed through a standards generating process, as opposed to historic provider-based qualifications, developed by individual providers of education and training.

<sup>10</sup> See Annexure 5

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

Both SAQA and the external provider were responsible for analysing NLRD data. SAQA looked at the quantitative data, including a summary of the number of qualifications and unit standards registered on the NQF. The external provider looked at a sample of regular (i.e. not provider-based) qualifications on the NQF from three particular sectors: mining, tourism and construction.

The external provider was tasked to conduct and analyse the responses from a national survey. The Terms of Reference prescribed random quota sampling within the same categories and strata that were used for the interviews (see Table 4). The responses were captured on MS Access and included verification of 10% of the sample. The provider compiled a report of the analysis of the responses (Annexure 8). As most of the SAQA interviewees also completed the same questionnaire their responses were analysed in a similar, but separate, manner (Annexure 1).

The analyses of the three empirical data sources were then merged, using the Impact Indicators as ordering mechanism, as summarised in Chapter 4 of this report. The findings put forward by each analysis were compared with each other. In most cases the findings were similar or identical. In some cases there were contradictions and disparities.

### Levels of impact

An important aim of the research design of the NQF Impact Study is to provide a 'comprehensive summary of the type of impact that has been achieved per Impact Indicator' (SAQA, 2004:56). Although this component was tentatively explored in the Cycle 1 Report (see pp. 56-57) no specific recommendation was offered. Now, with the second cycle data available, and the added hindsight gained from the first cycle analysis, it has become necessary to agree on the way in which the level of impact can be reported.

The term 'no impact' as used in the Cycle 1 Report has been replaced with 'minimal/mixed impact'. This change in terminology was based on agreement that even the slightest positive or negative impact could be placed in either of the minimal or negative categories. Likewise, in cases where the evidence was mixed, i.e. included both positive and negative statements, it was agreed that the impact would still be minimal, even if on balance, the evidence was more positive.

The following continuum of levels of impact has been used in Cycle 2 and proposed for continued use in subsequent cycles of the NQF Impact Study:

<b>HP: High positive impact</b>	The research evidence shows a marked positive change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF
<b>M: Moderate impact</b>	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
<b>MM: Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
<b>N: Negative impact</b>	The research evidence shows a marked negative change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF

Diagram 3: Continuum of levels of impact for the NQF Impact Study

The determination of the levels of impact was based on the type and range of quantitative and qualitative data collected.

## Findings regarding the methodology

The research design that emanated from Cycle 1 through extensive piloting and refinement proved to be appropriate for Cycle 2 even though some modifications were necessary. The fact that the NQF Impact Study is a longitudinal comparative study requires that the research design remain largely unaltered, while still allowing for some minor adjustments. The following is a summary of the findings that relate to the methodology employed during Cycle 2:

1. The longitudinal and comparative research design was considered to be useful and should be continued in future cycles.
2. The three components of the research design, namely contextualisation, data gathering and findings should also be continued.
3. The Impact Indicator approach provides a useful ordering mechanism for the research process, including the design of research instruments, data analysis and findings and recommendations. The dynamic nature of the indicators also allows for some changes during each cycle of the Study to ensure contextual sensitivity.
4. The following findings relate to specific Impact Indicators:
  - a. Impact Indicator #2 (*Effectiveness of qualification design*) may be too broad. Firstly, there was significant overlap with other indicators (e.g. Impact Indicator 4: *Relevance of qualifications*). Secondly, the design of qualifications is expected to have a wash-back effect on the design of learning programmes and therefore, there is another overlap with Impact Indicator 9: *Nature of learning programmes*. In Cycle 3 of the Impact Study, there may be a need to reconsider whether this impact indicator could be subsumed in the two above-mentioned Indicators, or whether it could be modified to focus more on the effect of qualification design on *learning programme design*.
  - b. Impact Indicator #16 (*Organisational, economic and societal benefits*) is also too broad. This indicator should be separated into three separate indicators that have a distinct focus on organisational aspects, economic relevance and societal benefits.
  - c. Impact Indicator #17 (*Contribution to other national strategies*) should be updated to reflect the changes in the role and vision of the Department of Education.
5. The inclusion of a wider range of stakeholders should be maintained and broadened to include more SMMEs, standards-setting bodies and professional bodies.
6. The difficulties faced both in Cycles 1 and 2 in including the voice of learners need to be investigated. The development of stakeholder-specific variations of the instruments (as opposed to the single generic questionnaire used in Cycle 2) may be useful.
7. Replicability, cost-effectiveness and credibility should remain important considerations. The intended outsourcing of Cycle 3 will be dependent on the extent to which these considerations are acknowledged. Furthermore, it will be necessary for SAQA to conceptualise carefully what is meant by outsourcing of this project and the extent to which SAQA would remain involved, albeit in a supporting an advisory capacity.
8. The qualitative analysis of NLRD data proved to be particularly challenging for an external research agency. The extended time required to fully understand the database construction, qualification terminology and structure, suggests that the scope and purpose of this component in the NQF Impact Study may have to be reconsidered.
9. The significant contribution of the two international experts is acknowledged. Their involvement as critical readers during future cycles will be of great value.
10. Local and international publication of the results of Cycle 2 will add value to the study and should be encouraged.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

11. Quota sampling proved to be suitable to a project of this nature. The need to develop a research design that would be repeatable was deemed more important than representing all sectors and groupings on a proportional basis.
12. The questionnaire that was developed for Cycle 2 was useful in gathering the relevant data but can be improved. The following recommendations are made:
- a. the questionnaire should be considerably shortened;
  - b. category-specific variations should be considered; and
  - c. the extent to which specialised knowledge is required in order to answer the questions should be reconsidered - the questionnaire should be simplified to be more accessible to non-expert respondents.
13. The inclusion of secondary schools in the sample proved to be particularly problematic. It should also be noted that this study did not focus on the schooling sector below NQF level 1, or below the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC). However, it did look at Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), including the three sub-levels leading to the achievement of a qualification at NQF level 1, or ABET level 4. The schooling sector, in particular, conflated outcomes-based education (OBE) with an outcomes-based approach. It is recommended that targeted research is undertaken in this area, specifically in terms of the conceptual differences and practice between OBE in schools and an outcomes-based approach as understood as a key underpinning principle of the NQF.
14. The four Sets of Impact Indicators,<sup>11</sup> which were particularly useful in the first cycle to develop the Impact Indicators, were less prominent in the second Cycle but were nevertheless found useful in interpreting the findings. In future applications, these Sets should retain this facilitating role and if necessary, be used even more explicitly.
15. The methodology employed to determine the levels of impact should be refined. The criteria could be conflating two distinct variables:
- (1) the extent of the *impact* of the NQF on the education and training system - mostly concerned with numbers and systemic changes; and
  - (2) whether the NQF has had *beneficial impact* on the education and training system - more concerned with issues of quality, access, redress, etc.

It is recommended that this awareness of the two dimensions be incorporated into the methodology.

## Summary

The research design and methodology emanating from Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study proved workable in Cycle 2. With the exception of representative sampling, the suggested research design was maintained and further refined. The opportunity to triangulate between three data sources added a particularly robust dimension to the overall research design and should be replicated in subsequent cycles.

<sup>11</sup>The Sets are:

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

## CHAPTER THREE: SECOND CYCLE CONTEXTUALISATION

### Introduction

This chapter sets out the context for the second cycle of the longitudinal NQF Impact Study. In the research design, the contextualisation of a particular cycle of the NQF Impact Study is integral to the findings. This is because it is expected that the focus of NQF implementation may shift. During the first phase of NQF implementation, the focus was largely on policy conceptualization and development. It is likely that subsequent phases will increasingly focus on policy implementation and practice. This chapter is designed to assist readers in the interpretation of the findings of the study.

Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study, *Establishing a baseline against which to measure progress*, reflects the first measurement of the impact of the NQF on the South African education and training system since its implementation. The findings of Cycle 2 are the baseline against which future measurements will be made.

Cycle 2 was initiated in September 2004, immediately after the conclusion of the pilot phase of the study. The context within which the second cycle of the study has taken place, is therefore largely similar to Cycle 1. For this reason, Chapter three of the first cycle report, as well as Annexure 2, which deals with the Contextualisation Literature Review of that report, are included as an annexure to the Cycle 2 Report. In addition, new and emerging issues influencing NQF implementation are discussed in this chapter.

This chapter covers:

- The origins and development of the South African National Qualifications Framework
- Reviewing the NQF - including discussion of an integrated framework, currently influential epistemologies and governance of the NQF
- An emerging typology of national qualification frameworks internationally
- A new NQF landscape

### Origins and development of the South African NQF

It is now common knowledge that the South African National Qualifications Framework originated from the strong need of the post-1994 African National Congress (ANC) government to reform a disparate and unequal education and training system. New policy-makers attempted to put in place a system that would facilitate access, mobility and recognition of learning, particularly for those individuals who had been prevented from accessing formal education and training under the previous regime.

When the new ANC government came to power in 1994, in South Africa a model, that incorporates every sector and level of education and training, was proposed. All stakeholders, including providers of education and training, employers, organised labour and other interested parties were therefore involved in the conceptualisation of the South African NQF.

In the Cycle 1 report (SAQA, 2004:22), it is acknowledged that

The [South African] 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.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

The nature and purpose of the South African NQF therefore, although drawing technically from developments in other countries, is to completely transform the disparate education and training system that existed before 1994. It would therefore be fair to say that (SAQA, 2004:24):

...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.

Qualifications frameworks and their associated quality assurance processes are increasingly attracting attention from the international education and training fraternity as a new approach to education systems. However, it is only the South African NQF that places such emphasis on 'addressing issues of social justice' (Tuck, Hart and Keevy, 2004:7). Jansen (2004:87) points out '[t]here are few policy initiatives which have consciously dubbed its major reform as "a social construct" with all the risks entailed in such an open-ended conception of the NQF'. In addition, the 'moral imperatives' of the first post-apartheid government resulted in a proposal for reform that was, according to Jansen (2004:88) meant to

...address "employment opportunities" as well as "economic development" as well as "career paths" and of course "redress past unfair discrimination". I know of no policy in the world that can address all of these things in the ways envisaged, let alone at the same time.

Nevertheless, it is evident that it is the 'moral imperative', which has sustained the development of the NQF in the first phase of implementation. However, the NQF has been under review for the last four years and it now seems appropriate to take stock of where we are, in order to take the process forward in a meaningful and pragmatic way.

### Reviewing the NQF

Three formal reviews of the South African NQF have been completed and published. These culminated in the following reports:

- The Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (2002)
- The European Union Mid-term Review (2002)
- An Interdependent National Qualifications Framework System. Consultative Document (2003)

In addition, the Higher Education Qualifications Framework Draft for Discussion (2004) was made available for public comment in July 2004.

The section dealing with 'A New NQF Landscape' offers an analysis of the recommendations of the Study Team responsible for the first report, the Task Team responsible for the third report, and the draft HEQF policy. The present section deals with the most prominent conceptual debates emerging from the reports.

### ***An integrated framework***

...to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements

The first of the five objectives of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is to 'create an integrated national framework for learning achievements'. The Study Team (Department of Education (DoE) and Department of Labour (DoL), 2002:65) noted that this objective is 'an obvious outcome of the NQF, for which ... SAQA in collaboration with its partners has legal responsibility', but that 'there is general concern that the integration of education and training has not been achieved' (p.22). The notion of an 'integrated framework' was central to the idea of the South African NQF as it was envisaged that such a framework could overcome the 'traditional division between different types of qualifications, and between education and training' (Tikly and Motala, 1994, in Chisholm *et al*, 2003:122).

'An integrated framework' has been one of most intensely contested ideals of NQFs internationally. The New Zealand Qualifications Framework is a case in point. One reason for the contestation, according to the Study Team (DoE & DoL, 2002) is that so many interpretations of the idea abound. The Study Team also noted the political differences between the two Departments responsible for education and training in South Africa, stating that the Departments:

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

...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 (*Ibid*, 67).

While these contestations are not unique to the South African NQF, and while it is acknowledged that the Departments have been trying to develop a common approach, the result is that NQF stakeholders had to engage with the concept of 'integration' in the absence of clear direction. In the context of international developments of NQFs, the principles of 'coherence, access and portability' are the main drivers for the establishment of qualification frameworks. Tuck (*et al*, 2004:3) says that where the establishment of an NQF in South Africa was strongly linked to issues of social justice, as well as improved systemic coherence, other NQFs are being developed to improve access and progression within qualifications systems and to establish standards for comparability and benchmarking in the interests of systemic coherence.

As recently as in August 2004, the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, articulated the same orientation for a proposed European Qualifications Framework. Such a framework would provide the 'means [to structure] sector activity so that it becomes coherent and integrated with work in other sectors' (European Commission, 2004:3).

Several commentators (for example Mehl, 2004 and Jansen, 2004) have suggested that integration in South Africa could have been achieved through a single Ministry for Education and Training as mooted in the pre-NQF days. Jansen (2004:52) notes that 'the work of SAQA and the ambitions of the NQF were always going to be constrained by a simple fact: and that is that the early promise of a single ministry of education and labour was not to materialise'. He adds that there has not been sufficient acknowledgement of 'the massive consequences of bureaucratic and political divisions between education and labour for the operations and goals of the National Qualifications Framework'.

Political differences in no small measure contribute to implementation problems of NQFs. Such tensions seem to inhibit the formation of 'communities of trust' (Young, 2003:18) where shared experience and usage can be built through practice. Instead political differences often seem to stand proxy for other deeply rooted philosophies about the very nature and purpose of learning and are seen to be an obstacle to finding innovative ways in which integration is operationalised (Heyns and Needham, 2004).

An important reason for the slow progress in the achievement of the objective to achieve an 'integrated framework' may be that there does not seem to be a common understanding of what we mean by an 'integrated approach'. Currently, the understanding of 'integration' seems to emerge at a number of different levels:

- The *macro* understanding, namely that education and training should be integrated. As noted above, it seems as if the contestations evident between the two sponsoring departments (DoE and DoL) are the result of the decision not to have a single Ministry of Education and Labour in the post-1994 government. This resulted in what Badat (2002:20) called the lack of 'a shared language, understanding and agreement around areas of initiative and cooperation'
- The *meso* understanding, referring to epistemological differences between the nature and purposes of education and training respectively. Young (2003:10) says that 'the power of different types of learning is a reality that any NQF has to start from. If it does not it will be a barrier to progression [and] not a way of overcoming barriers'.
- The *micro* understanding, namely in terms of the inclusion of theory and practice in qualifications, curricula and learning programmes; and 'learning in the "context of application"' (Gibbons, in Kraak, 2000:40). This last understanding, i.e. at the 'micro' level, in particular, seems to have much support across the education and training spectrum (Heyns and Needham, 2004). This understanding is reflected in
  - The integration of theory and practice in learning programmes
  - Partnerships between education and training providers and workplaces
  - The application of theory in authentic situations, i.e. in simulated and/or real scenarios

This may be where the greatest promise for the development of an integrated approach to education and training lies - in what is emerging from the 'more persuasive logic locked up in daily practice' (Jansen, 2004:90).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### ...a continuum of learning

Isaacs (in DoE & DoL, 2002:67) noted that 'for some, [an integrated framework] is actually an integrated system. For others, it is two systems running side by side and if you occasionally look over the fence dividing the two, that's the integrated approach'. However, the Study Team (DoE & DoL, 2002:72) strongly supported the notion that an integrated framework should entail 'a single framework that includes all qualifications, and that academic and vocational qualifications represent a *continuum* of education and training, not a division between them' (emphasis added).

There is support for an integrated framework. According to the *Consultative Document* (DoE & DoL, 2003:1) an integrated framework is 'a reference point for all new developments in our national learning system', but there is also critique. A respondent to Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study argued that 'advocates of integration of education and training really ignore the fundamental difference [in their] epistemological basis'.

These debates are most pronounced in the discussions about unit-standard based and non-unit standard based (or 'whole') qualifications and the appropriateness of such qualifications within different components of the system, and are most marked in the attempts to develop common level descriptors.

In the *Consultative Document* (DoE & DoL, 2003:13) for example, the statement is made that the Departments will stop '[attempting] to bridge the conceptual divide with level descriptor statements of broader and broader generality' and therefore propose 'fit-for-purposes level descriptors for each learning mode'. Ensor (2003:325) agrees and maintains that the idea of an integrated framework 'is at odds with formal education and training, which rests upon a different social base and generates different knowledge structures. This makes common membership within a single qualifications framework of the South African type ultimately unworkable'.

The problem of establishing equivalence and parity of esteem between different components of the education and training system is by no means unique to the South African NQF. Young (2004) argues that this is because there is a tension between 'the principles of similarity and of difference'. He notes that it was not until the first NQFs that there has been an attempt 'to bring together academic and vocational qualifications, school and university qualifications or the different types of professional and vocational qualifications'. In other words, in the past, qualifications were defined in terms of their differences, and there was no attempt to find 'similarities' in terms of the level and depth of learning and in the key or core skills that are common to the different contexts of learning. This resulted in problems of progression, transferability and portability. In South Africa, the NQF promised to be 'a radical credit accumulation and transfer system, promised to accredit workers for accumulated proficiency and undertook to open up access to education and training routes that had previously been closed to them' (Ensor, 2003:327). 'Equivalence' therefore took on a much more important meaning than anywhere else in the world. Mehl (2004:22) makes the point that:

The way in which society recognises, rewards and measures learning achievement is through qualifications. It is society that provides the ultimate validation of qualifications and accords respect to the bearer. Society awards status and also opportunities and privilege.

In a society where 'difference', according to Young's principle discussed above, equated to lack of opportunity and privilege, it seems much more important to find ways whereby social barriers to advancement are eroded and replaced with a more equitable approach.

These different views of education and training are still, at this point of the implementation of the South African NQF, considered a stumbling block in the achievement of a seamless, integrated framework. Ensor (2003:341) states that...

[f]ormal education and the NQF thus rest on two fundamentally different assumptions about knowledge, knowing and identity. Formal education and training aim to specialise academic and/or professional identities through induction to largely disciplinary-based forms of knowledge, whereas the NQF wishes to background knowledge and emphasise a generic capacity to learn.

From very early on the debates on the NQF were characterised by these opposing epistemologies: discipline-based (or institution-based) learning and workplace-based learning. The HSRC (1995:3) summarised this crucial debate as follows:

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

'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'.

The development of the South African NQF in particular, and NQFs in general, therefore seemed to coincide with changes in the very nature of learning and knowledge production throughout the world. NQFs both contributed to and were shaped by these changes. Kraak (1999:4), argues that the conceptualisation and development of the NQF in South Africa coincided with the emergence of a mode of knowledge production which increasingly favours 'problem-solving' (or Mode 2) knowledge:

A vibrant debate has begun in the international literature on knowledge production centred on the premise that fundamental changes are occurring in the mode of production of new knowledge (1999:1).

Young (2003:10) maintains that

...parity of esteem is not a reality in any country, partly as a result of continuing social inequalities and the unequal distribution of wealth and partly because there are real differences between types of learning.

However, despite these differences, the emerging system seems to be evolving a structure that provides a space where education and training are not considered to be opposite, but a 'continuum of learning' (Study Team). At a colloquium hosted by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) for example, the participants acknowledged that if

...education and business were not posited as opposites and if both parties could transcend "the vocabulary of condemnation" it would be possible to construct sound relationships between the partners in education and training (CHE, 2002:17).

Differences continue to hold sway between those who maintain the ideal of a fully integrated system, those who believe that there are significant differences between modes of learning that make even the loosest form of integration a remote possibility, and those who recognise these differences but argue that they represent points on a continuum.

### **NQF governance and reviews**

As we have seen, SAQA and the NQF have been subject to several reviews in the relatively short eight-year period of NQF implementation in South Africa.

The first noteworthy point is that two of the reviews were initiated (and responded to), by the political heads of the two sponsoring departments. This is significant as it points to South Africa's belief in 'the redemptive power of policy' (Jansen, 2004:88) and to the extent that policy is a symbol of a break from the past (Jansen, 2001). However, a political agenda, according to Young (2003:226) is not unique to South Africa. He maintains that 'qualifications reforms 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'.

However, the political positioning is particularly marked in South Africa and has had a major impact on the extent to which the NQF has become embedded in education and training.

In a meta-evaluation undertaken on the two reviews, Jansen (2004:52) maintains that 'it is clear that the implementation dilemmas facing SAQA, as the body tasked to oversee the development and implementation of the NQF... have their roots in unresolved political divisions, bureaucratic inertia and [the lack of] financial commitments on the part of its key sponsor-government'.

Other commentators have observed these difficulties and seem to be equally affected: in a strong response to the recently published draft Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) discussion document (DoE, 2004), the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), voiced their frustration with the lack of direction from the two departments (2004:1):

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

NAPTOSA finds it perplexing and frustrating that the tensions between the Departments of Education and Labour are such that there is a very real danger that the rift will result in "territorial" imperatives and protection of sectoral interests (along the DoE:DoL/ education:training/ academic:vocational divide) at the cost of integration across education and training and across formal: non-formal education and training opportunities...It would seem that while pace-setters in Europe are embarking on a process of developing...integrated qualifications framework[s], South Africa (because of inter-departmental differences and absence of a political will to drive the process) is preparing to make a 180 [degree] turn and head back in the direction from where we emerged in 1994!

Others commentators agree, for example:

Political contestation should now be put aside and we should honestly engage with ways in which [an integrated framework] can become a reality to ensure the development of an integrated NQF as the country moves to the notion of a "Ministry of Learning" (Mehl, 2004) in principle, if not in practice (Heyns & Needham, 2004:45)

The political contestations between the two sponsoring departments is therefore perceived as a major stumbling block for engagement with a 'complex adaptive systems such as education and training' (Mehl, 2004:21). Jansen, (2004) is much more direct in his assessment of the apparent lack of political will displayed by the departments which is 'the result of naked contestations by people/departments who are (or should be) on the same side' (NAPTOSA 2003:71).

In a number of questions posed on the occasion of the launch of the Cycle 1 Report, Jansen (2004:91) highlights some of the issues impacting on the implementation of the NQF, namely:

How do you know whether government (or another lead agency) is serious about a particular *change proposal or policy reform?*

What kinds of *resources* have been dedicated to enable change to happen?

What kinds of *plans* have been put in place to make change happen? Are the plans feasible, and do they articulate a clear and persuasive logic of implementation?

What kinds of *timeframes* have been stipulated against which reasonable progress can be measured? Are the timeframes realistic?

What kinds of *contexts* have been described, in all their variations, as the receptive sites within this change has to happen? Is there sufficient capacity within these contexts to make sense of, engage and implement the proposed changes?

What kinds of *support* for the change have been built among practitioners, policymakers and planners to ensure smooth implementation?

What kinds of *key personnel* have been identified to lead the change process? That is, is there sufficient expertise and capacity at the center to drive the change process?

What kinds of *obstacles and impediments* to change have been anticipated, and how will these concerns be addressed in the implementation process?

What kinds of concrete *benefits* flow from the change plan? In other words, why should (would) practitioners buy into the change plan to begin with?

What kinds of *consequences* result from non-implementation? Who is held accountable, and under what conditions, for implementation failure?

What kinds of *evidence* exist that this change proposal can make a positive difference in practice? In other words, is the plan credible on the ground?

Seen in this light, the implications may very well be that the 'lead agency' does not seem to be serious about 'a particular *change proposal or policy reform*' (Jansen, 2004:91). In the first review of the NQF undertaken by the Study Team (DoE, 2002:116) the notion of leadership of the NQF project was strongly underlined. The Study Team recommended that the NQF Strategic Partnership should 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

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

While this recommendation was broadly accepted in the subsequent response to the *Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework*, the departments proposed instead:

...the continuation of the DoE/DoL task team [responsible for the report *An Interdependent National Qualifications Framework System. Consultative Document*] as the nucleus of the inter-departmental NQF Strategic Team, to

- Be a permanent point of liaison between SAQA and the two departments
- Develop a broad national plan for the implementation of the NQF, to be updated annually in consultation with SAQA and formulated as an annual remit by the Ministers to SAQA
- Promote the alignment of NQF implementation with the government's HRD strategy
- Advise Ministers on SAQA's annual business plan and budget
- Consult regularly with the National Treasury on the funding of NQF implementation.

Further, linked to the leadership issue, the lack of coherence in terms of the legislation that governs education and training in South Africa seems to be exacerbating the difficulties associated with the leadership of the NQF. In a report developed for SAQA dealing with the audit of the Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs) in 2004, the independent auditors noted the lack of legislative coherence as an inhibitor to the development of an efficient quality assurance system. They noted that the 'political posturing' (SAQA, 2005:10) between the departments is having a detrimental affect on the system, for example:

The roles of SAQA, the band ETQAs, the SETAs and the professional bodies in terms of a revised NQF cannot wait any longer for clarification. This single issue alone is responsible for much of the confusion and instability in the system. In addition much of the administrative overlaps and gaps that exist in the system can also be attributed to this systemic issue....The posturing and political games that are being played at both ETQA managerial and state level with regards to territory have affected the constitutional rights of learners and providers on the ground and can no longer be tolerated. It appears as if the voices of persons whom this system was supposed to enable have been disabled by the very organisations that were entrusted with this mandate.

The auditors (SAQA, 2005) also noted that the failure of some ETQAs to achieve favourable audit reports was 'due to systemic issues, influenced in part by the fact that the ETQA(s) [have] to address more than one set of legislation.' In the case of SETA ETQAs for example, 'there has been considerable pressure from the Department of Labour (DoL) on the SETAs to perform in terms of the DoL criteria, [and] there were definitely instances where the ETQA suffered a lack of attention and resources as a result'.

It therefore seems that while the South African NQF is still considered completely central to the reconstruction of a post-apartheid society and still enjoys widespread support in its eighth year of implementation, the issues of leadership of the NQF has not yet been resolved. In addition, the fact that different sectors are governed by different sets of legislation, not necessarily aligned to the first education act promulgated after the ANC took power, namely the SAQA Act (58 of 1995), is creating confusion and contestation about the 'supremacy' of the acts promulgated for each sector.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

In Table 4 the shifts in the thinking about the NQF and the governance of the project are illustrated:

<b>Current conceptual model</b>	<b>Study team report 2002</b>	<b>Consultative document 2003</b>	<b>Draft Higher Education Qualifications Framework 2004</b>
One implementing agency (SAQA) with executive powers reporting to two ministers (Education and Labour)	Strategic partnership of implementing agency (SAQA) with the two departments (Education and Labour)	Departments of Education and Labour have a strategic role with one overseeing body (SAQA) and three implementing agencies (HI ED QC; TOP QC; GENFET QC)	Minister of Education responsible for policy One implementing agency providing intellectual and strategic leadership (SAQA) One implementing agency responsible for standard generation and quality assurance (CHE-HEQC)

Table 4: Shifts in thinking about the governance of the NQF

In the current legislative framework, the South African Qualifications Authority has executive powers over the establishment and monitoring of the quality assurance and standard-setting apparatus of the system. The Study Team in their review of the implementation of the NQF (DoE/DoL, 2002) recommended that SAQA and the two sponsoring departments take joint responsibility for the implementation agenda through a 'strategic partnership'. In the response to the review, however, the Departments recommended instead that they would take on the strategic and executive roles, that SAQA retains an oversight role and that three implementing agencies (HI-ED QC, TOP QC and GENFET QC) take charge of the operationalisation of the system (DoE/DoL, 2003). In yet another shift regarding the leadership of the NQF, the draft Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) discussion document (2004) proposed that the Minister of Education have the executive responsibility, that SAQA take responsibility for intellectual and strategic leadership and that the executive responsibility for quality assurance and standard-setting move to the CHE-HEQC.

In conclusion: the ongoing reviews of the NQF 'is best understood as part of a series of policy reviews undertaken by the second post-1994 Minister of Education' but cannot simply be seen as 'part of the normal cycle of administrative review associated with government bureaucracies throughout the world' (Jansen, 2004:49). It also seems evident that the reviews did not succeed in bringing to a close the main areas of contestation. Nevertheless, it did succeed in highlighting some key issues that need to be resolved in order for NQF implementation to be taken forward meaningfully.

The next section deals with some of the other dimensions of NQFs, which has largely been ignored in the reviews, and is included to throw some light on future NQF development.

## Towards a typology of National Qualification Frameworks

A typology of national qualifications frameworks is emerging through international debate on the usefulness and implementation of such frameworks. It is included in this chapter as a conceptual tool that may shed some light on the debates on the South African NQF.

At one time, according to Tuck, Hart and Keevy (2004:6) the term 'NQF' was closely associated with Anglophone countries such as Scotland, New Zealand and Australia, but increasingly many other countries are exploring and developing qualifications frameworks. Some member states of the European Union (EU), the Accession countries, some former Soviet Republics and many of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, such as Mauritius, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia and the Seychelles, are at various stages of NQF development and implementation.

The proposed (and perceived) benefits (cf. Tuck *et al*, 2004) of national qualifications frameworks are immensely appealing, to the extent that the international community is now talking about first generation NQFs (of which the South African NQF is considered one despite the limited time for implementation) and emerging, second generation NQFs (also see 'Origins and development of the South African NQF').

NQFs translate these perceived benefits in different ways. The characteristics of NQFs according to Raffe (2003) provide some clues to the possible models for (and problems with) implementation. He points out that NQFs can be understood in terms of five characteristics: the purpose, scope, level of prescription, incrementalism and policy breadth. Purpose, scope and level of prescription relate broadly to the debates on integration, while incrementalism and policy breadth relate to debates on leadership. Each of these are discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

### Purpose

Internationally the argument has been made that old qualifications and old qualification systems are 'frequently seen as out of date and inappropriate in the new economy, and [as] inflexible obstacles to labour market mobility and the need for lifelong learning' (Richardson in Blackmur, 2003:6). Blackmur suggests that all NQFs can be conceptualised at their most basic level as 'a set of principles in terms of which qualifications can be classified'. In most cases though, NQFs are seen to have broader purposes, such as:

- Addressing issues of social justice
- Improving access to the qualifications system and progression within it
- Establishing standards, achieving comparability and intra-national or international benchmarking (Tuck *et al*, 2004:7).

In South Africa the NQF is considered to be 'a set of principles and guidelines which provide a vision, a philosophical base and an organisational structure' for the construction of a qualification system (SAQA, 2000:1). Words such as 'vision' and 'philosophical base' hint at more than a classification system. South Africa and Namibia, in particular, have a transformation and redress agenda, but it is also clear that most countries where NQFs are being implemented have a broader view of the benefits of an NQF. As Young (2003:223) notes, the rhetoric or broad goals of NQFs are hard to disagree with. He asks 'who could not want qualifications to be more linked to each other and to exhibit greater transparency'?

The proposed benefits of NQFs therefore include (Tuck *et al*, 2004:7):

- Making the qualifications system easier to understand
- Making progression routes easier and clearer/improving career mobility
- Increasing and improving credit transfer between qualifications
- Improving the recognition of prior learning
- Improving access to education and training opportunities
- Rationalising qualifications by removing duplication of provision
- Ensuring that qualifications are relevant to perceived social and economic needs
- Ensuring that education and training standards are defined and applied consistently
- Securing international recognition for national qualifications

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

The purposes of qualification frameworks could include 'frameworks of communication' and 'regulatory frameworks' (Young, 2005:13). Young (2004) maintains that this distinction relates directly to the goals of an NQF. In 'frameworks of communication', the framework provides a map of qualifications and possible progression routes between levels and, in principle, across sectors. In 'regulatory frameworks' there is a more deliberate political intervention that seeks to effect change in education and training using an NQF as a vehicle. Such frameworks are usually 'associated with concerns about quality (e.g. in the training provider market) or as a lever for ambitious qualifications reform (South Africa, New Zealand)' (Tuck *et al*, 2004:3). The South African NQF can be considered to be a 'regulatory' framework with the purpose to 'communicate' a common format.

### **Scope**

The scope of an NQF refers to the education and training sectors included in the framework. While some NQFs mainly function in vocational education and training (VET), most NQFs seek to eventually increase the scope by developing relationships between all categories of education and training.

A useful classification of the scope of NQFs was developed by David Raffe (2003), namely a 'tracked, linked' or 'unified' system. In a 'tracked system' each of the separate components of the education and training system has distinctive purposes and a different ethos associated with each track; in a 'linked system', there are common elements across tracks and the purposes and ethos overlap; a 'unified system' displays multiple purposes, has a pluralistic ethos and integrates academic and vocational learning (Raffe, 2003). The South African NQF is currently the best example of a unified system. Table 5 below highlights the main differences:

Tracked	Linked	Unified
Vocational and general education organised in separate and distinctive tracks	Different tracks exist with emphasis on similarities and equivalence. Common structures. Credit transfer between tracks	No tracks Single system

Table 5: Scope and policy breadth of NQFs

### **Level of prescription**

In relation to *prescriptiveness*, Young (2003) distinguishes between 'strong' and 'weak' frameworks. Tuck *et al* (2004) prefer to call them 'tight' and 'loose' frameworks because of the possible derogatory connotation with 'weak'.

Broadly, a 'tight' framework refers to a high level of prescription about qualification design, quality assurance and key system features, while 'loose' frameworks are based on general principles which 'accept that there are valid differences between types of learning or education/training sectors, and to work with the grain of education and training institution practice' (Tuck *et al*, 2004:5), e.g.:

Tight	Loose
Prescriptive about qualification design and quality assurance Regulatory purpose Aim to achieve wider social goals Tend to apply common rules and procedures across all sectors	Based on general principles Seek to communicate Regulate to some extent Accept differences between sectors

Table 6: Prescriptiveness of NQFs

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

'Tight' frameworks are often associated with controversy and contestation. Tuck *et al* (2004:5) maintain that such contestation:

...largely [arises] from resistance in the university and school sectors to what may be perceived as the imposition of alien and inappropriate ideas and processes imported from VET. This has been evident both in South Africa and New Zealand, but also in Scotland where a particular reform (Higher Still) had tight features related to assessment that provoked some opposition in the school sector.

In addition, the 'tightness' or 'looseness' of a framework may illuminate the discussion on integration. In the current integration debate, the focus is on a 'unified', 'linked' or 'tracked' system, but such a system may also have the added dimension of being 'tight' or 'loose'. The diagram below explains this notion:

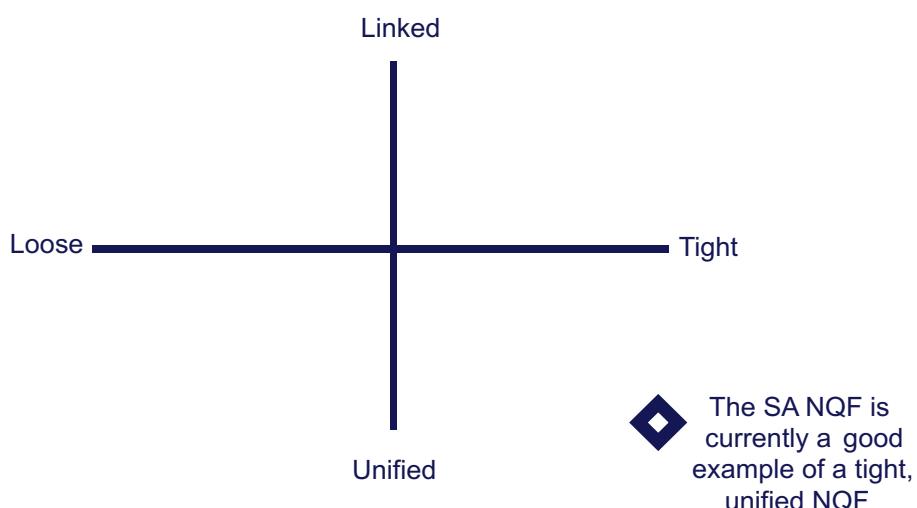


Diagram 4: Scope and prescriptiveness of NQFs

### **Incrementalism**

The degree of voluntarism in terms of the participation of different components of the education and training system, (such as vocational and academic, further and higher education) is characteristic of the scope of a system, and implementation of the system usually takes place on a more *incremental* basis, i.e. it is implemented over time and at differing paces amongst the components of the system. The Irish NQF for example, came into being over a period of twenty years (Granville, 2003).

In Scotland, the framework was also built over a long time, with relative absence of conflict and controversy. However, as Tuck *et al* (2004:13) note: 'countries such as South Africa, aiming for radical transformation, understandably wish to build their frameworks more quickly' and therefore aim to include all sectors and levels of education and training.

### **Policy breadth**

Raffe (2003) describes *policy breadth* as 'the extent to which the establishment of the framework is directly and explicitly linked with other measures to influence how the framework is used'. The South African NQF is seen to be one of three pillars to transform education and training, and by implication society, with its association with the Human Resource Development and National Skills Development strategies. Tuck *et al* (2004:13) point out that it is the policy breadth that may lead to 'exaggerated and unrealistic impressions of what the building of an NQF can achieve in isolation from other developments'. This comment was also made by the Study Team (DoE & DoL, 2002:66):

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

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.

An important point to note is that even if a framework is only considered to be a 'classification system' (Blackmur, 2004), it is unreasonable to expect that the NQF can achieve its objectives on its own. There is sufficient evidence, for example, from the Irish and Scottish experiences that a single strategy is not enough to lead to deep change in the education and training system. It is therefore quite interesting to note that the two other 'legs' of South Africa's national approach to human resource development, namely the Human Resource Development (HRD) and National Skills Development (NSD) strategies, are not nearly as contested, and certainly not as reviewed, as the NQF has been (and continues to be). The South African NQF, however, has been consciously dubbed as a 'social construct', and not only as a 'classification system'. Cosser (2001:157), says that

...by a "social construct" SAQA means in the first instance [it] is a mental construction (of a framework) that is socially determined - shaped by consensus of those individuals and groups party to its construction...

Policy breadth is also linked to the notion of 'intrinsic' versus 'institutional logic' (Raffe, 2003:242) and to 'communities of trust' (Young, 2003:18). If the focus, in reforming an education and training system is only on the building of a framework, only the 'intrinsic logic' is addressed. Tuck (*et al*, 2004:8) maintains that 'the intrinsic logic of an NQF arises from its design features, such as flexible pathways and the establishment of equivalences between different qualifications'. However, deep change in the way that practitioners act on the ground needs to be supported by wider policies and initiatives that will address 'institutional logic', e.g.:

[Institutional logic comprises] the opportunities, incentives and constraints arising from such factors as the policies of educational institutions (in their roles as providers and selectors), funding and regulatory requirements, timetabling and resource constraints, the relative status of different fields of study and the influence of the labour market and the social structure. A qualifications framework may be ineffective if it is not complemented by measures to reform the surrounding institutional logic, for example, local institutional agreements to promote credit transfer, or encouragement to employers to reflect credit values in their selection processes (Raffe, 2003:242)

It is evident, from international practice, that it is not sufficient to focus only on building progression pathways into a framework. Young (2003:18) maintains that it is also necessary to build 'communities [of trust and/or practice] with shared experience (which is often expertise in a subject or occupational field), which provide people with the basis for making judgments'.

To conclude; it is also evident that there is growing international support for establishing NQFs in trying to achieve the widely accepted public goals of promoting social justice, improving access to education and training and raising standards. However, Young (2005:1) asserts that there is 'relatively little evidence from the experience of countries that have already introduced NQFs that they can achieve the goals claimed from them'. He maintains that political reasons are behind the implementation of NQFs, particularly in terms of making a 'break from the past' and for increased national accountability of education and training systems. In South Africa the political rather than the educational purpose of the NQF seems to dominate: Jansen, (2004:50), for example, is of the opinion that 'the first ten years of policy making in South Africa, following official moves towards a new democracy, hinged largely on the symbolism rather than the substance of change in education' (2001:41) and consequently that the two reviews<sup>12</sup> of the South African NQF reflect 'a political intervention intended to revisit, revise or even reverse policies around which the political agenda has shifted' (2004:50).

### A new NQF landscape

The South African NQF has been subject to debate and contestation from the outset. A respondent in the Cycle 1 report (SAQA, 2004:27) noted that

...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 strategy.

<sup>12</sup> Study Team Report (DoE & DoL, 2002) and Consultative Document (DoE and DoL, 2003)

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

The discussions and recommendations emanating from the two reviews and the draft discussion document dealing with the Higher Education Qualification Framework policy regarding the architecture of the NQF have significant implications for how the new NQF landscape may look in the near future. The following is a brief summary of the recommendations:

The *Study Team* (DoE and DoL, 2002) recommended that a permanent NQF strategic partnership consisting of the Department of Education, the Department of Labour and SAQA be formed and enacted in law. It was also recommended that standards writing and quality assurance bodies be hosted under one roof.

The *Inter-Departmental Task Team* (DoE and DoL, 2003) recommended that a permanent inter-departmental NQF strategic partnership be established that would interact with a National Human Resource Development Forum. It was also recommended that three new standards-generation and quality assurance bodies be constituted: TOP QC (to include the SETAs and professional bodies); HI ED QC (to include the CHE and HEQC); GENFET QC (to include Umalusi, NBFET and NABABET). Other recommendations included a ten level NQF, three sets of level descriptors to describe the competencies required for General, General Vocational and TOP career and learning paths and three pathways to relate to one another as partnered pairs, namely: (1) Stand alone discipline-based qualifications with components of workplace practice; (2) Stand alone occupational context-based qualifications with components of discipline-based study.

The draft *HEQF* (DoE, 2003) recommended a permanent inter-departmental NQF Committee reporting to the Minister of Education and that only two new standards-generation and quality assurance bodies be constituted: HI ED Qualification Council; and GENFET Qualification Council.

Table 7 reflects how these ongoing NQF review processes might be viewed in the light of the suggested typology of national qualification frameworks:

	<b>Current conceptual model</b>	<b>Study Team Report (DoE and DoL, 2002)</b>	<b>Consultative Document (DoE and DoL, 2003)</b>	<b>Draft Higher Education Qualifications Framework (DoE, 2004)</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Social justice Improve access Establish standards	Social justice Improve access Establish standards	Social justice Improve access Establish standards	Silent on these issues
<b>Scope</b>	Unified	3 tracks linked	3 tracks linked	Tracks not necessarily linked Recognise differences in purpose, content, outcomes or equivalence but similarity in terms of levels
<b>Prescription</b>	Tight	Tight	Tight	Tight
<b>Incrementalism</b>	Regulatory	Regulatory	Regulatory	Regulatory
<b>Policy breadth</b>	Combines intrinsic and institutional logic	Sees the NQF as an element in transformation	Sees the NQF as one of three pillars in transformation, with HRD and Skills Development Strategy	Sees HEQF as part of other policy initiatives in higher education and within the broader NQF

Table 7: The shifting typology of the South African NQF

## CHAPTER FOUR: BASELINE FINDINGS

### Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the research undertaken for the second cycle of the Study, which was carried out in the period July 2004 to February 2005. The aim of the second cycle was to establish a baseline against which to measure the progress of the NQF.

The following stakeholder groupings were included in interviews, focus groups and a national survey (refer to Table 3 in Chapter 2 for a detailed breakdown of the sample):

- providers of education and training (GET/FET/HET, public/private, large/SMME, workplace-based/not-workplace-based);
- employers (large/SMME, levy payers/non-levy payers);
- organised labour (education and other);
- Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (including professional bodies);
- standards setting bodies (NSBs and SGBs);
- government departments (mainly Education and Labour);
- learners (from a range of providers); and
- employees (from a range of employers).

The baseline findings are ordered according to the 17 Impact Indicators developed during Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study (see Table 1 on page 17). A quantitative summary of the combined responses from the SAQA administered questionnaires (summarised in Annexure 1) and the survey responses (Annexure 8) are given. In cases where there were significant differences between the two sets of responses comments are included. The quantitative summary is then discussed in more detail with supporting evidence from the qualitative analysis of the interviews (Annexures 2-6), the quantitative overview of data on the NLRD (Annexure 7) and the qualitative analysis of qualifications on the NLRD (included in Annexure 8). The summary per Impact Indicator is concluded with a judgment on the level of impact of the indicator. Four levels of impact are used (as described in Chapter 2):

<b>HP: High positive impact</b>	The research evidence shows a marked positive change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF
<b>M: Moderate impact</b>	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
<b>MM: Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
<b>N: Negative impact</b>	The research evidence shows a marked negative change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

It is important to note that the level of impact is suggested for the overall Impact Indicator, and not for specific questions that are part of the set. Although the set may contain the whole spectrum, i.e. a low rating per question, a moderate rating per question and a high rating per question, the judgment is made based on the *balance* of the findings.

### Baseline findings of the NQF Impact Study

As explained in Chapter 2, the empirical findings of the second Cycle of the NQF Impact Study are sourced<sup>13</sup> mainly from:

- Stakeholder interviews and focus groups conducted by SAQA - Annexures 1 to 6;
- Quantitative and qualitative analyses of qualifications on the NLRD conducted by SAQA and an external agency - Annexures 7 and 8;
- A national survey that included 623 respondents across all nine provinces in a variety of sectors, also conducted by an external agency - Annexure 8.

The following format, categorised per Impact Indicator, is followed:

- Tabular overview of responses to the national survey (not all Impact Indicators were included in the survey);
- Comments on the responses, including qualitative support from interviews and NLRD analyses; and
- Rating of the level of impact.

In addition to the findings presented according to the Impact Indicators a number of overarching issues were also identified. These are not discussed in this chapter but are captured in Appendix 5 as aspects that require further research. Examples include:

- Difficulties around the matriculation certificate, particularly with regard to RPL;
- Misconceptions around skills levy claims; and
- Quality of registered assessors.

<sup>13</sup> References to the Annexure are maintained throughout. The format (x:y) is used, where x refers to the number of the Annexure, and y the page number in the particular annexure.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### Indicator 1: Number of qualifications

The number of NQF registered qualifications

No questions directly related to *Number of qualifications* were asked in the survey.

The following overview of NQF qualifications and unit standards is included as background:

A *qualification* is “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 made up of “registered statements of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria, describing the quality of the expected performance” (SAQA, 2000b:8). Unit standards are always based on specific outcomes and associated assessment criteria.

There are two *classes of qualification* on the NQF:

*Unit standard-based qualifications*: Qualifications that are made up of a specific grouping of unit standards so that specific rules of combination for a qualification can be 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 standard-based qualifications*: These are qualifications that specify only the exit level outcomes and assessment criteria (ELOAC) 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.<sup>14</sup>

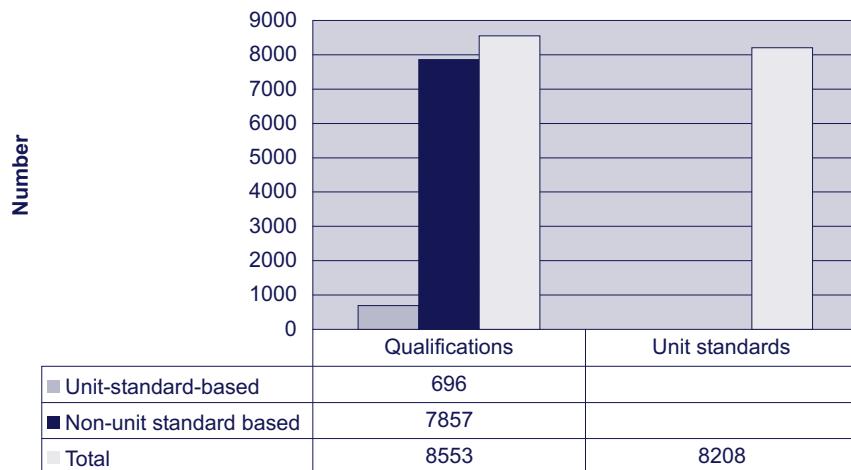
Qualifications that existed prior to NQF implementation were registered on an interim basis by providers between July 1998 and June 2003. This process was initiated at the early stage of NQF development mainly in an attempt to accommodate the huge numbers of existing qualifications. It was also an attempt to give existing providers the opportunity to gradually align their qualifications to the NQF requirements, specifically placing the qualifications within an outcomes-based framework. All those qualifications that were previously registered on an interim basis have been fully registered on the NQF until June 2006 and are therefore included in this overview of all registered qualifications. All these “historical” qualifications fall within the non-unit standard-based *class*.

<sup>14</sup>For this reason non-unit standard-based qualifications are also referred to as ELOAC-qualifications.

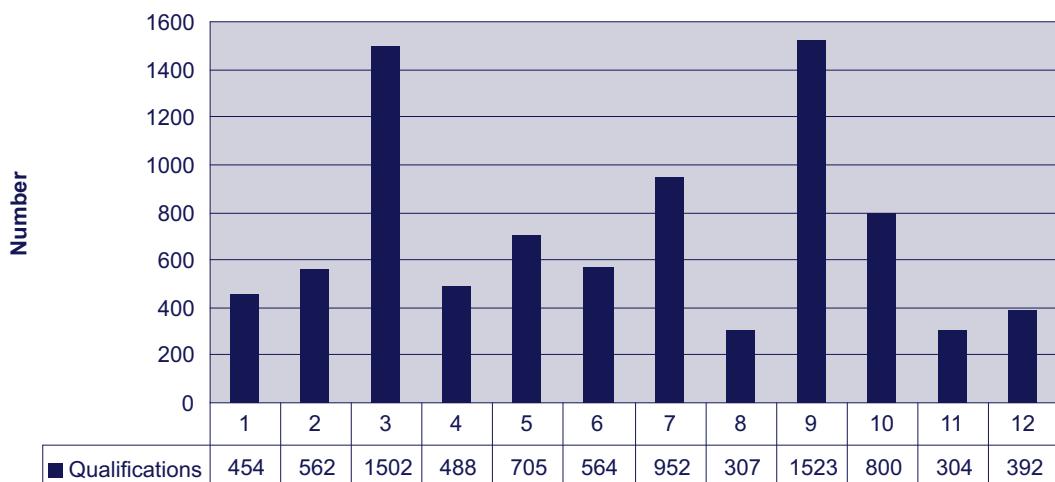
# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

At the time that this report was compiled (March 2005) there were 8,553 qualifications and 8,208 unit standards registered<sup>15</sup> on the NQF. Of the 8,553 qualifications, 8% (696) were unit standard-based. Graphs 2 to 6 below are graphical representation of these totals.



Graph 2: Qualifications and Unit Standards registered on the NQF

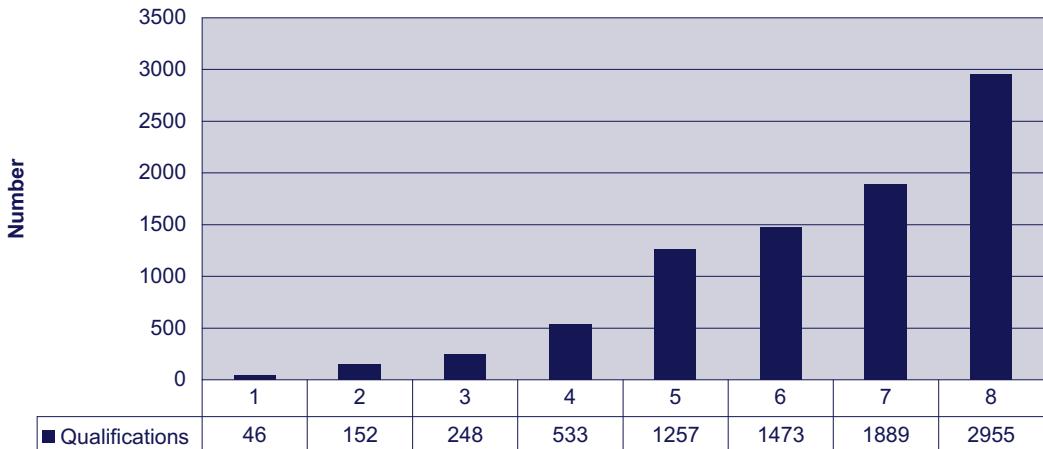


Graph 3: Qualifications by NQF Organising Field<sup>16</sup>

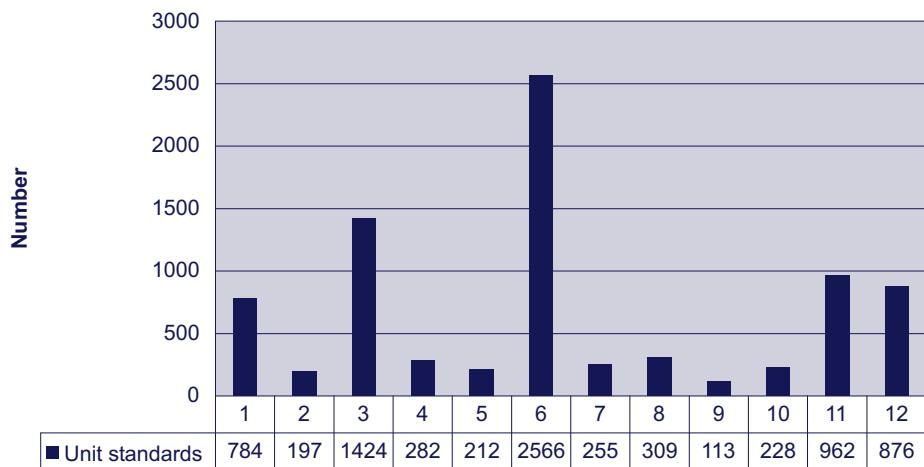
<sup>15</sup>Registration statuses 'Registered', 'Registered capture in progress' and 'Reregistered' were combined. Other registration statuses have been excluded.  
<sup>16</sup>There are 12 NQF Organising Fields (also described in Appendix 3):

- (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.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

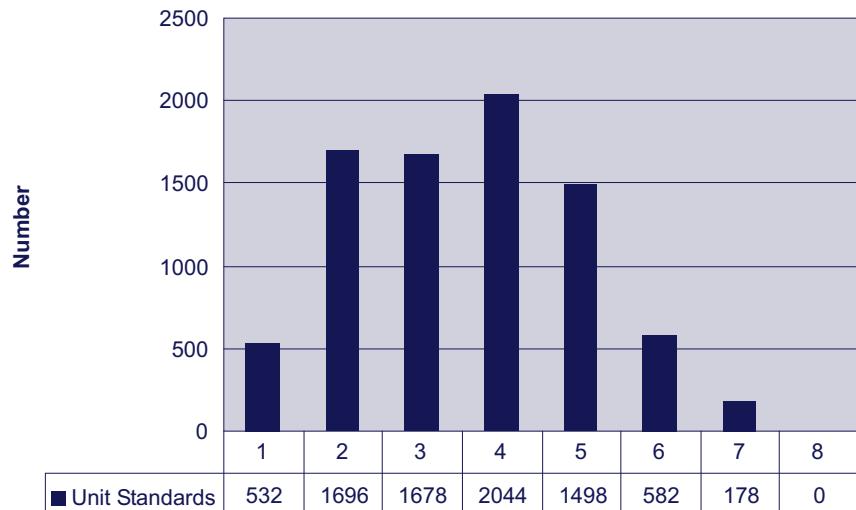


Graph 4: Qualifications by NQF Level



Graph 5: Unit Standards by NQF Organising Field

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**



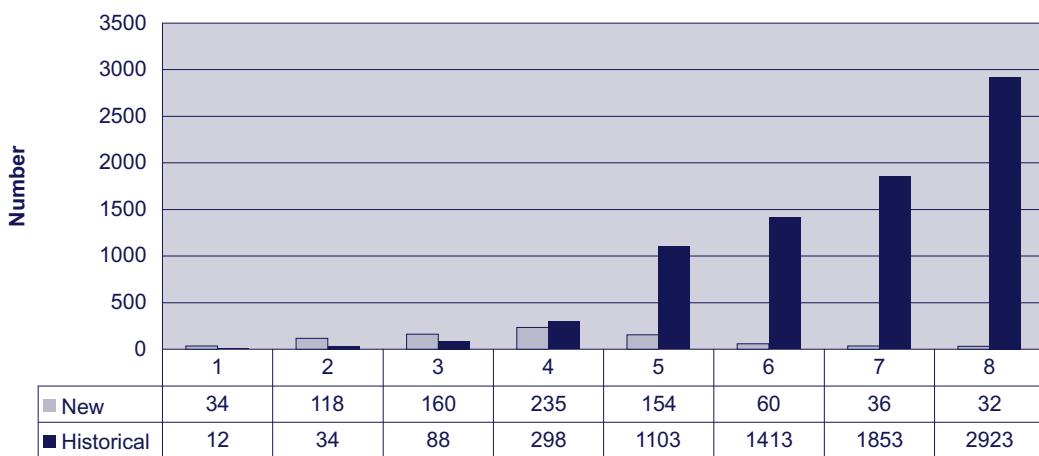
Graph 6: Unit standards by NQF Level

During the interviews respondents noted that the “new” NQF qualifications are considered to be broader than the old technical college qualifications (4:20) and the scope of qualifications becoming available is positive (4:21). More qualifications are also becoming available in new and emerging (non-traditional) fields of learning (4:21).

A departmental official raised the issue of the need for an “audit” to determine which qualifications are available:

Once we know what the country needs at a higher level, you must take that need and check what is available on the NQF. Such a process must take place up to the point where we say, “But we still sit with these areas where there are no qualifications.” It is difficult to say yes, or no, it is not enough. Maybe we are sitting with all of them (3:8).

A comparison between the “historical” qualifications (developed by providers) and “new” qualifications developed after the NQF was established shows a significant increase in qualifications available at NQF Levels 3, 4 and 5, even though the numbers are still relatively low. This is illustrated in the graph below.

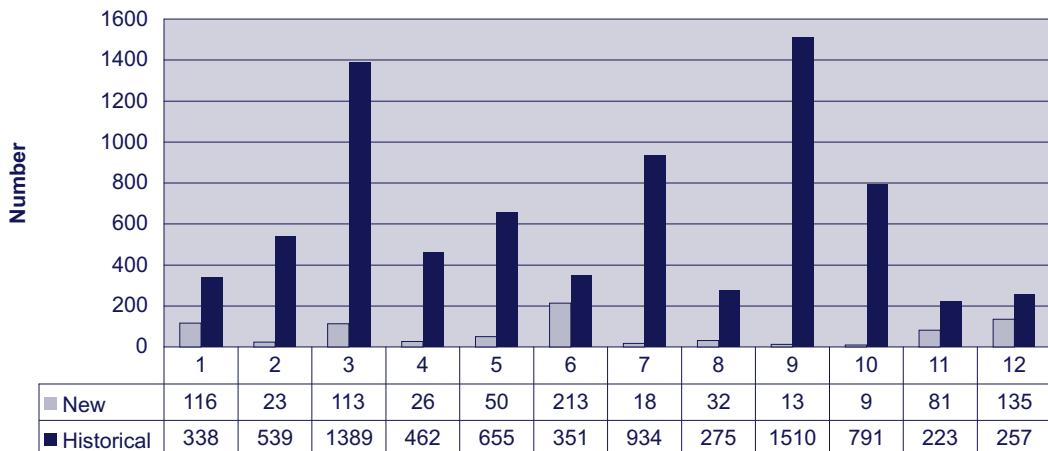


Graph 7: Comparison between “historical” and “new” qualifications by NQF Level

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

A similar comparison between the “historical” and “new” qualifications by NQF Organising Field shows highest activity in Organising Field 6 (Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology) for the “new” qualifications, whereas Organising Fields 3 (Business, Commerce and Management Studies) and 9 (Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences) were highest for the “historical” qualifications. This is illustrated in the graph below.



Graph 8: Comparison between “historical” and “new” qualifications by NQF Organising Field

### *Level of impact*

<b>Moderate impact</b>	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
------------------------	---

The evidence presented on this first Impact Indicator, *Number of qualifications*, suggests that the level of impact is moderate. The shift in the development of qualifications to NQF Levels 3, 4 and 5 (Graph 6), the registration of all provider-based qualifications on the NQF and the significant development of new unit standards all contribute to a marked positive change. On the other hand, the large number of “historical qualifications” (7,454) currently registered on the NQF still requires considerable attention. Although all these qualifications were submitted in an outcomes-based format, many require redesign that extends beyond compliance.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

### Indicator 2: Effectiveness of qualification design

The contribution that qualifications design makes to ease of access, mobility and progression of learners

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't know/ Too soon to say
The design of NQF qualifications contributes to the improved access of learners to further and higher education and training institutions	6,7%	75,6%	17,7%
The implementation of the NQF has enabled learners and employees to gain access to further and higher education and training <i>regardless of race, gender or disability</i>	10,0%	71,5%	18,5%
Employees who have completed, or are in the process of completing, NQF qualifications, <i>progress well in the organisational environment</i>	8,6%	56,2%	35,2%
NQF designed qualifications are a significant factor when considering <i>employment</i>	11,8%	67,4%	20,8%
NQF quality assurance practices ensure that qualifications are based on <i>nationally agreed standards</i>	7,9%	76,6%	15,4%
Standards setting arrangements ensure that qualifications are <i>fit-for-purpose</i>	7,6%	73,7%	18,7%
NQF qualifications increase the mobility of employees - thus <i>decrease the stability of the workforce</i> in an organisation	22,1%	53,1%	24,8%
There has been <i>upward mobility</i> within the organisation as a result of improved qualifications through the establishment of the NQF	15,4%	50,8%	33,9%

Table 8: Survey responses for Indicator 2

Most respondents (75,6%) agreed that the design of NQF qualifications could contribute to improved access to further and higher education institutions. Even so, very limited evidence of relevant examples was presented during the interviews. Respondents tended to conflate issues related to qualification design with broader overarching aspects such as quality assurance and progression within the workplace.

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, the design of qualifications do seem to enhance access by providing flexible entry and progression pathways. Access to the National Certificate in the Supervision of Civil Engineering Construction, for example, allows for the following categories of learners to enrol:

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

- Learners who have attended short courses or completed basic education at FET or ABET level 4
- Learners that are employed and have acquired skills and knowledge
- Learners that have participated in skills programmes
- Learners that have completed portions of a formal course and have dropped out due to financial reasons (8: 25)

This feature was consistent across all three sectors analysed (8:23 - 60).

Some respondents were of the opinion that non-unit standard-based qualifications were more useable than unit standard-based qualifications (2:10). An ETQA manager noted:

I know a lot of the other ETQAs don't like provider-linked qualifications. I personally love them. I think it is fantastic, because you can then really do benchmarking in terms of syllabi content and entrance of outcome content and learner competency content.

There still seems to be a divide between unit standard-based and non-unit standard-based qualifications (2:10). Formal, discipline-based qualifications still seem to be considered more important than workplace-based and other qualifications (3:9). An ETQA noted, for example:

[It is not] that [qualifications] are not practical enough but that there is a divide between the ...university-type standard and ours which, quite frankly, is only now starting to be developed by the universities and technikons (2:10).

There was a mixed reaction to the extent to which qualifications are considered a significant factor for employment. Comments such as 'we are not there yet' (6:9) and 'we are beginning to see many adverts' (3:9) were common. Although it was noted that progress in the workplace is not dependent only on NQF qualifications (3:9), some responses were very positive (3:9) and showed general acceptance of the value of qualifications in the workplace.

Likewise, the 'upward mobility' of employees in organisations, is not yet evident - over a third (33,9%) of respondents indicated that they don't know, or that it is still too soon to say.

The value of combining theory and practice in qualifications was noted by many respondents. Concern was expressed about the extent to which qualifications, particularly the matric certificate, exclude a practical component and are therefore unable to prepare the learner for the workplace. It was noted that, as a result of this, many people with matriculation certificates are unemployed:

...you would find in most cases it's because they don't have the necessary skills to enter the labour market (4:11).

Conflicting comments were made about nationally agreed standards and standard setting arrangements. There is strong support for the principle of standard setting (76,6% and 73,7% respectively) and there is evidence that the principles of stakeholder involvement through representation on Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) and a call for public comment before standards are registered, are perceived to enhance the relevance of qualifications (8:23). Unit standards seem to be considered valuable in drafting courses for the workplace (4:10) and the guidelines for the format of qualifications are found useful in the reconfiguration of old programmes (4:17), but some fundamental unit standards, particularly at NQF level 1, are considered to be pitched too high, while other unit standards are seen to be over-specific (reductionist).

General comments on the effectiveness of qualification design included:

- qualifications enable employees to progress in an organisation (3:9)
- qualifications can be used to determine what skills people have, or should have (3:9)
- access is not improved by the design of the qualification but through implementation by the provider (4:8)
- some higher education qualifications are not relevant (4:12)

Responses tended to focus on specific problems related to qualifications. Examples include:

- proposed positioning of SGBs under SETAs is considered problematic (2:8)
- short courses need to be aligned (6:7)
- discipline-based qualifications are considered more important (3:16)

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### *Level of impact*

<b>Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
-----------------------------	--

The evidence presented on this Impact Indicator, *Effectiveness of qualification design*, suggests that the level of impact is minimal/mixed.

Conflicting responses on aspects such as the significance of qualifications for employment and a range of related problems contribute to this rating. The many general comments, with few concrete examples, also point towards the fact that respondents had difficulty in answering these questions, and therefore also had difficulty in isolating qualification design issues. It is acknowledged that few people are directly involved in curriculum development and that more SGB/NSB responses could have been included.

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, this indicator was useful in determining the extent to which qualifications design supports the broader principles of the NQF.

From the evidence it is also possible that this Impact Indicator is too broad as it overlapped significantly with other indicators. It is recommended that it be modified to focus more on the effect of qualification design *on learning programme design* in future cycles (refer to the list of methodological findings presented in Chapter 2).

### **Indicator 3: Portability of Qualifications**

The extent to which qualifications facilitate the mobility of learners horizontally, diagonally and vertically

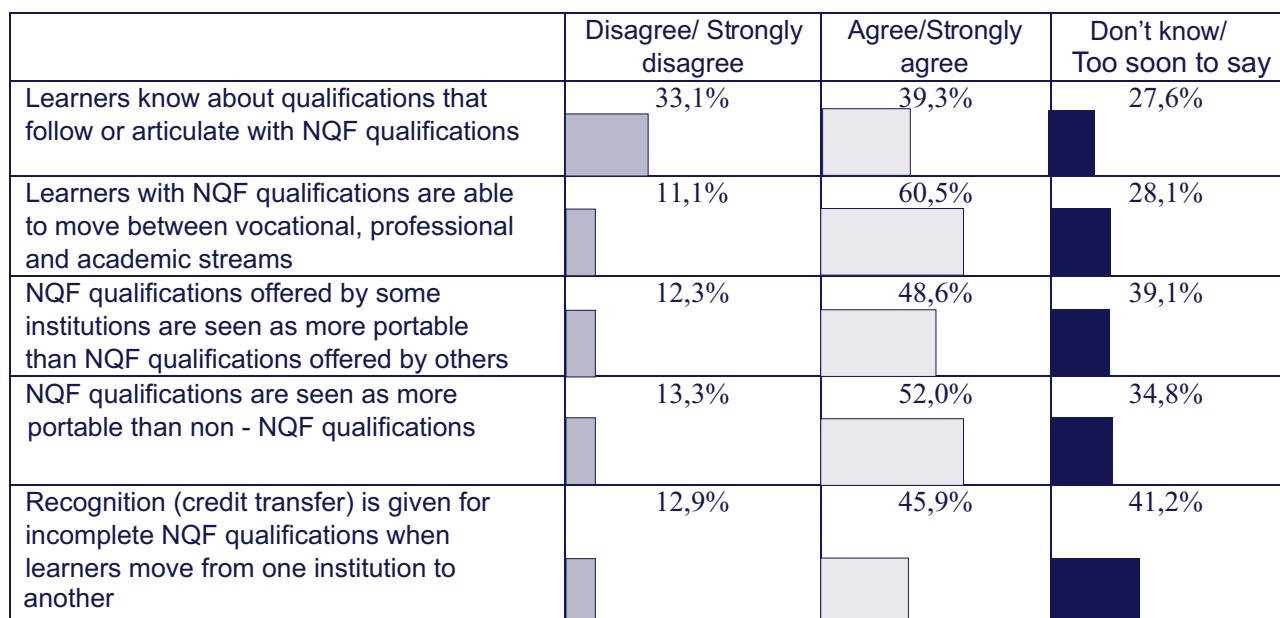


Table 9: Survey responses for Indicator 3

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

Almost two thirds of respondents (60,5%) thought that NQF qualifications encouraged educational mobility (the ability to move between streams) and were more portable than non-NQF qualifications. Slightly less than half (48,6%) believed that the institution attended affected portability. However, more than a third of respondents (39,1%) were as yet undecided on these questions.

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, this perception was confirmed. Mobility, particularly within the three sectors, seems to be enhanced by the articulation possibilities created within a suite of qualifications. Articulation is facilitated by common unit standards in the fundamental and core components of qualifications (8:60).

In addition, portability and credit transfer are possible across fields and sectors due to the generic nature of parts of the qualifications (8:60). In the Mining and Minerals sector analysis, for example, with the exception of Jewellery qualifications, most of the qualifications analysed enable mobility to other sectors, thereby improving career opportunities and career pathways (8:47).

There was a tendency for respondents to believe that learners did not know about progression routes into or out of NQF qualifications. Less than half the sample (45,9%) thought there was recognition of incomplete NQF qualifications, although almost an equal proportion (41,2%) did not know or felt it was too soon to say.

The interviews provided little evidence on learners' knowledge about qualifications apart from a comment that trainees did not really understand certification and were simply interested in the training (3:12).

Other interview responses treated the issues of moving between streams, portability and credit transfer holistically. Little elaboration was offered to support the belief that learners could move between streams and few actual examples of portability were offered. There were many comments to support the survey finding that qualifications from some institutions were more portable than others (see the responses below on beliefs about the quality of institutions).

The responses in the survey interviews focused on the barriers to achieving portability. The two most important barriers were:

- Beliefs about the quality of institutions or education sectors
- Institutional practices

Many respondents pointed to the unwillingness of certain sectors of education or training to trust the qualifications gained in other sectors. Universities did not accept technikon qualifications (4:12) according to one provider, although an employer (6:9) said there was evidence of vertical progression from technikons to universities. Technikons were said not to accept private provider qualifications (2:16). Academic qualifications were viewed as superior to training qualifications (4:13). One respondent thought that while progression from FET level 4 to diploma level 5 was possible, progression from an FET college to a university was much less likely (4:18).

There was a perception that there are disparities of esteem within educational sectors, such as the problem of historically disadvantaged institutions (4:19) and that rural universities were of lower status than urban universities (3:10).

There was also a more general problem stemming from perceptions of the quality of individual institutions (3:10). Not surprisingly, some universities were seen to have higher status than others (4:17 and 6:9). It was also stated that students might have fears about 'fly by night' private training providers (4:17).

Several system features and practices were seen to inhibit portability. Some respondents said that providers did not talk enough to one another. One thought that the system worked despite this lack of communication (2:16) while others thought this was a serious problem. Other inhibiting factors were said to be:

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

- The drive for profit by educational institutions - this creates a reluctance to recognise more credits as this would mean a shorter period of time at the receiving institution (3:10)
- The 50% residency clause that inhibited transfer of credits between institutions for more than 50% of credits already attained at the first institution (3:10)
- Modular versus semester systems (3:10)
- The practice of re-assessing students on entry (4:16)
- Differences in syllabus content or length of study (4:16)
- Continuing limitations of portability of qualifications between universities (4:13)

Respondents referred to these problems of trust in other institutions' quality, parity of esteem and institutional practices, without elaborating on them.

It should also be noted that for this indicator, in particular, across all the questionnaire questions, there is a high number of respondents indicating 'don't know', or 'too soon to say' (between 26,5% and 45,4%).

### *Level of impact*

<b>Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
-----------------------------	--

Minimal impact has so far been achieved for the *Portability of qualifications*. The questionnaire returns suggest that respondents were fairly equivocal about the level of progress and the interviews threw up few concrete examples of portability. The Cycle 1 Report (SAQA, 2004) had an indicative finding that portability might be a problem area. This indicative finding may now be regarded as confirmed.

### Indicator 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)

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't Know/ Too soon to say
Employees who have completed, or are in the process of completing, NQF qualifications acquire learning that is relevant to the workplace	4,5%	77,4%	18,1%
Relevant workplace related NQF qualifications are widely available	21,8%	51,8%	26,4%
Learnerships are addressing the skills shortage in the country	12,4%	69,2%	18,4%
NQF-aligned skills programmes are addressing the skills shortage in the country	9,5%	69,0%	21,5%
NQF qualifications are offered in new and emerging fields of learning	6,7%	66,4%	26,9%
Existing NQF qualifications are changed in response to the needs of the workplace, industry and society	9,2%	63,4%	27,4%

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

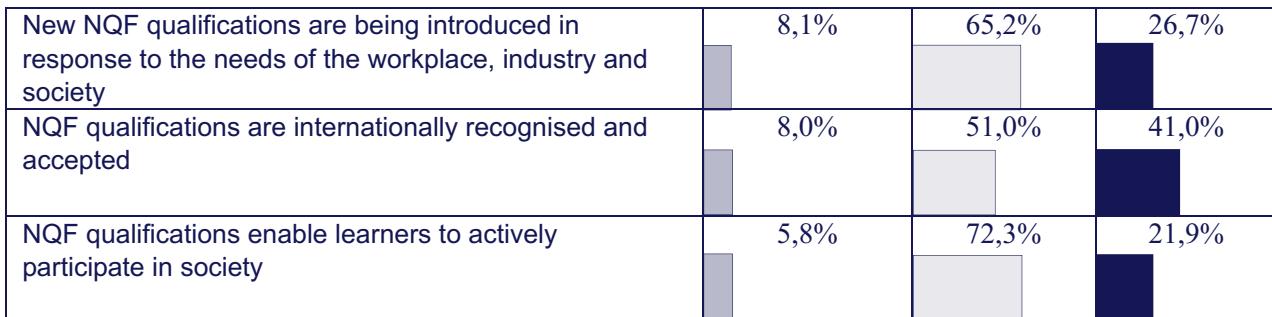


Table 10: Survey responses for Indicator 4

The majority of respondents (77,4%) thought that NQF qualifications are very relevant. One respondent indicated that 'qualifications are the only measurable factor that we could consider before we employ someone' (3:13). Workplace-based qualifications, in particular, are considered responsive to the needs of employers and learners and may consequently lead to employment (4:22). Employers felt that NQF qualifications enable learners to put theory into practice (6:11).

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, this perception was again confirmed. Across all three sectors, responsiveness and relevance to the needs of workplaces was particularly evident (8:23 - 60).

While support was noted for newly developed higher education qualifications (3:15) and for career-oriented qualifications (as offered by universities of technology) (4:22), qualifications offered by universities were often criticized as not being responsive to the needs of the market and society (4:21; 4:22). A public higher education institution for example noted that they had received comments that 'the graduates you are producing are not ready for work' (4:22) and that 'degrees are not found to be applicable directly to the market' (4:23). University qualifications therefore do not seem to 'correspond to the challenges' of industry and workplaces (4:23).

School qualifications and teacher qualifications in particular, were mentioned as being outdated and not preparing graduates adequately for work (4:22; 4:23).

Public higher education institutions felt frustrated by the requirements of the Department of Education in terms of the registration of new qualifications and their lack of involvement with learnerships (4:22) or other viable workplace-related education and training such as internships and workplace assessment (3:14).

Two thirds of the respondents (66,4%) felt that the non-traditional qualifications were increasingly available and indicated that they believed these qualifications were being developed in response to the needs of the workplace, industry and society (65,2%). In addition, almost two thirds of respondents (63,4%) indicated that existing qualifications were currently undergoing substantial reformatting in response to these needs. However, just more than half of the respondents (51,8%) were satisfied with the availability of such qualifications.

More than two thirds of respondents indicated that they believe that learnerships and skills programmes were addressing the skills shortages in the country (69,2% and 69,0% respectively). Employers consider learnerships particularly relevant (6:10). In addition, new NQF qualifications are considered to be broader than old technical college qualifications, encompassing more knowledge and skills than previously required (4:20). The holistic nature of qualifications also became evident through the analysis of the NQF registered qualifications (8:23 - 60). In the National Certificate in Construction Plastering, for example, the qualification addresses knowledge, skills and competencies required in the construction industry, but also includes management and entrepreneurial skills and enables the learner to become a member of the professional community of the sector (8:41).

In addition, many of the qualifications analysed in the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, enables learners to build up credits through skills programmes (8:56).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

However, a number of respondents noted that there were not enough learnerships (3:13; 5:10; 6:12) and that some learnerships have too narrow a focus (3:13) and therefore might inhibit the transfer of knowledge and skills across contexts. In some cases the learnership levels may be too low and do not seem to match the requirements of the workplace.

While some respondents indicated that more attention should be given to the need for particular skills in a specific region, e.g. engineering, hospitality, tourism and agriculture (3:17), others felt that in some sectors there was a proliferation of qualifications and that the sector should undertake an audit to determine its needs (3:15).

Unit standards are considered valuable in drafting learning programmes for the workplace (4:10) and the generic guidelines for qualifications are found to be useful in the reconfiguration of old provider-based programmes.

In general, perceptions of the international comparability of NQF qualifications is average. Half of the respondents (51,0%) agreed that NQF qualifications were internationally comparable while more than a third (41,0%) said that they did not know or that it was too soon to say. Nevertheless, an ETQA stated that their qualifications were closely aligned with international standards (2:11) and that it was important for them to retain international recognition. A provider noted that new qualifications and unit standards would facilitate international benchmarking (4:24). Another ETQA noted that international recognition depended on the institution where the qualification was obtained (2:12). In some cases, international standards were considered to be more valuable than the qualification, particularly in the Information Technology environment (4:24).

Almost three quarters of respondents (72,3%) indicated that they believe that NQF qualifications enable learners to participate actively in society, while less than a quarter (21,9%) did not know, or thought it was too soon to say.

Other important issues raised include the following:

- The qualification and standard setting processes seem to be creating closer interaction between providers, the ETQAs and SGBs (2:12)
- The department (Labour) in particular is not convinced that employers are overly concerned about skills development - they are more interested in tax rebates (3:9). Candidates in learnership are often seen as 'an extra pair of hands' (4:26). The Departments also believed that some of the learnership requirements were too strenuous and that they were driven by the learnership contract (3:14). They also seem to feel that the uptake of learnerships was not as good as it could be - there were many more 'registered learnerships' than 'active learnerships'
- Short courses were still considered the most viable and cost effective option for the workplace - both for the employer and the learner
- A need was also identified for the establishment of more generic standards and programmes (2:11; 6:11)
- Unit standards are not considered useful if they are developed for small, specialised groups (2:12)

### *Level of impact*

<b>Moderate impact</b>	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
------------------------	---

The evidence presented on this Impact Indicator, *Relevance of qualifications*, suggests that the level of impact is moderate. There is considerable evidence that qualifications are designed and redesigned to be relevant and responsive to the needs to workplaces, industry and society. Negative comments on registration requirements and the proliferation of qualifications in some sectors weigh down the greater portion of supportive comments, placing this Impact Indicator on a moderate, and not high, level.

### Indicator 5: Qualifications uptake and achievement

The extent to which NQF registered qualifications are offered and the achievement of such qualifications by learners

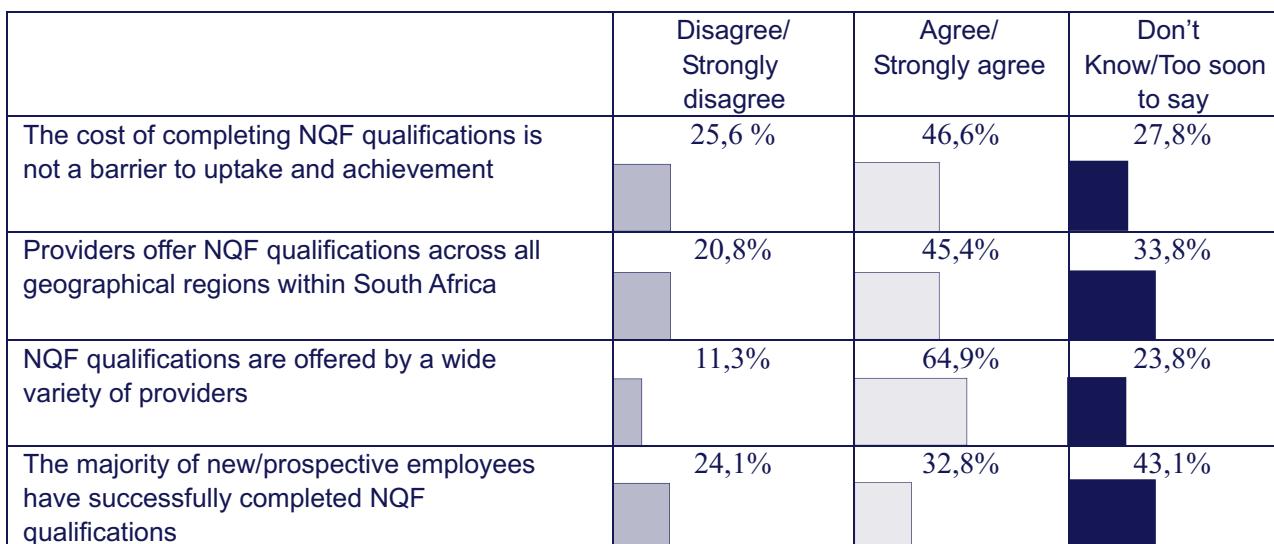


Table 11: Survey responses for Indicator 5

Almost half of the survey respondents (46,6%) felt that the cost of completing NQF qualifications was *not* a barrier to uptake and achievement, but almost a third (25,6%) of respondents did not agree and felt that cost was a significant barrier to the uptake of NQF qualifications.

Conflicting evidence was received from interviews on costs being a barrier to uptake and achievement. An Education and Training Quality Assurance Body felt that competitiveness between providers contributed to reduced education and training costs for learners (2:14). A Department of Labour official felt that the income levels for the majority of learners was too low in relation to education and training costs:

I don't think it is too high, income levels are too low...I'm thinking if I'm out there in Khayelitsha, I'd rather use that money [learnership allowances for transport and food] to eat and just live at home (3:17).

Some private providers and employers felt however, that there were increased costs involved in NQF provision, particularly for mentoring and assessment, as well as VAT charges for employers to recover training costs (4:30-31) Another employer noted that training providers were able to charge as they liked, because there were very few accredited providers (6:12). Additional responses received were that travel costs for learners to the place of training and/or workplace were an inhibiting factor for uptake and achievement, as were the cost of HE qualifications (4:28).

Some public providers felt there were no additional costs for the learner:

You take learnerships, they get paid to come and study...so it's very cheap for learners (4:27).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

Almost half of the respondents (45,4%) felt that there was delivery of NQF qualifications by a wide range of providers. However, almost a quarter of respondents (20,8%) felt that there were not enough accredited providers available in all regions of South Africa, with a third of respondents (33,8%) stating they did not know whether there were sufficient providers in all geographic regions.

Extensive comments from interviews were received on the availability of education and training providers in all geographic regions of South Africa. Some respondents from the Department of Labour and Department of Education felt that providers were limited to metropolitan areas. A trade union commented that:

You will only find two accredited providers in this province...also in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape (5:10).

A public provider felt that learnerships were difficult to implement in rural areas, due to the paucity of relevant workplaces and education and training infrastructure (4:30).

On the other hand, a few private providers noted that franchising models and networks with other private providers helped them provide NQF qualifications to rurally-based learners (4:30). An employer stated that they worked closely with a SETA, who identified accredited education and training providers for them in different geographic areas.

A third of respondents (32,8%) felt that the majority of new or prospective employees had successfully completed NQF qualifications, with nearly half of the respondents stating that they did not know or felt it was too soon to say (43,1%). A quarter of respondents (24,1%) disagreed with this statement.

An employer corroborated the evidence found in the survey questions, namely that most employees had not completed NQF qualifications:

We are starting now....busy with re-engineering the previous year, so since then everything has been NQF linked. People are still busy with their portfolio of evidence (6:13).

Another employer raised a concern that large numbers of unemployed learners undertaking workplace based routes to an NQF qualification were dropping out and not completing these qualifications (6:15).

### *Level of Impact*

<b>Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
-----------------------------	--

Systemically, most learners have not completed NQF qualifications. This means that the impact is in the pipeline, as it were, rather than in more concrete results. There is evidence of uptake, but it seems that this is mainly in metropolitan areas. While there is considerable evidence of uptake of NQF qualifications, particularly through work-based routes to a qualification, this is confined to urban areas. Rural learners seem to be marginalised from qualifications uptake, and delivery seems to be skewed provincially.

Public colleges seem to think that NQF qualifications promise additional income, whereas new training and assessment requirements have cost implications for private training providers. VAT is also a key issue. Private providers seem to be more responsive to the needs of rural learners and find innovative ways of delivery.

However, most respondents agree that learners are still undergoing education and training and that achievement will only become evident later. While uptake seems encouraging, achievement is low and therefore the indicator *Qualifications uptake and achievement* is rated as minimal/mixed.

### Indicator 6: Integrative approach

The extent to which qualifications promote an integrative approach to education and training and the nature of such qualifications

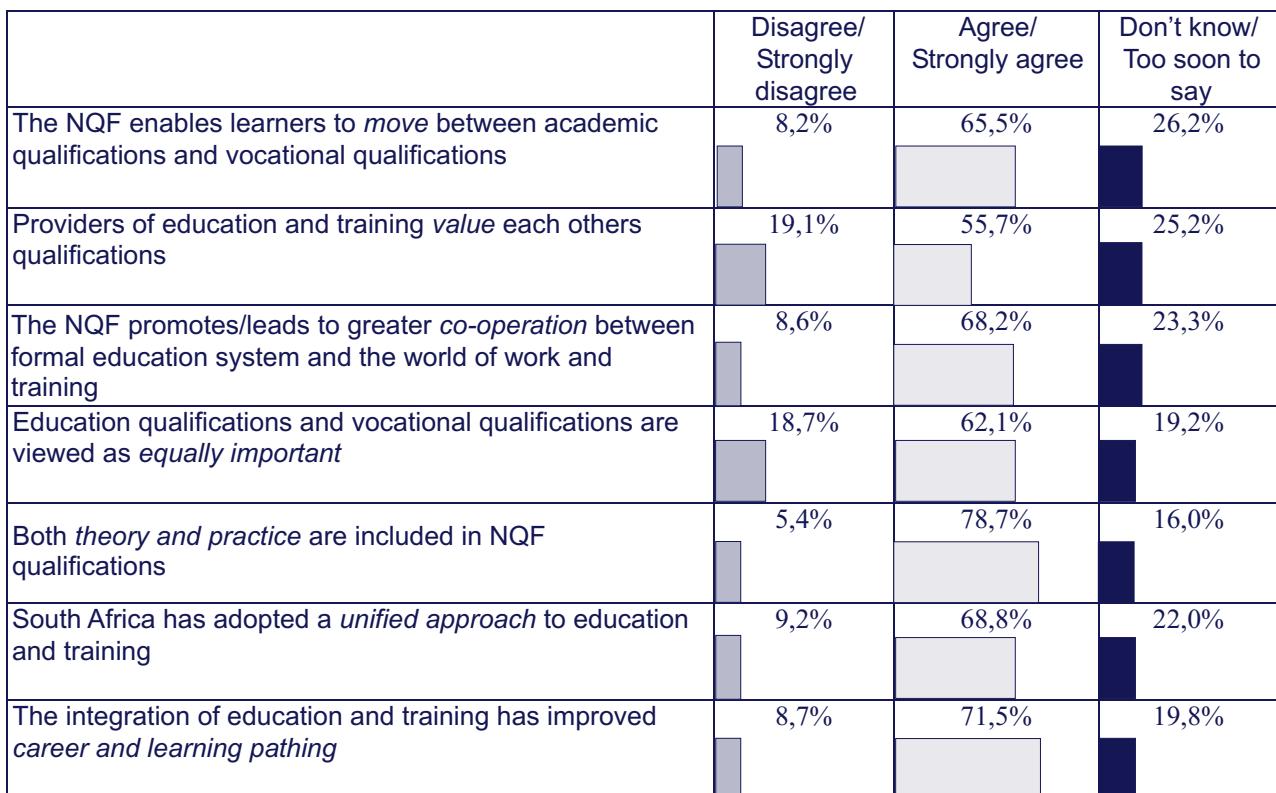


Table 12: Survey responses for Indicator 6

Significant positive responses were received on the last three questions of this section of the survey: respondents felt that both theory and practice are included in NQF qualifications (78,7%); that a unified approach in education and training is followed (68,8%) and that there seems to be an improvement in career and learning pathing through an integrative approach (71,5%). However, it seems that the three questions represented the respondents' perceptions of what could be achieved through an integrative approach, but that integrative *practice* is less evident. Nevertheless, some of the other responses to this part of the survey indicate that there is strong agreement on the *principle* of integration. The other questions received moderate responses (ranging between 55,7% to 68,2%).

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, it became evident that many qualifications consciously integrate theory and practice (8: 24- 54). This understanding of 'integration' and of 'an integrative approach' therefore seems to have become embedded in the design of qualifications.

While two thirds of respondents (65,5%) believed that the NQF enables learners to move between academic and vocational qualifications, comments in interviews on issues of articulation between vocational and academic streams were mixed. They included 'we have not experienced it yet, so it is too soon to say' (4:31), 'still in the process' (4:31), 'in policy yes, in theory at least but in practice it's a long journey to undergo' (4:36) to 'I think it is much easier' (4:32). However, limited but relevant examples of cases were received which showed that an integrative approach was being successfully implemented between institutions and between workplaces and institutions.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

The relative value of qualifications attained in different contexts of the education and training system is, according to the survey responses, not yet a reality. While more than half of the respondents (55,7%) indicated that they believed that providers do value each other's qualifications, a quarter (25,2%) said that they did not know, or that it is too soon to say.

A trade union representative felt, for example, that vocational qualifications were *not* seen as equal to academic qualifications:

...in some quarters vocational qualifications are not seen as equally important as educational qualifications. That kind of integration has not yet happened. Those who have gone through vocational training, their qualifications are seen as low. It also depends on where people see you coming from, from which particular institution you got your qualification (5:11).

The survey responses to the question of co-operation also seem to reflect the desire to co-operate in practice (68,2%). The difficulties, but also the need for greater co-operation between roleplayers was noted by many interview respondents. Comments included:

- tensions between public and private providers: 'private providers are taking away our business' (4:32)
- current lack of co-operation due to 'turf wars' (4:32)
- new partnerships in KwaZulu-Natal that were not possible in the past (4:32)
- integration has led to 'co-operation between companies in the industry...' (4:33)

The desire for the establishment of a more integrative approach was evident across all categories of stakeholders. An ETQA manager expressed the view that it was crucial to involve business in education and training (2:13):

Unless you involve people who are business minded, who are on the ground in business, unless you get that sort of expertise involved, nothing will happen, it will remain talk shops, pie in the sky stuff.

In addition, some positive comments regarding an integrative practice emerged:

Interviewees believed that a more integrated system will be enabled by the mergers of technical colleges, and by the mergers of technikons and universities. This was noted as having contributed to improved parity between workplace learning and education:

At least there's a recognition now, if we talk about learning, that we're not talking about sitting at a desk and studying and working. We're also now talking about in the workplace, behind a sewing machine, you're also busy with working and training (3:20).

...it makes sense to integrate universities and technikons and the like. I think they are not nearly as involved in business and practice outside as they should be (3:21).

It was also noted that integration leads to greater employability

It's because I say you go when you have to learn both theory and practical you will be able to enter into the labour market much more easily than a person who only learns theory (3:22).

Evidence of private providers' involvement in occupationally directed qualifications was noted (2:13).

In the tourism sector it was mentioned that the integrated approach has influenced assessment practices. For example, there was new awareness of the inadequacy of assessing learners unless they have had practical exposure (4:34).

Evidence of the perception that the system is still fragmented included: acknowledgement of the differences between academic and vocational and/or workplace training; lack of trust between universities, and the confusion resulting from the NQF review process:

In my opinion, a person coming from a university and a person who has received practical training are different - the person who has received the practical training has taken 50% of his time exploring and doing the things - he would be better off than a person who comes from a university situation... (3:21, paraphrased).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

People don't see the benefits of the two systems. The fight [between] the two systems now comes about because there isn't enough structure to support the development of the one and the development of the other (4:39).

[U]niversities don't trust one another - it's all about money (4:36).

The NQF Review and the Interdependent Task Team's reports created much "unclarity" when they said that the two must be separated (5:11).

Another ETQA manager notes the divide between non-unit standard-based qualifications and unit standard-based qualifications (2:14). She remarked that higher education providers, such as technikons, had recently begun to show more interest in unit standard-based qualifications, to the extent that they were developing the qualifications. However, a respondent from a public provider expressed the opinion that an integrative approach does not address the different purposes of qualifications:

...the aim of a full qualification is different from the aim of the vocational qualification (4:36).

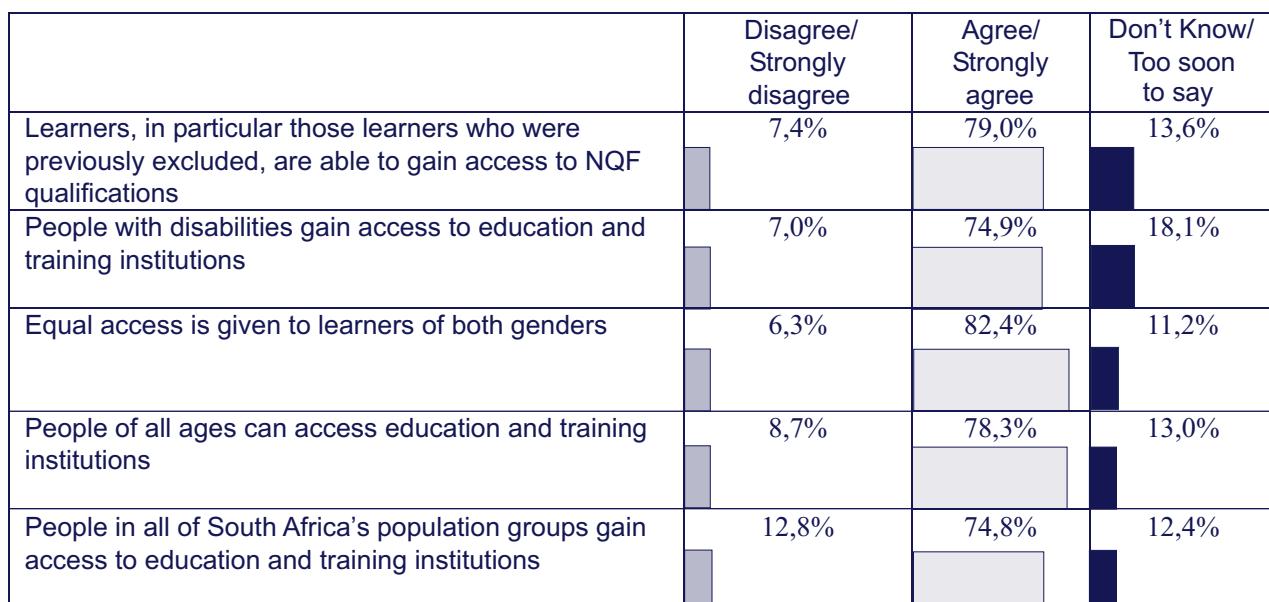
### *Level of impact*

<b>Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
-----------------------------	--

While there seems to be strong support for the notion of an integrative approach, particularly as it relates to the integration of theory and practice in the design of qualifications and the delivery and assessment of learning, examples in practice are still emerging. The evidence presented on this Impact Indicator, *Integrative approach*, suggests that the level of impact is minimal/mixed. An integrative approach was often seen as partnerships and collaboration. Nevertheless progress towards parity of esteem between institutions and between institutions and workplaces seems to be slow despite significant support for a more integrated system.

### **Indicator 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



**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

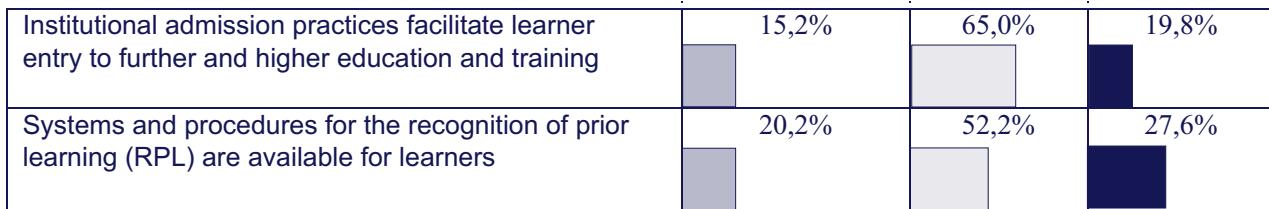


Table 13: Survey responses for Indicator 7

These results suggest a strong consensus that access to education and training has improved. Access is open to previously excluded groups (79,1%), people with disabilities (74,9%), women (82,4%) learners of all ages (78,3%), and all population groups (74,8%). Two thirds of all respondents (65,3%) also had positive views on institutional admission practices and just more than half (52,2%) believed that systems for RPL are available.

In the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, this perception was confirmed. Flexible entry requirements, improved access to the qualifications and RPL were in most cases explicitly stated as principles underpinning the qualifications (8:24- 54). According to the analysis, the National Certificate Electrical, for example, is designed for learners who could not gain entry to formal training institutions in the past (8:45).

On the general question about access to NQF qualifications by previously excluded groups, some respondents identified significant improvements. For example, there had been a huge influx of previously disadvantaged people into the Human Resources (HR) sector:

The applications for professional registration are practically 80% from previously disadvantaged people... I think that not only are [they] interested in studying but also finding jobs in our profession and being able to register, because there is this career path. We are not excluding anybody, we are saying this is where you start, this is where you can go from here and this is how you do it (2:15).

Some employers also stated that previously excluded learners had better access to skills development opportunities and learnerships (6:16), although it was argued that access was inhibited by bureaucratic blockages (6:17).

Other general comments were that South Africa was still dealing with the legacy of apartheid (4:43), and that financial constraints were a real barrier to access (4:39 and 4:40).

Another respondent pointed out that the focus had to be on completion as well as access:

Current research indicates that those students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not able to complete and that is an indicator of whether the system is working or not (4:40).

Providers generally believed that there were no barriers to people with disabilities arising from the nature of the qualifications or their own policies and practices. Many employers referred to their practice of employing significant numbers of people with disabilities. However, there were resource-related problems. One provider admitted that there were difficulties, due to lack of specialist expertise to support education of deaf people, for example (3:23). The problem of physical access was highlighted by a trade unionist, who also referred to the cost of access to Braille. (5:13). One provider was particularly forthright:

I am sorry that we [fail disabled learners] because of physical access. Many places are not accessible for people in wheelchairs for instance. A lot of learning programmes would be inaccessible to blind or partially visually impaired people... because of the nature of it. And I really must say to you that very few colleges have gone out of their way to make it total access in terms of disabilities. It's a strike against us (4:39).

There were few comments on gender. One respondent noted an increase of male students in the health and beauty sector (2:15). Another a trade unionist believed that the position of women had not improved:

I find that many [male] workers [feel] threatened by female workers when we talk equity issues as much as white people still [feel] threatened by black people (5:13).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

Comments on age-related access came mainly from providers and employers who pointed to the wide age range of learners entering education and training and accessing NQF qualifications (4:39 and 6:17).

As far as access across population groups was concerned, it was reported that the proportion of black students in FET colleges had risen from around 20% in 1990 to about 95% today (4:41). Examples were quoted such as the access of black students to courses in asphalt technology (5:13). An ETQA respondent thought that learnerships would increase the number of black students but also pointed out the lack of black assessors and facilitators (2:16).

An employer respondent thought that admission practices were now more open:

It's not as difficult any more. I mean you can now get admissions just because of age. When I was studying you couldn't do that. If people go now with the NQF qualifications and go into the workplace, they can access university education [which they couldn't before]... (6:17).

Not surprisingly, the topic of RPL provoked most reaction. There were reports of developments on the ground. A provider in the HET sector reported that there was a dedicated RPL post in the institution (4:46). One Department respondent noted that 'a few [higher education institutions] are already implementing RPL as some form of entry assessment.' (3:25). An ETQA respondent said:

The technikons [have] very strong RPL departments we are referring people for qualifications to them. What we are actually saying [to learners] is that you now have a choice and you have to price [the institutions] and...make a comparison (2:16).

Providers referred to a number of examples of RPL initiatives at various stages of development (4:42 and 4:43). However, others suggested that RPL systems were not yet in place (3:26 and 4:42), that there was a lack of understanding of RPL on the ground and that processes needed to be simplified (3:26). Another said that 'the people who need it most are those who can least afford it.' (3:26). It was also suggested that RPL candidates might be regarded as 'weaker' than those with conventionally-acquired qualifications (3:26).

An FET respondent was sceptical about the prospects for RPL:

The RPL thing isn't going to work because the funding system of universities specifically relates to how long that learner spends with his bum on that seat... RPL is a short process, there is no funding mechanism to RPL. There just isn't (4:42).

Another respondent said that RPL processes were too cumbersome and paper-oriented (4:43). An HET institution reported that each faculty had an RPL quality assurance committee but that it was a 'tedious process'. This respondent referred also to a more informal process whereby some applicants without a degree but who had experienced what was thought to be an appropriate training process were admitted to a Master's degree. The implication was that academics should be trusted to undertake this process without excessive bureaucracy.

Trade unions tended to feel that RPL was not widely available to workers:

It has been a nightmare. RPL has not been accessible to people... it was made to be a very complex procedure and a very expensive exercise... (5:13).

Another said:

It should not be an added cost... providers must provide all forms of assessment to learners, including RPL (5:15).

### *Level of impact*

<b>Moderate impact</b>	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
------------------------	---

In general the perceptions reflected in the survey point to a moderate impact on *Equity of Access*. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statements associated with this Indicator. Examples were given of developments that would support these judgements. On the other hand, respondents identified significant issues still to be addressed in the area of RPL.

### Indicator 8: Redress practices

The extent to which redress practices, including the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), facilitate the award of credits and/or access of learners to learning programmes

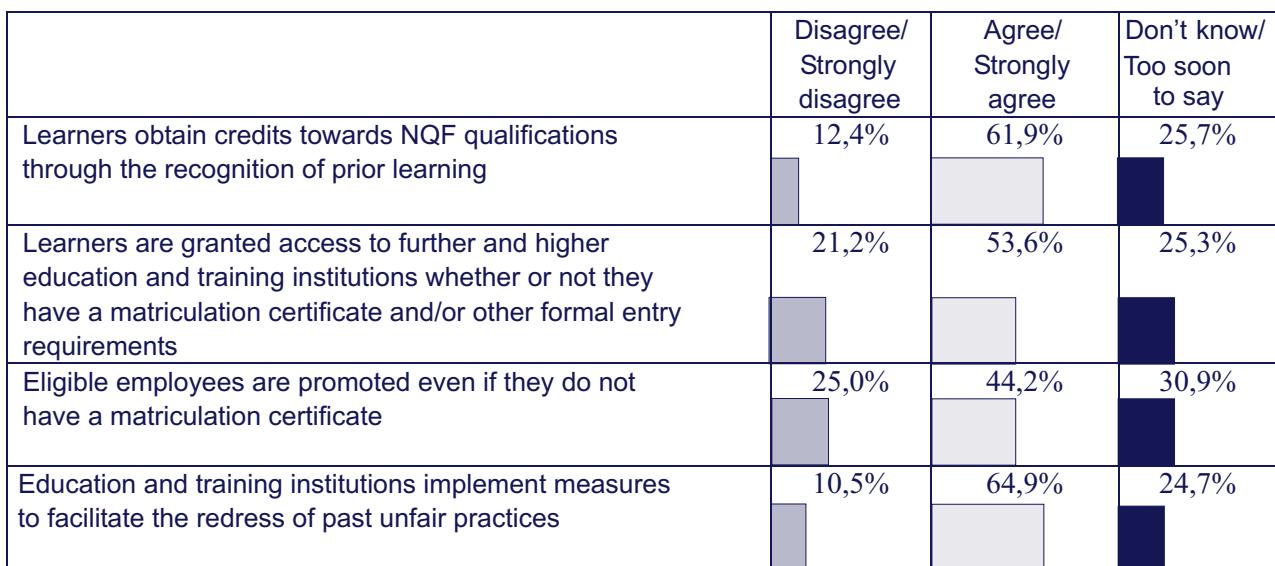


Table 14: Survey responses for Indicator 8

While almost two thirds of the respondents (61,9%) indicated that learners can obtain credits towards NQF qualifications through RPL, slightly more than half (53,6%) believed that learners were granted access to further and higher education and training institutions without a matriculation certificate and/or other formal entry requirements.

Interview respondents supported the quantitative results but indicated that the matriculation certification is still a major barrier to RPL and redress particularly in terms of entry to higher education. They also noted that, in their view, matriculation is not considered a reliable indicator of success in higher education, but without matriculation as a minimum, it is difficult to get employment (3:28). A provider argued that a matriculation certificate should no longer be the sole criterion for entry to a higher education learning programmes - experience should also be recognised (4:45). In the respondents' view, even learners who have attained matriculation certificates seem to find it difficult to access higher education programmes. Learners are often required to do a foundation programme before they gain entry to the qualification (4:44).

Nevertheless, there is clear evidence of support for the idea of RPL. RPL is seen to be giving recognition to learners with extensive experience in order to gain access to further and higher education and training, particularly for those learners who did not have the opportunities to gain entry to education and training in the past. Currently, it is felt that experience is not taken into account in formal learning environments (3:27).

However, one ETQA indicated that they have had very few requests for RPL - only for unit standards achieved through a City and Guilds certificate offered by a South African technical college. However, they expected that requests for RPL may emanate from learners who completed qualifications offered by providers prior to the requirement to become accredited through an ETQA (2:17).

Other issues inhibiting the implementation of RPL seem to include a bias towards academic learning. A departmental official, for example, mentioned that RPL 'can't replace academic qualifications', but that it does have a place in education and training (3:27).

A higher education provider noted with concern that with the capping of enrolments in higher education, access to learning programmes through RPL may become more difficult (4:45).

A respondent noted that without adequate funding incentives, redress might not take place (4:46).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

However, many positive comments about RPL were received:

RPL is viewed by some respondents as a possible cost saving mechanism, particularly if it can be undertaken instead of workplace assessment, which is seen to be slow and cumbersome - it may therefore be possible to fast-track learners through RPL procedures (2:17).

A respondent also noted that institutions seem to be much more accommodating - learners are not simply refused entry to higher education - but he voiced some doubt about the sincerity of such actions, citing the need to reflect equity of access and changes in the demographic profile of institutions (3:27).

Progress towards redress in workplaces seem to be slow - less than half of the respondents (44,2%) indicated that employees are promoted on the basis of performance and not solely on minimum qualification requirements. However, there are encouraging examples of recognition of experience:

[Qualifications and experience are] both important but what is most important is the experience that the person has ....you might find that ...this person's [experience] is equal to [the one with] qualifications although he or she doesn't have those qualifications (6:18).

While a higher education institution indicated that they do not consider it possible to promote somebody without the requisite qualification (4:45), an FET provider indicated that experience and a 'good track record' will secure promotion (4:45). Other providers agree - the person must be able to 'prove that [he/she] can do the job' (4:45)

Employers in particular were more concerned about experience and performance as the basis for promotion, but added that if matriculation is the minimum requirement, they will accept that. In their view, a prospective candidate could undergo an RPL assessment to determine whether he/she is eligible for promotion (6:18).

However, a trade union does not seem to be convinced, for example:

I don't see that. I think they [employers] may have bought into it, but they are not doing enough. When you look at some of them who are still mainly employing white people, you can see that it is not 100% (5:14).

### *Level of impact*

<b>Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
-----------------------------	--

*Redress practices* were almost without exception seen as the recognition of prior learning (RPL) and progress towards achieving the implementation of RPL is still considered slow. This is also borne out by the quantitative responses to Indicator 7: *Equity of access* where the question dealt with RPL systems. Most respondents indicated strong support for the principle of RPL, but between a quarter and a third of respondents, (between 24,7% and 30,9%) indicated that they are unsure about the implementation of RPL, or that it is too soon to make a judgment about the impact of RPL on education and training. Nevertheless, based on the evidence, it seems as if there is a high level of awareness of the need to redress past injustices.

In terms of the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, it became evident that while redress practice is dependent on the institution's implementation thereof, the design of qualifications consciously make provision for RPL.

These findings may seem slightly at odds with those from Impact Indicator 7: *Equity of access*. The distinction may be that while respondents feel that there are now some opportunities to gain credits through RPL, they do not believe that learners are able to "cash in" such credits in a way that is significant in terms of redress. *Redress practices* is therefore rated minimal/mixed.

### Indicator 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

	Disagree/Strongly disagree	Agree/Strongly agree	Don't Know/Too soon to say
There is a demand for learning programmes based on NQF qualifications	3,8%	79,0%	17,1%
A wide range of NQF qualifications is available to facilitate curriculum development	9,9%	65,8%	24,3%
The implementation of the NQF has led to a major re-design of courses to adopt an outcomes-based approach	4,2%	76,2%	19,6%
The quality of learning programmes is improved by using an outcomes-based approach	8,8%	70,9%	20,3%
The NQF has led to an improvement in the design of learning programmes	6%	72,6%	21,4%

Table 15: Survey responses for Indicator 9

The majority of respondents (79,0%) surveyed indicated that there was a high demand for learning programmes based on NQF qualifications. Two-thirds of the respondents (65,8%) thought that there is a wide range of NQF qualifications available to facilitate curriculum development, but a quarter of respondents felt that they didn't know or that it was too soon to say. A trade union and an employer expressed similar sentiments on this demand for learning programmes:

We want to be sent to the institution that trains us so we are qualified and given certificates to show that we are competent (Labour) (5:14).

It stands out like a sore thumb wherever you go....whatever training that we undergo with you, we can have some sort of paper that says we have attended and how it will assist us going forward (Employer) (6:18).

When it came to the redesign of courses to adopt an outcomes-based approach, a large number of respondents (76,2%) indicated that the implementation of the NQF had led to a major reconfiguration of programmes. Almost three quarters of respondents (70,9%) felt that the quality of learning programmes was improved by using an outcomes-based approach. A similar number of respondents (72,6%) also felt that the implementation of the NQF had resulted in improvement to the design of learning programmes.

A private provider agreed that while there was a demand for learning programmes based on NQF qualifications, they felt that industry would not require learning programmes to be registered on the NQF unless they wanted to get their Skills Levy back (4:46).

Of the respondents interviewed, there was general agreement that there was a wide range of NQF qualifications available for curriculum development, but a few providers felt that the curriculum development process was very cumbersome. (4:54) One provider felt that the repetitive nature of assessment criteria within NQF qualifications was cumbersome and impeded curriculum development (4:48).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

Significant, though contradictory, evidence was received from respondents interviewed as to whether the implementation of the NQF had led to a major redesign of courses. On the one hand, some FET and HE providers stated that they had undergone major redesign processes of their curriculum (4:47). A public HE institution noted that this redesign process was one of their highest priorities (4:47). Another GET/ABET provider explained that they had gone through a major redesign process as a result of a government department's requirements (4:47). An employer stated:

People throwing theory at you means nothing...you need to apply it... and demonstrate what you are doing. We've got preferred providers and are looking for people with accreditation (6:19).

Other respondents stated difficulties with the redesign process. A government department made the following statement about the redesign of qualifications aligned to the NQF:

I think people have tried to do so, but people don't know how to do that....also, it is a bureaucratic process (3:28).

The same government department also noted that as a result of people having no choice but to redesign courses according to NQF requirements, the redesign process was very slow (3:28). An employer stated that their redesign process was merely to comply with NQF requirements, but that they still taught the course using the same materials (6:19).

Most respondents interviewed felt that the quality of learning programmes had improved as a result of the implementation of the NQF. An ETQA stated:

I can tell you there is a difference. A difference of attitude, there is a difference of quality of ethical issues, there is a difference of curriculum (2:17).

A private FET provider reflected on their previous practice compared to their current NQF-aligned processes in stating that:

We didn't have good quality programmes and quality management systems and I think that's important. (4:47).

Similarly, most respondents interviewed felt that the implementation of the NQF had led to an improvement in the design of learning programmes. The same ETQA quoted above reflected that:

...you couldn't think back that we ever had the old system. You know the way people were taught....what you call lackadaisical. This is a fantastic system (2:17).

A provider felt that the design of NQF learning programmes had improved:

When you start with designing a programme you already have an idea what you're working towards...helps when you're developing materials and you are thinking in terms of what assessments [to conduct] (4:47).

Some education and labour department responses felt that learners benefited from new learning programmes:

On the side of the learners, I think there's a lot of support...there's a lot of room being given to them to be more creative and take charge of their own learning (3:29).

I think outcomes-based education is a good process of learning (3:29).

I think learners enjoy the outcomes-based system more, because it is more practical (3:29).

One respondent noted mixed feelings towards an outcomes-based education system, as she felt that teachers had not been given enough training to deal with the implementation of this system (3:29).

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

*Level of Impact*

<b>High positive impact</b>	The research evidence shows a marked positive change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF
-----------------------------	---

Qualitative and quantitative data received indicate a high positive impact for the indicator *Nature of learning programmes*. There is a close and consistent corroboration between interviews and the survey responses. A few negative points were raised but did not undermine the majority views on the NQF's impact on curriculum development, learning and teaching.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

### Indicator 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

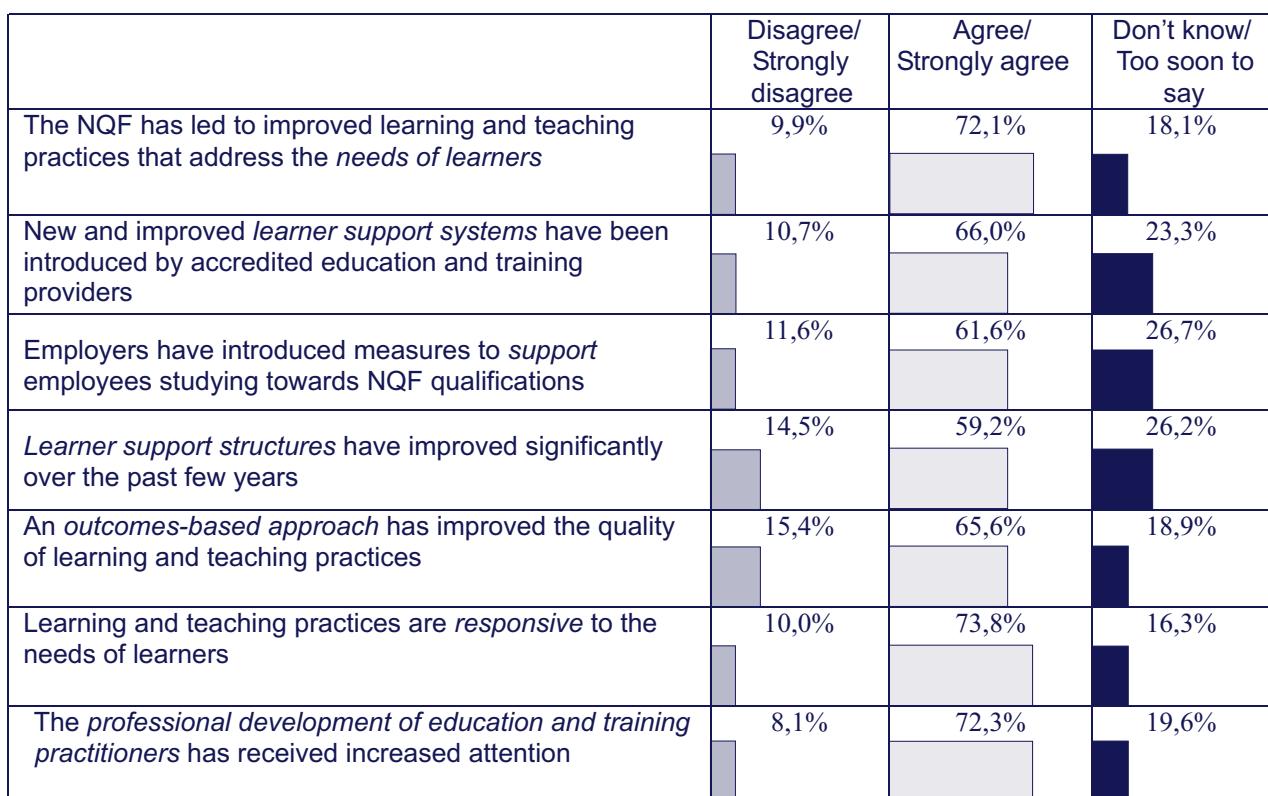


Table 16: Survey responses for Indicator 10

A significant number of respondents indicated that the needs of learners have been addressed through improved learning and teaching practices (72,1%) and also that the learning and teaching practices are in fact responsive to the needs of learners (73,8%).

Many respondents (72,3%) were of the opinion that the professional development of education and training practitioners had received increased attention. Interview respondents noted that numerous courses for professional development of educators are available (3:32):

I think we have a lot of programs through the development of the NQF to make sure that side of [educators'] development is actually taken care of successfully...

A union focus group, on the other hand, was very critical of the limited professional development that was offered to educators:

... with the professional development of educators they are subjected to programmes that are not of much value to them. We are wasting time due to the quality of training that they get. Those are the kinds of things that we have been raising, to ask for better quality programmes and to increase their presentation skills (5:15).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

Substantial evidence, both of a quantitative (65,6%), as well as of a qualitative nature indicated support for the conclusion that an outcomes-based approach results in improved quality of learning and teaching practices. Comments included increased buy-in from senior management to implement systems (2:18), a move away from traditional learning (2:18), increased focus on learner support (3:30 and 5:16), establishment of quality assurance units within institutions (4:57), recent establishment of a department for academic development (4:50).

Examples of learner support structures included:

- an educator social committee that includes learners (4:51)
- a mentorship approach (4:50)
- policies on learner support (4:51)

Encouraging evidence of support systems seems to be emerging from the quantitative survey (61,6% indicated that support systems for employees are being put in place). Employers mentioned numerous examples of 'comprehensive learner support mechanisms' (6:20). However, the lack of support for learners in secondary schools was noted (6:21), as well as a lack of support from employers (noted during a trade union focus group, 5:15).

In terms of improved learning and teaching practices, the quantitative data suggests strong support (72,1%) but some interview respondents noted that the NQF is only indirectly responsible for this improvement, mainly through the changes in assessment practices (4:52).

Nevertheless, positive comments on using an outcomes-based approach were offered by a respondent from a higher education institution:

I think the whole idea of outcomes is a wonderful asset to our model designers because you must always keep in mind that many of your academics at university do not have teacher training skills, so just having those outcomes already gives that focus (4:52).

Another respondent from a Western Cape FET institution agreed, but added that implementation was lacking:

...there are a lot of wonderful things that the outcomes-based system is offering, but the implementation is just not there (4:53).

Other positive comments on the quality of learning and teaching included:

- learners have more than one opportunity to show competence (3:31)
- FET institutions are more responsive to learners (3:31)

### *Level of impact*

<b>Moderate impact</b>	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
------------------------	---

There appears to have been a moderate impact on the *Quality of learning and teaching*. Although a significant amount of positive responses were received, e.g. the needs of learners had been addressed and the implementation of quality management systems, there were also some conflicting comments on measures to support employees. The evidence is therefore positive but not unqualified, and the impact is thus moderate.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

**Indicator 11: Assessment Practices**

The fairness, validity, reliability and practicability of the assessment of learning

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't know/ Too soon to say
The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications is <i>fair</i> (unbiased)	7,1%	65,4%	27,5%
The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications is <i>valid</i> (measures what it is supposed to measure)	3,7%	69,1%	27,2%
The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications is <i>reliable</i> (dependable and consistent)	7,8%	60,7%	31,5%
The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications can be implemented <i>without undue difficulty</i>	26,5%	42,2%	31,3%
<i>Significant positive changes</i> to assessment practices have occurred over the past few years	7,8%	66,2%	26,0%
The <i>quality</i> of assessment practices has improved over the past few years	11,2%	61,4%	27,4%
There has been no significant increase in the <i>workload</i> associated with assessment practices	18,9%	55,7%	25,4%
<i>Feedback and appeal</i> mechanisms have become more accessible to learners and employees	12,7%	59,8%	27,5%
The assessment of learning towards a specific NQF qualification is done in a <i>comparable and similar</i> manner by <i>different</i> providers of education and training	15,5%	49,0%	35,5%
The <i>cost</i> of assessing learning towards NQF qualifications is not a barrier to effective practice	22,1%	46,6%	31,3%

Table 17: Survey responses for Indicator 11

Over two thirds of respondents feel that assessment is fair (65,4%) and valid (69,1%) and almost two thirds (60,7%) believe that assessment is reliable and that feedback and appeal mechanisms have improved (59,8%). Two thirds (66,2%) thought that there had been significant positive changes to assessment practices and almost two thirds (61,4%) that the quality of assessment had improved. However a quarter of respondents (26,5%) were not convinced that assessment could be implemented without undue difficulty or that there had not been a significant increase in workload associated with assessment (18,9%). Less than half (44,6%) thought that the cost of assessment was *not* a barrier to effective practice, while almost a quarter (22,1%) of respondents did not agree, and a third of respondents (31,3%) did not want to venture an opinion or felt that it was too soon to say whether cost can be considered a barrier to effective assessment practice.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

However, there were many comments on the improvement of the quality of assessment. Lecturers and assessors were said to be taking assessment much more seriously.

For the first time now these people have a structure... Now there is some system happening, the assessors are being trained, the moderators are being trained. What I have seen personally is a change in the attitude of the lecturers. They feel for the first time that they know what they are doing and there seems to be a change of attitude. There is confidence (2:19).

The improvement of assessment was seen as a development process. One respondent said that it would take time to make it work (2:20), while an employer said that it had taken a while to understand but that interaction with SETAs had helped (6:23). The notion that it is still too soon to say is reflected in the quantitative responses. In most cases between a quarter and two thirds (24,1% to 35%) of respondents indicated that they did not know, or that it is still too soon to say. An ETQA respondent said that people had found the language difficult at first but exposure to assessment training had made a big impact (2:20). A provider respondent agreed that the training of assessors had been beneficial.

The quality of assessment was said to have been improved through the use of assignments, case studies and problem solving (4:56). A private provider explained their practice as follows:

You are guided by the specific outcomes, and you give learners ample time to prepare. You also take into account workplace context and assess the critical outcomes (4:65).

A higher education respondent said:

...the assessment practice has changed tremendously. In our institution, we have recently adopted a policy... of continuous assessment, so we have changed our whole philosophy. There has been some improvement in our institution in the quality of assessment because we are now assessing students on smaller chunks of learning than in the past. When you go into continuous assessment, there is more in-depth learning. ...In certain areas, we could already detect the improvement in the pass rates (4:56).

On the other hand, a Departmental respondent said that there had been little change in university assessment practice (3:34).

One private provider reported that assessment practices were now much better because of assessment policies and moderation (4:57). Another said that they were beginning to see an improvement, with assessment strongly linked to workplace learning (4:58).

An employer said that assessment was 'fair - not biased' (6:21). A trade union respondent agreed that assessment was 'very reliable' but thought that 'appeals could be improved' (5:16). However, another trade union respondent said that the intention was good but that assessments were not always objective because assessors could be manipulated by employers (5:16). Another trade union respondent thought that the quality assurance of assessment was affected by the desire of employers to save money (5:16). One ETQA respondent pointed to the potential for fraud in the use of portfolios (2:20).

A Departmental respondent argued that benefits were being reaped from provincial standardisation of school examinations (3:34). There was also some dissatisfaction with school examinations. One provider, commenting on national examinations, said:

The quality of question papers is not better. [When I] look through the subjects I have knowledge of... I think it's gone back. And also when we come to the results...They go out with a matric certificate, they can't get into a university or a technikon because they just haven't got the kind of capabilities required to learn further (4:58).

A DoE respondent was of the view that there was a need for more contextualisation in examination papers.

Many respondents pointed to improvements in learning brought about by new assessment practices:

If people know upfront that they're going to be assessed, they want to know the content of the material much better...They sort of understand that if they are employees already they know they're going to have to put this into practice... This links the assessment and the implementation in the workplace... Without the assessment world, you're just going on courses (4:55).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

A private provider explained how assessment had made their organisation more learner-focused:

You know that you 'have to think the learner': how do I assess the learner, how do I prepare the learner for assessment... (4:56).

Some employers noted benefits from the new assessment practices. One said that he now had more involvement with trainees and that quality control had improved (6:21). Another commented:

It is an actual indicator of performance; it is linked to our performance appraisal system. It also upgrades the quality of the product that you manufacture (6:22).

However, another employer disliked the fact that he had to alter his training programme to fit new assessment requirements (6:22).

There were negative comments about paperwork, workload and cost. A private provider commented:

... there was definitely an increase [in workload] and that is still a big problem for us at the moment... we had to change the perception of our staff towards assessment. They would have liked to go on with exams at the end of a short course ... [but now have to] do continuous assessment. That's asking for a mind change (4:59).

Another private provider referred to having to 'go through this red tape to do a very simple assessment' (4:67). A higher education respondent said that there were 'huge implications in terms of staffing' (4:60). One private provider said that they had had to employ more trainers because of the workload but viewed that positively (4:59).

An ETQA respondent said:

...assessments are so cumbersome that it's a real hassle and we need to find more and more ways of streamlining [e.g. electronic assessments] (2:20).

Other respondents said that paperwork, assessment and 'begging the kids to give you stuff' was having an adverse effect on teaching (4:59). Some thought that the solution might lie in more integrated assessment (4:60).

A private provider thought that it was 'hugely expensive for business and government'. Many employers thought that the workload and cost for them had increased. For example:

Unfortunately yes, one would have to acknowledge that the workload has increased, making it difficult for supervisors ... to complete all the paperwork (6:22).

The whole process is just too long, you know, all the meetings you must have... takes too long... The people that developed it sit in ivory towers in Johannesburg. I don't think they've ever worked in a plant environment where you've got so many hours to produce so many cars... (6:22).

It is a brilliant concept but whether it can work I actually doubt...I started researching [RPL] and how we are going to implement it. If you look at how much assessors charge per hour for assessment... (6:23).

### *Level of impact*

<b>Moderate impact</b>	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
------------------------	---

The Impact Indicator, *Assessment practices*, is rated as having a moderate impact. There is strong evidence of beneficial effects on standards and on quality of learning. However, there are still major issues of workload and cost to be addressed. In addition, this indicator had a very high incidence of 'don't know' and 'too soon to say' quantitative responses, which may reflect that the system is still in development.

### Indicator 12: Career and learning pathing

The extent to which learning programmes support and enhance career and learning pathing

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't know/ Too soon to say
Learners are becoming increasingly aware of career opportunities associated with specific NQF qualifications	15,1%	66,7%	18,2%
Employers encourage employees to improve their qualifications by providing career paths	16,2%	67,9%	16,0%
Education and training provider encourage learners to improve their qualifications by providing learning pathways	10,0%	74,4%	15,6%
Learning programmes are designed to include Critical Cross-field Outcomes	6,1%	68,1%	25,8%
Learning programmes have improved career and learning pathways	7,6%	72,7%	19,7%

Table 18: Survey responses for Indicator 12

Two-thirds of respondents (66,7%) indicated that they felt that learners are becoming increasingly aware of career opportunities associated with specific NQF qualifications. Almost three quarters of respondents (72,7%) noted that there is a clear link between learning and career pathways.

An ETQA noted that they have, through their SGBs, developed a framework of qualifications that 'flow one into the other'. They felt that the NQF helped to delineate levels clearly, to the extent that professional registration is integrated into career pathways from NQF level 5, whereas before these pathways were only available from first degree level upwards (2:20).

Some departmental respondents also indicated that employees are aware of career pathways, but noted that a career path is subject to the availability of new positions (3:36) and that the unavailability of career opportunities in the departments may result in a loss of credibility in the value of career pathing (3:36). Nevertheless, it seems that in general employers encourage employees to improve their qualifications by providing career paths (67,9%).

Other departmental respondents indicated that they did not think learners are aware of such pathways and that many departmental officials are not too sure about where their own qualifications lie within the NQF (3:36).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

A concern raised is that career pathways may result in unrealistic expectations on the part of learners, especially if the learning is not directly associated with their job function (3:36).

Skills programmes are seen to be conducive to career pathing:

[T]he courses that are offered now give a person [the ability to] exit at any stage, and when you want to re-enter you have credits that will allow you to re-enter. [In] the old programmes...you [had] to start all over again (3:37).

The quantitative responses dealing with the provision of learning pathways by education and training providers, is very encouraging (74,4%). However, providers indicated that they offer career guidance, but seemed doubtful about whether this helps learners to have an understanding of career paths (4:61). Other providers indicated that it might be too soon to say despite their efforts to explain the implications of the NQF in relation to career paths in their orientation programmes (4:61).

A higher education provider also raises doubts as to whether 'the framework as such has all of a sudden made these guys start thinking about career [pathways]' (4:62).

In the same vein, providers noted that career and learning pathing do not necessarily relate to the NQF *per se* rather it 'relates to the activities in the different programmes in the schools' (4:61). On the other hand their experience is that learners are much more aware of possibilities, but that such possibilities are limited in rural areas (4:61).

An FET institution indicated that their learners increasingly use their qualification as a basis for entry to higher education (4:62) thereby creating a learning pathway.

A higher education institution mentioned that they are in the process of developing a qualification matrix for their fields of learning and subsequently career and learning pathways will become clearer (4:62).

In addition, as indicated above, more than two-thirds of respondents (67,9%) indicated that employers are encouraging employees to improve their qualifications by providing career paths. However, comments were mixed. One private provider noted with concern that in their opinion, employers are not very supportive in establishing career pathways (4:62), while another provider observed that there seemed to be increasing support for work-based learning and the development of career and learning paths.

A trade union agreed that learners' awareness of career and learning paths has improved but that some implementation problems were experienced (5:17).

Large employers, in particular, felt that the introduction of the NQF enhanced an awareness of career pathways and that the NQF conferred credibility. Through their programmes, learners are able to advance 'through the ranks'. Older learners also seem to take the opportunity to advance their careers due to competition with younger entrants (6:23):

There are lots of examples of people who have gone through the ranks by means of our competency acquisition process, which has set the example for other [learners]. We are doing this in accordance with the NQF guidelines, giving it [the process] a lot of credibility (6:23).

Most respondents indicated that education and training providers offer meaningful learning pathways.

In addition, more than two thirds of the respondents (68,1%) believed that critical cross-field outcomes are embedded in learning programmes, while a quarter (25,8%) indicated that they could not venture an opinion, or that it was too soon to say. One provider indicated that the critical cross-field outcomes were important and that they were integrated into the learning programme. A holistic approach to learning seemed to be emerging.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

*Level of impact*

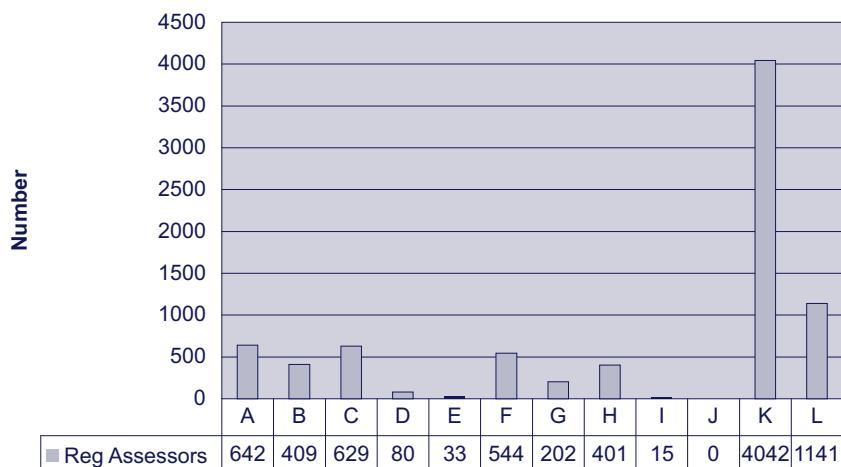
Moderate impact	The research evidence shows moderate positive change across the education and training system
-----------------	---

While many respondents indicated that *Career and learning pathing* are not as widely known as it could be, there is evidence that providers of education and training, and particularly large employers, have developed (or are in the process of developing) clear career and learning pathways for prospective learners.

**Indicator 13: Number of registered assessors and moderators**

The number of skilled assessors and moderators required to support an effective education and training system

No questions directly related to *Number of registered assessors* were asked in the survey.



Graph 9: Number of registered assessors by sector  
(From the SAQA Audit Report, forthcoming 2005)

The graph above is a summary of data obtained during the SAQA ETQA auditing process that took place during 2004. Due to the sensitive nature of the data, the identity of the individual ETQAs have been withheld and replaced with the letters A to L.

From the data the following observations can be made:

- a total of 8,138 assessors have been registered by the 12 ETQAs included in the summary;
- there are significant disparities across the various sectors, ranging from 0 to 4,042 registered assessors; and
- the average number of assessors registered across the 12 ETQAs is 678 - removing ETQA K, this average falls to 341.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

During the interviews respondents noted that there were very few black assessors:

One area where we have huge lack....is that we don't have enough assessors and facilitators of colour (2:16).

Even at the technikons in total in the entire country there are three black assessors (2:22).

An ETQA respondent explained how few assessors had been registered in their sector:

We are now registering assessors up to the point I think we have maybe 28 assessors....we have got some moderators, not many, a few, and actually only one verifier registered....(2:22).

ETQAs also noted just how difficult it was to obtain assessors who could function at the expected level:

But the fact is that many of the people just aren't ... making the grade. It has actually been a fight to get people to comply with quality assurance (2:22).

### *Level of impact*

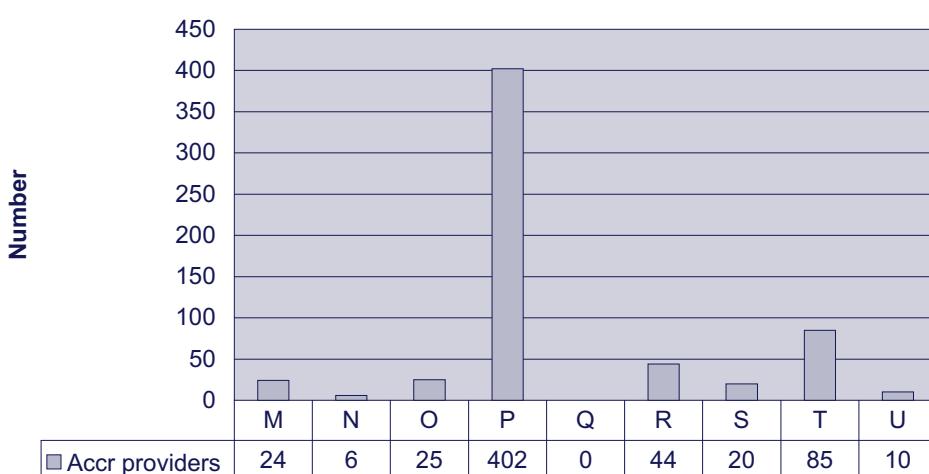
Minimal/mixed impact	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
----------------------	--

The *Number of registered assessors and moderators* is rated as minimal/mixed. It is not rated as negative, as, compared to the pre-NQF dispensation, there are at least some assessors functioning within the national quality assurance system. On the other hand, the numbers are so low in some sectors, that much progress can still be made.

### **Indicator 14: Number of accredited providers**

The number of education and training providers who meet the quality requirements of the system

No questions directly related to *Number of accredited providers* were asked in the survey.



Graph 10: Number of accredited providers by sector  
(From the SAQA Audit Report, forthcoming 2005)

As in the case of Indicator 13: *Number of registered assessors and moderators*, the graph above is a summary of data obtained during the SAQA ETQA auditing process that took place during 2004. Due to the sensitive nature of the data, the identity of the individual ETQAs have been withheld and replaced with the letters M to U.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

From the data the following observations can be made:

- a total of 616 providers have been accredited by the 9 ETQAs included in the summary;
- there are significant disparities across the various sectors, ranging from 0 to 402 accredited providers; and
- the average number of providers accredited across the 9 ETQAs is 68 - removing ETQA P, this average falls to 27.

Interview comments on the number of accredited providers were limited, and even where they did occur; the indication was that the numbers are very low. The following responses from ETQA managers illustrate the point:

- ...in the process of about five providers coming in (2:23)
- ...about ten (2:23)
- ...about 30 that are going to meet full accreditation (2:23)
- ...there will be about 10 of them that have that in place (2:23)
- ...at least 22 or 26 has submitted their application (2:23)
- ...we've got our first pilot workplace provider...that we just accredited (2:23)

### *Level of impact*

<b>Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
-----------------------------	--

As was the case with the previous indicator, the *Number of accredited providers* is rated as minimal/mixed. It is not rated as negative, as, compared to the pre-NQF dispensation, there are a number of providers functioning within the national quality assurance system. The 616 accredited providers from nine ETQAs represent, in particular, private providers of education and training. It is important to note that public institutions did not have to seek accreditation through Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs) as they are deemed accredited through the legislation governing public provisioning. Nevertheless, the total number of accredited private providers seems to present a disturbing trend, though it would be difficult to say how many providers the emerging education and training system actually needs. However, the fact that in some sectors no providers have been accredited places this indicator at a minimal/mixed rating.

Both Impact Indicators 13 and 14 require further research. The results from only 9 or 12 out of a possible 35 ETQAs do not present a complete picture. Furthermore a comparison with other NQFs in terms of the expected number of assessors and providers may be useful.

### Indicator 15: Quality Assurance Practices

The extent to which quality assurance practices enhance the quality of learning, teaching and assessment

	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/ Strongly agree	Don't know/ Too soon to say
New forms of learning, teaching and assessment have been introduced as a result of quality assurance practices	5,6%	74,5%	19,9%
The quality assurance of education and training has improved since the implementation of the NQF	11,8%	61,2%	27,1%
NQF quality assurance practices do not cause administrative and bureaucratic problems	31,7%	35,3%	33,0%
NQF quality assurance practices ensure that qualifications are based on <i>nationally agreed standards</i>	6,5%	72,3%	21,3%
NQF quality assurance practices have improved the <i>quality of education and training providers</i>	9,6%	62,6%	27,9%
The requirements and processes required to qualify as an <i>accredited provider</i> is effective and timeous	14%	46,0%	40,0%
<i>The process of establishing unit standards for an NQF qualification is not without undue difficulties</i>	13,5%	53,0%	33,6%

Table 19: Survey responses for Indicator 15

Three quarters of the respondents (74,5%) indicated that quality assurance practices had led to the introduction of new forms of learning, teaching and assessment. While almost two thirds (61,2%) also commented that quality assurance practices have improved since the implementation of the NQF, a quarter of respondents (27,1%) thought that it was still too soon to say.

However, more than a third of respondents (35,3%) considered quality assurance practices to be overly bureaucratic and to cause many administrative problems, while another third (33,0%) indicated that they did not know.

ETQAs seem to be conscious of the need for a developmental approach to the design and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms:

We don't want to cripple providers in [the accreditation] process ...some of them have been badly hurt...We've actually taken people by the hand and schooled them through the system...[we give them] accreditation...then another year for monitoring and then a third year for audit so that we could prove we gave everybody an equal opportunity (2:23).

SMME providers in particular, have been given much support:

...it's been extremely difficult for [SMME] providers to get through the quality assurance [process]...We have allowed them extensions, there have been different tiers of accreditation...we try not to come from a point of view where we [are] perceived as a body that doesn't guide, that doesn't provide assistance (2:26).

However, ETQAs in particular noted that quality assurance is hampered by the lack of agreements between education and training quality assurance bodies - the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) - especially between SETA ETQAs and the band ETQAs. One ETQA noted:

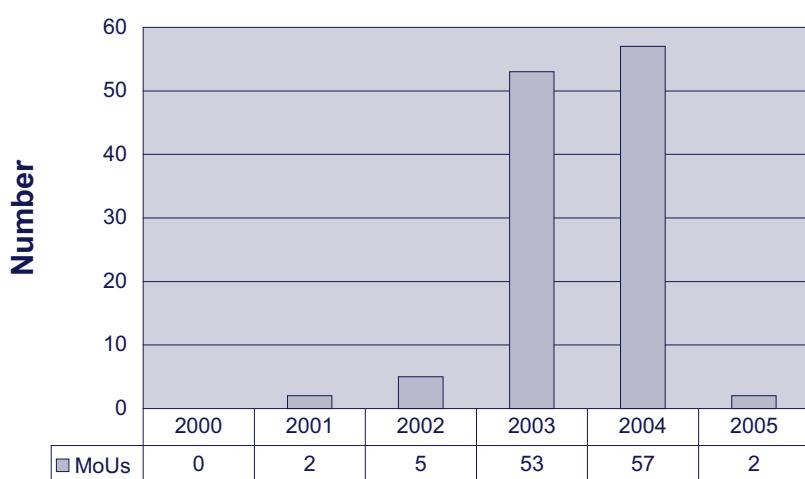
## National Qualifications Framework IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

...we will have to be very careful that we are not overstepping our boundaries as an ETQA because of the higher education situation where we are tolerated at most as an ETQA by higher education (CHE-HEQC) and they may not continue to tolerate this (2:24).

Although many MoUs are in place, the feeling is that the MoUs are only 'an agreement to agree' (2:26) and that it does not seem to be very helpful to the process. In addition, the legislative anomalies, for example between the SAQA Act and the Higher Education Act, result in some cases in a dual accreditation of providers (2:27).

A provider quite openly stated that if the MoUs are not in place between ETQAs, they simply go directly to a different ETQA without consideration of the shared primary focus:

...those processes are not in place so we are sidelining that and we are going directly to MERSETA or W&RSETA (4:65).



Graph 11: Signed Memoranda of Understanding

ETQAs are voicing frustration that despite the fact that common audit criteria for accreditation as a quality assurance body are used, there seems to be little mutual trust between ETQAs:

...we would think that the same rules, hopefully, apply to everybody, so if they have gone through an audit from SAQA and everything is in place the process ought to be trustworthy (2:25).

The tension between ETQAs due to overlapping responsibilities is keenly felt and this seems to be compounded by the feeling that some ETQAs are more powerful than others:

There is the perception that CHE is the authority and that they have more power...(2:25).

The CHE will do what the CHE wants to do...we can either participate or we can leave. It's being horrible (2:25).

While some ETQAs noted that education and training quality assurance bodies that are more advanced in their processes are most helpful towards each other, some feel that the CHE in particular, creates unnecessary blockages in the system:

...it came from the point that the CHE is all powerful and that they had the power to close institutions down if they felt like it. The harm that the CHE has done...[threatening our] institutions with closure (2:27).

In addition, despite stringent quality assurance requirements, parity of esteem between private and public providers linked to different ETQAs has not yet been achieved:

They don't accept [the learners]. [The learners] have done exactly the same curriculum...[they] don't allow a learner with a ...qualification from a private institution (2:28).

This seems to be compounded by the fact that according to ETQAs responsible for private providers, the Department of Education is not helping to facilitate quality assurance between public and private provisioning:

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

...what has become increasingly clear is that the DoE [Department of Education] has no understanding of anything that happens outside the formal academic environment and is not willing to learn and not willing to concede that [private provisioning] is making a contribution (2:28).

The Department of Labour (DoL) on the other hand, seems to duplicate the quality assurance processes that have been put in place by the ETQAs, for smaller, more informal education and training providers. This may ultimately result in offering training that cannot be recognised in terms of credits towards skills programmes and qualifications:

When we select providers there are a couple of criteria [to determine] whether they are able to do the training. The SETAs [ETQAs] work with the formal sector...we work more with the smaller informal sector (3:40).

Nevertheless, there is evidence that the DoL is increasingly using accredited providers:

...we prefer to use [accredited providers] and encourage the others...to also make sure that they are quality assured in terms of what they are offering (3:40)

Most respondents indicated strong support for nationally agreed standards (72,3%). The benefits of quality assurance (3:40), including the standardisation of education and training against nationally developed standards (3:42), are seen to be emerging despite the feeling that ETQAs do not yet have sufficient capacity and that there are many inconsistencies between quality assurance processes (3:41 - 42).

The lack of consistency leads to opportunities to circumvent the system. A private provider in Gauteng, for example, explained how he was requested to collude with another provider: without doing any training he would be paid 50% of the invoice (4:52). From the respondent's comments it appears as if the requirement to use an accredited provider was the reason for this inappropriate request.

However, national standards are considered to be important benchmarks:

...you benchmark against unit standards, or the national standards, the NQF standards. My perspective is that it's immensely valuable (4:76).

Standards also assist with uniformity of provisioning (4:77), facilitate the re-alignment of old programmes with new qualifications (4:94) and are contextualised for particular purposes (4:77). Even some public higher education institutions came out in support of standardisation:

...we all know the same things no matter [from] which university or college we are coming from.  
The standardisation of qualifications has helped (4:77).

However, standard setting is seen to be bureaucratic, time-consuming and costly. Standards Generation Bodies (SGBs) are not sufficiently funded. ETQAs and providers alike noted that there should be financial support for standard generation:

To get the people around the table [to] start up an SGB ... is very costly. Institutions don't pay for that (4:77).

Nevertheless, standards seem to be useful as they capture the 'core' competence of the organisation (4:78).

Despite the bureaucratic nature of achieving accreditation, the stringent requirements for accreditation as education and training providers are welcomed:

I think in the past many training providers who claimed to be providers got away with murder, where they would open up a training institution for six months and then close down and disappear ...leaving the unfortunate learners in the lurch (3:42)

Almost two thirds of respondents (62,6%) agreed that the implementation of quality assurance practices has improved the quality of education and training providers.

Providers in particular, seemed to agree that quality assurance was essential and necessary and that quality assurance has improved:

We started our quality assurance office five years ago and we are already in the third year of our own internal self-evaluation cycles in faculties (4:72).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

From the providers' point of view, the development of quality assurance mechanisms links strongly with the requirements for accreditation by an appropriate ETQA. This seems to point to a culture of 'compliance' rather than deep change. For example:

...we are all forced to have a quality assurance committee, [but] it hasn't met once, it hasn't discussed a single issue ...on quality assurance ... (4:74).

However, there is strong evidence that quality management is becoming embedded in practice:

...[developing a quality management system] was a learning experience for all of us because there are lots of new things in terms of quality management systems that had to be [put] in place (4:72).

We have questionnaires that the students have to fill in - what are the problems that they experience in class...you can alter ...your approach (4:72).

...we expect specifically the facilitators to write reports ...We do evaluations at the workshops and the project manager would ...talk to participants in the workshop (4:72).

...the implementation [of quality assurance mechanisms] has already [enabled] a new mind set from all our lecturers...because it helps them to structure [their processes], it keeps them on track [and] that is a good thing (4:74).

A trade union indicated that they are aware of quality assurance requirements and that they are using it to the benefit of their members (5:19).

Therefore, despite the difficulties associated with lack of capacity and in many cases, the lack of support and guidance from ETQAs, providers feel that they have been treated fairly (4:73) and that they support the process:

I am prepared to go the whole hog...we are taking the trouble to comply (4:73).

I think the improvement of [quality assurance] is probably due to the accreditation criteria and the emphasis they place on [quality management] (4:65).

In addition, providers feel that being accredited gives a certain assurance of quality (4:65).

However, there is no doubt that providers are finding the development of quality assurance mechanisms time-consuming, bureaucratic, complex and difficult to achieve. The question dealing with the bureaucratic nature of attaining accreditation indicated that more than a third of respondents (35,3%) felt that the processes were causing problems, and a third each (31,7 % and 33,0%) of respondents indicated that they did not find it difficult, or that they did not know.

Different approaches to quality assurance (4:66), financial and resource requirements (4:66, 4:69), disbursement of Skills Development grants (4:70) and the cost of developing quality management systems (4:66) seem to be inhibiting. Uncertainty about the need for registration with the DoE is perceived to be problematic to providers when seeking accreditation:

...we specifically do not want to [offer] a full qualification because [then] we have to go to the HEQC (CHE) and they [tell] you about the anomalies in the legislation - to deliver a full qualification, you have to be registered with the Department of Education (4:79).

The interpretation of the SAQA Act that all private providers need to be registered with the DoE before they can initiate an accreditation process seems to be particularly inhibiting. Some private FET providers noted with concern that the DoE seems to have placed a hold on the registration of such providers:

...what is very worrying are the rumours that the Department of Education wants to put a hold on [the registration of] the independent service providers (4:86).

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

*Level of impact*

<b>Minimal/mixed impact</b>	The research evidence shows minimal positive and/or a mix of positive and negative change across the education and training system
-----------------------------	--

A minimal/mixed rating has been given to *Quality assurance practices* because its impact is mixed. Most respondents indicated strong support for the implementation of quality assurance mechanisms, and indicated that the quality of education and training has improved because of them. But the operationalisation of quality assurance has been problematic. Most of the problems are associated with lack of capacity (mostly of ETQAs, but also of providers), contestation, overlapping of responsibilities, lack of meaningful MoUs, legislative anomalies and power struggles. The impact therefore cannot be considered 'minimal', because there is much evidence of support for the principle of quality assurance, but the problems associated with the implementation of quality assurance processes make it impossible to assign a rating of 'moderate' impact.

**Indicator 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

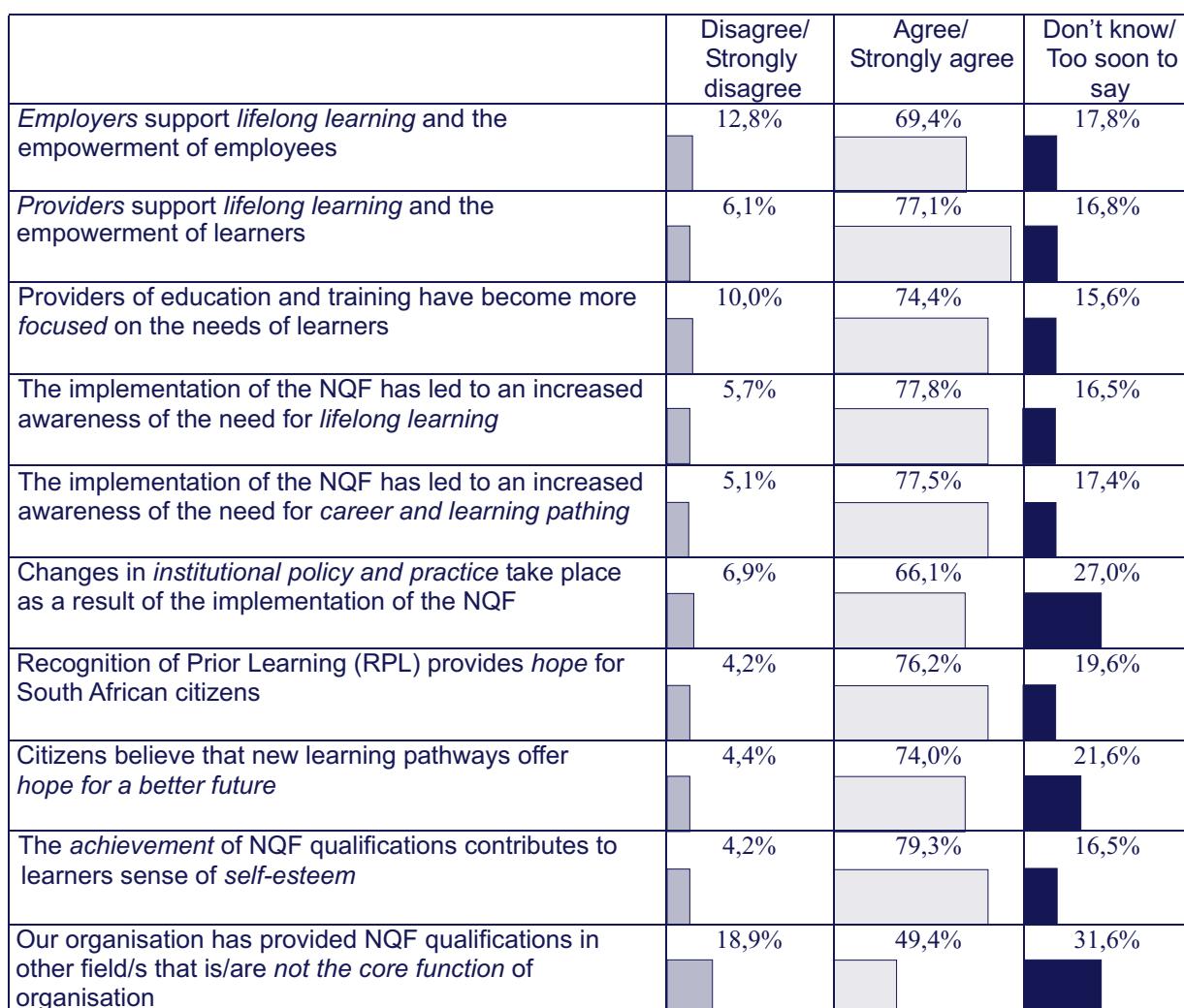


Table 20: Survey responses for Indicator 16

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

More than two thirds of respondents (69,4%) indicated that they believe that employers support lifelong learning and the empowerment of employees. ETQAs, in particular, agree strongly that the empowerment of employees is increasingly taking place:

There was nothing at our institutions. Nothing. Not a single quality. We didn't even have employment contracts at some of these institutions... Workplace skills plans...have been submitted. Lecturers are empowered. Even staff [at the lower end is] being placed in learnerships (2:31).

Moreover, most respondents believe that the NQF is becoming embedded in the education and training system and that qualifications are contributing to individuals' sense of self-esteem (79,3%) (2:31):

...10 years from now you wouldn't believe, you couldn't think back that we ever had the old system...[there is] a difference in attitude, there is a difference of quality...there is a difference [in] curriculum (2:31).

However, a consistent response is that there has not been enough advocacy of the NQF (2:31; 4:82), in respect of both learners and employers.

Most respondents believed that providers of education and training support lifelong learning and that the NQF has contributed to an awareness of lifelong learning (77,1%). A respondent noted for example:

People are not excited about the NQF because of policy...it is more a case of 'I can write my name, I can read', and this is how [they] get on this path of [lifelong learning] of the NQF. 'I want to read, so that I can read my Bible, I want to write so [that] I can get my pension'...they are more excited about the policy in practice, than about the policy itself (3:45).

Likewise, a substantial number of respondents (74,4%) believe that providers are more responsive to the needs of learners:

The NQF processes is a guideline...it guides us to provide quality in training and then to ensure that the training programmes we produce...are in line with the norms and standards set ...if we are following the NQF processes, we ...[produce] quality, not quantity (3:45).

An even larger number of respondents (77,5%) indicated that the awareness has led to the need for career and learning pathing and that the NQF is the foundation for other national strategies (3:45). It is perhaps still too soon to say, but it seems as if the system is underpinned by good policies:

...[what is] working, is the 'spirit of the NQF'. I think the legislation works well...whether companies apply it properly, that's another matter. But I think the framework has been set up, and those who make use of it...gain from it. We had a long history of not providing quality education for everybody (4:84)

Two thirds of respondents (66,1%) also believe that institutional policies and practice are changing as a result of the implementation of the NQF. Even in the job market, NQF qualifications are becoming a requirement:

...we are beginning to see many adverts ...talking about SAQA, level 'X' qualifications; it's becoming a requirement (3:46).

RPL is considered very important - most respondents (76,2%) believe that it holds great promise (3:45) but that it has not yet been implemented sufficiently (3:45). Nevertheless, implementation is essential in order to 'get the fundamental principles of the NQF working' (4:85- 87).

Almost three quarters of respondents (74,0%) indicated that learning pathways were increasingly contributing to a better future and that education and training is having an impact on society:

...these youngsters are rough...very rough, we are talking about guys dying...[T]o address [these issues] we have to show the guy 'hey, look, you are special' and we find they look [at us] as father figures...I mean one guy invited me to his wedding ...I trained him four years ago (4:82).

### *Level of impact*

<b>High positive impact</b>	The research evidence shows a marked positive change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF
-----------------------------	---

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

*Organisational, economic and societal benefits* has been rated with high positive impact. Most respondents agreed with the questions posed to them (up to 79% in some cases). It was noted, amongst others, that institutional policies and practices have changed and learning pathways had improved. Awareness of the NQF structures was very high. There was also a high degree of expectation and hope that the system was going to work. Some concerns regarding the need for more advocacy, tension between the Departments and the unresolved reviews were also raised.

It is furthermore recommended that this Impact Indicator be separated into three separate indicators to allow for distinct focus on each dimension (see the findings in Chapter 2).

### Indicator 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 (HRD), National Skills Development (NSD) strategies and Tirisano

Statement	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Agree/Strongly agree	Don't Know/Too soon to say
The objectives of the NQF are aligned with the objectives of the national Human Resource Development Strategy	4,9%	63,5%	31,6%
NQF implementation supports and contributes to a decrease in unemployment	18,2%	52,2%	29,6%
NQF implementation supports and contributes to economic growth and the development of new economic opportunities	7,2%	69,9%	22,8%
NQF implementation supports and contributes to reducing illiteracy	2,8%	79,1%	18,1%
NQF implementation supports and contributes to the upskilling of the labour force	3,9%	79,4%	16,7%
Life skills and HIV/AIDS awareness are improved through the completion of NQF qualifications	14,2%	58,3%	27,5%
The NQF contributes to SADC and Africa collaboration	6,4%	48,1%	45,5%
NQF qualifications improve employability and facilitate sustainable livelihoods of learners	7,1%	67,1%	25,9%
NQF qualifications assist communities to take control of their socio-economic situations	8,4%	64,6%	27,0%
NQF qualifications contribute to the achievement of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) targets	3,6%	72,3%	24,2%
NQF qualifications contribute to the development of the capacity of self-employed individuals and small businesses (SMMEs)	5,1%	70,3%	24,6%

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

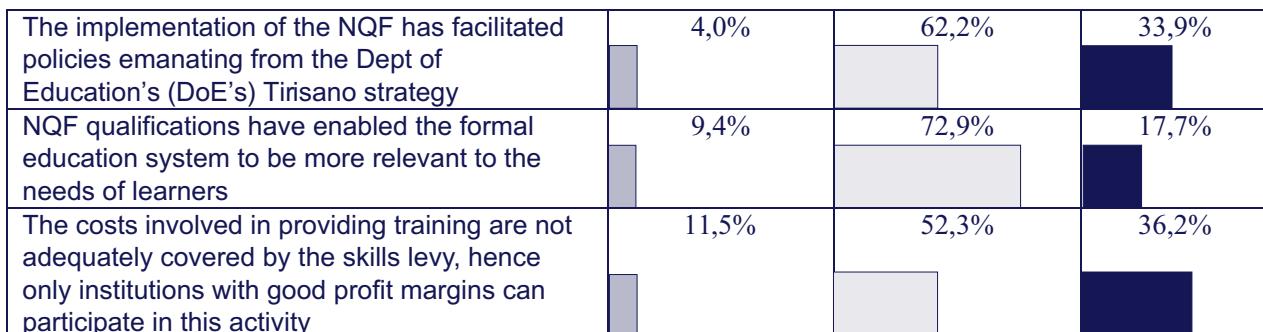


Table 21: Survey responses for Indicator 17

Responses received from surveys indicated that two-thirds of respondents felt the NQF was an important part of the national Human Resource Development Strategy (63,5%). Three quarters of respondents felt the NQF was an important part of the National Skills Development Strategy (72,3%).

For both of these strategies, however, between a quarter and a third of respondents felt it was too soon to say or that they did not know whether the NQF was an important part of these national strategies. Responses received as to whether the NQF facilitated policies emanating from the Department of Education's Tirisano strategy showed that almost two thirds of the respondents (62,2%) agreed with this. However, a third of the respondents (33,9%) felt that it was too soon to say or that they did not know.

An overwhelming majority of survey respondents felt that the NQF had made an impact by reducing illiteracy (79,1%) and the up-skilling of the labour force (79,4%). Almost three quarters of respondents (70,3%) felt that the NQF had contributed to building the capacity of SMMEs and the employability and sustainable livelihoods of learners (67,1%). Similarly, almost three quarters of respondents (72,9%) felt that NQF qualifications had enabled the formal education system to be more responsive to the needs of learners.

Just over half of the survey respondents (52,2%) felt that NQF implementation had made an impact on reducing unemployment. In terms of the NQF's contribution to economic growth and the development of new economic opportunities, almost three quarters of survey respondents (69,9%) felt that the NQF had made an impact.

Almost two thirds of the survey respondents felt that NQF qualifications had assisted communities to take control of their socio-economic situations (64,6%), although nearly a third of respondents (27,0%) felt that it was too soon to say or they didn't know. Fairly similar results were given for NQF qualifications improving awareness of HIV/AIDS and life skills, with over half of the respondents (58,3%) indicating that this had happened.

In response to the statement that the NQF contributes to SADC/Africa collaboration, almost half of the respondents (45,5%) indicated that they didn't know or that it was too soon to say.

Responses from interview respondents on the alignment of NQF objectives with the HRD objectives were varied. A trade union stated:

...it [NQF] is very much seen as a relevant part of the HRD Strategy. From our own perspective it is critical (5:22).

An employer corroborated this view:

HR .... walks hand in hand with skills development and we are linked to all of this (6:29).

A Department of Education respondent critiqued the HRD Strategy as having good intentions, but trying to do everything (3:46). A Department of Labour respondent agreed that there was a link between the HRD and NQF, but felt that this was not a coordinated approach that provided visible or tangible outputs (3:47).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

There was general agreement in interview responses that the NQF contributed to the achievement of the National Skills Development Strategy. A Department of Labour respondent argued that:

If there had been no NQF we could have continued, but there would have been no quality assurance....if the NQF is not there, then [the National Skills Development Strategy] is a waste of time and it is business as usual. If we want to ensure redress, there has to be an NQF and there have to be ETQAs (3:48).

Another Department of Labour response stated:

....training is one of the pillars for building South Africa....I think it's going to take many years to sort it out properly and I wonder if we'll ever get there because it's like a shifting desert platform that you [are] working on. But I'm quite excited and I think [it] can work well (3:47).

An SMME employer disagreed that the NQF contributed to the achievement of the National Skills Development Strategy in stating:

I think what we are doing is bluffing ourselves (6:29).

Responses from interview respondents did not support the statement that the implementation of the NQF facilitated policies emanating from the Department of Education's Tirisano policy. A Department of Education response noted:

Tirisano was a brand....It went well for that era of 1999 to 2004 but now with the new Minister coming in, she's determining her own priorities.... All the work that was happening on Tirisano is happening. The work didn't stop; it's just that there's no mention (3:48).

A trade union response indicated:

I don't know if the NQF is upholding the principles of Tirisano. How the NQF is delivered through providers is not necessarily linked to the DoE's policy, which is why one would not be able to link the government's policies to it, especially [as] private providers may not be aware of the principles contained in the Department's policy (5:22).

Limited qualitative evidence was found to corroborate the overwhelming majority view from survey respondents that the NQF had contributed to reducing illiteracy and up-skilling the labour force. A trade union and an employer had contrasting views on the up-skilling of the labour force:

....we [Labour] have become less involved and we lack capacity. A few union officials at top level sit in the SETA structure and information is not filtering down sufficiently.... [workers are] not sure what to do and they lose interest in the whole training possibility (5:22).

Definitely. It [the NQF] is creating opportunities for people who did not have opportunities (6:29).

No qualitative evidence was found to corroborate the majority view of survey respondents that NQF implementation supports and contributes to economic growth and the development of new economic opportunities. Interview responses did not support the majority of survey responses that NQF qualifications have enabled the formal education system to be more responsive to the needs of learners. An ETQA stated:

If the Department of Education won't accredit [a private provider] who trained at [NQF] level 5, so they can't operate at level 5 then (2:32).

An employer noted his personal frustration with the education system, as he felt that school learners were being worked too hard as a result of having to work with two different syllabuses (6:29).

Respondents interviewed sustained the majority view received from surveys that NQF implementation supports and contributes to a decrease in unemployment. An ETQA felt that this was possible:

Opportunities could be developed for them to start small businesses (2:32).

An employer recorded their support for this statement:

...we get unemployed people going on learnerships; they learn and they have the possibility of getting a permanent position, because they already have the knowledge (6:29).

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

Only one response was received on whether NQF implementation contributed to the development of the capacity of self-employed individuals and small businesses (SMMEs):

My experience is that SMMEs are busy....they don't have time to entertain these issues of training, the issues of learnerships...the reason is that they are too busy to actually be involved in this paperwork (3:48).

No qualitative evidence was found to support responses from surveys that NQF implementation contributed to awareness of HIV/AIDS and life skills or for NQF implementation assisting communities to take control of their own socio-economic situations.

One response received on whether the NQF contributes to SADC and Africa collaboration stated:

I don't think we compare very well with other countries in Africa....we are not part of Africa...We are very unpopular in Africa in some countries because we are very arrogant (3:48).

### *Level of Impact*

<b>High positive impact</b>	The research evidence shows a marked positive change across most of the education and training system as it pertains to the NQF
-----------------------------	---

Qualitative and quantitative data received on this indicator, *Contribution to other national strategies*, shows high positive impact. There is significant evidence that the NQF is perceived to be making a positive contribution to the achievement of national strategies. A minor exception to this case is the NQF's contribution to the Tirisano strategy, which is an internal Department of Education strategy and appears to be slightly outdated now. An overwhelming majority of positive responses was received for the NQF's contribution to reducing illiteracy and upskilling the labour force. Therefore, while there are areas where qualitative data does not support the survey findings, these do not undermine the overall high positive impact.

It should also be noted that as in the case of Indicator 11: *Assessment Practices*, there was a high incidence of responses that fell within the 'don't know' or 'it is too soon to say' category. This is an indication that the emerging system is still becoming embedded in daily practice.

However, on balance, the responses indicate high positive impact.

## **CHAPTER 5: SECOND CYCLE SUMMARY AND FINDINGS**

---

### **Introduction**

This final chapter summarises and comments on the baseline findings presented in Chapter 4 and discusses their implications for current NQF debates, in particular the issues identified in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 also identifies future research and development implications.

### **Summary of baseline findings**

As was explained in Chapter 1 of the Report, the 17 Impact Indicators are organised into four sets, each focusing on different overarching aspects of NQF implementation. The following table is a summary of the baseline findings per Set of Impact Indicators.

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

Table 22: Baseline findings per Impact Indicator Set

In the following sections the findings are summarised according to levels of impact.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### High positive impact baseline findings

The NQF was perceived to have had a high positive impact in the following areas:

- Nature of learning programmes (#9)
- Organisational, economic and societal benefits (#16)
- Contribution to other national strategies (#17)

The positive impact of the NQF on the nature of learning programmes was a marked and perhaps surprising finding. The NQF has led to a major redesign of courses and while there were some complaints about cumbersome processes, there was widespread agreement that NQF principles, in particular an outcomes-based approach, had had a positive impact on learning programmes. This view stemmed partly from the belief that certification had increased learner motivation. Other factors included a greater emphasis on application of knowledge and skills, clarity of learning objectives, enhanced learner autonomy, and a strengthening of quality assurance of programmes.

Clearly, some respondents had concerns about the onerous nature of the associated processes but this does not detract from the overall finding that learning programmes have markedly improved since the inception of the NQF. This is corroborated by comments made under Indicator 16, which were also highly positive.

There was strong evidence of the organisational and societal benefits of the NQF. There were fewer comments on the economic benefits; people clearly believed that there had been benefits for skills development in South Africa but understandably few were suggesting that this had yet worked through to economic benefits. Respondents pointed to a number of ways in which the NQF was making an impact, including employee empowerment, enhanced self esteem for learners, more awareness of learning opportunities, improved responsiveness on the part of providers, and clearer learning pathways. NQF qualifications were also said to be becoming an important factor in recruitment.

Similarly, respondents believed strongly that the NQF was contributing to other national strategies. Examples they gave included reducing illiteracy, upskilling the labour force, enabling communities to take control of their socio-economic situation, and improving HIV/AIDS awareness. While reaction was highly positive, it seems possible that respondents were giving a strong endorsement to the principles and values of the NQF rather than necessarily arguing that these strategies were yet fully operational. However, the key point is that the NQF strategy is seen to be well aligned with, and supportive of, these other key national policies and strategies.

### Moderate impact baseline findings

The implementation of the NQF was perceived to have had a moderate positive impact in the following areas:

- Number of qualifications (#1)
- Relevance of qualifications (#4)
- Equity of access (#7)
- Quality of learning and teaching (#10)
- Assessment practices (#11)
- Career and learning pathing (#12)

Some NQF qualifications, especially workplace qualifications, were seen to be very relevant to employment needs, particularly because of their practical emphasis. Learnerships and skills programmes were thought to be particularly relevant, although some respondents thought that there was still a need to improve the scope and level of outcomes in these programmes. There was also an acknowledgement of the increased availability and relevance of non-traditional qualifications. Some university qualifications, school qualifications and, in particular teacher education qualifications, were frequently criticised for lack of relevance. By this was meant lack of relevance to the world of work.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

There was a strong consensus that access to education is open to all previously excluded groups, people with disabilities, women, learners of all ages, and all population groups. These beliefs were backed up by practical examples, except for some reason in respect of gender. However, the key issue (in the minds of respondents) in respect of access is RPL. In Cycle 1, the indicative evidence was that while RPL was seen as very important, there was frustration about the lack of progress. In this cycle, there was some encouraging evidence of developments in actual practices, notably in technikons and universities. On the other hand, there is still a widespread belief that RPL is too complex and costly. The whole area of access to education is one which might benefit from more in-depth research (see below).

The quality of learning and teaching was thought to have improved. Respondents believed that more attention was paid to the needs of learners. Many pointed to an increased emphasis on professional development for educators and the establishment of units for academic development or quality of learning. Others believed that more needed to be done in teacher development. Examples were given by respondents of improvements in learner support, although again there were some dissenting voices.

Respondents clearly believed that assessment practices had improved. This was perhaps an unexpected finding, but people seem to be distinguishing between the process of assessment reform, which many believe to be cumbersome and over-detailed, and the outcomes of assessment reform, which are viewed much more positively. It was said that assessment was taken more seriously, and there was increased use of assignments and case studies, and more continuous assessment. There were also better links with workplace learning. Assessment could be linked into workplace quality control and appraisal systems. On the other hand, the evidence on standards was mixed. Some said there was more consistency while others were concerned about the scope for subjectivity or even fraud. Also, the concerns about bureaucracy and workload remain. While some felt that it was a matter of getting used to the new system, others were more pessimistic.

While the overall responses on career and learning pathing were mixed, there was some evidence that progression routes were becoming clearer. There were perhaps enough reports of good practice to suggest that there has been some positive change in the years since the introduction of the NQF (although some argued that such changes were not directly attributable to the NQF). This is another area that would benefit from further research.

### Minimal/mixed impact baseline findings

The NQF was found to have had a minimal or mixed impact in the following areas:

- Effectiveness of qualification design (#2)
- Portability of qualifications (#3)
- Qualifications uptake and achievement (#5)
- Integrative approach (#6)
- Redress practices (#8)
- Number of registered assessors and moderators (#13)
- Number of accredited providers (#14)
- Quality assurance practices (#15)

Respondents generally found it difficult to focus on issues of qualifications design. There were some comments on the value of combining theory and practice and some reactions on specific issues such as the quality of the matric certificate and the relative merits of unit-standard based and non-unit standard based qualifications. However, in the analysis of NQF registered qualifications of the three sectors, Physical Planning and Construction, Mining and Minerals and Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Gaming, this indicator was useful in determining the extent to which qualifications design supports the broader principles of the NQF. The following principles and foci became evident:

- Career mapping/career pathways
- Improved access through flexible entry requirements and RPL
- The portability and transfer of credits, particularly within the sector, but also across sectors
- Articulation of qualifications with each other

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

- Standardisation of qualifications
- The integration of theory and practice
- Responsiveness and relevance to workplaces
- Employability, entrepreneurship and social transformation

There is still a sense that the NQF is not yet fully operational because of a number of inter-related problems. The level of uptake and achievement is still low, partly because it takes time for learners to complete programmes leading to qualifications. One would expect numbers to increase significantly by Cycle 3. However, uptake is also affected by the slow progress in registration of assessors and moderators and accreditation of providers.

These problems in turn are attributed by the majority of respondents to deficiencies in the quality assurance system. There is little doubt that this is the area with the most significant issues for the NQF to address. About two thirds of respondents considered quality assurance to be overly bureaucratic, causing many administrative problems. It is interesting to note, however (and there is a parallel here with assessment practices) that while there are deep concerns about *processes*, there is some satisfaction with quality assurance *outcomes*. There is strong support for the idea of quality standards and a belief that quality assurance is improving.

The key problems affecting quality assurance are said to be:

- Lack of progress with Memoranda of Understanding
- Legislative anomalies, giving rise to dual accreditation
- Lack of trust
- Overlapping responsibilities of ETQAs
- 'Too much power' for CHE
- DoE's 'lack of understanding of non-formal education'
- Quality assurance mechanisms being set up for the sake of compliance rather than to improve quality
- Uncertainty about registration with the DoE

These problems are not new. Many have been on record since the report of the Study Team. Interestingly, the problems on which respondents focus are strategic rather than operational. They relate to ongoing problems of governance of the NQF. South Africa is far from being unique internationally in having developed assessment or quality assurance processes that practitioners find to be too complex. It may be unique in the length of time such issues have been left unresolved.

Portability of qualifications continues to be seen as problematic. Respondents identified two key problems:

- Beliefs that are held about the relative quality of particular institutions or education/training sectors
- Institutional practices such as limited communication, the drive for profit and differences in syllabi

It is also thought that there has been little progress on Redress. This is largely attributable to the lack of impact of RPL. Under the Equity of Access Indicator, a moderately encouraging position was presented because learners are starting to be able to obtain NQF credits through RPL. However, redress requires that learners are then able to 'cash in' their credits and most respondents believe that this is not yet happening. It is said that the only route into further and higher education is through the matric certificate or other formal entry requirement.

This lack of progress on Portability and Redress is perhaps not surprising. International evidence and expert commentary has consistently pointed to the need to consider 'institutional (as well as intrinsic) logic' and to seek to develop 'communities of trust'. It is not enough to develop systems that allow for progression and credit transfer and permit the recognition of prior learning. It is also necessary for practitioner values and institutional practices to be aligned with these goals.

The findings on Integrative Approach echo those on Portability and Redress. Moving between academic and vocational qualifications remains difficult; there is no parity of esteem for vocational education; and co-operation between formal education and the world of work and training remains limited. There were positive responses to some questions under this Indicator but this seems largely to reflect support for the *aspiration* to a unified system rather than an identification of significant progress in reality.

## Negative impact baseline findings

No Impact Indicators were rated negative.

## Implications of the baseline findings for current debates and future research

French (2004) in his critique of the Chairperson's Lecture characterised the NQF Impact Study methodology as based on 'market opinion and self-report questionnaire surveys'. He went on to argue:

Professor Jansen ... implicitly recommends some interesting alternatives. At the heart of his recommendation is the use of studies of how the NQF is being implemented, or evaded, in terms of the practices, institutional arrangements and individual responses. For example: How have curricula been changing, and to what extent is the change due to the NQF? How is assessment being managed? How have previously marginalised learners been taken up in education and training in ways that recognise and valorise new knowledge? In what ways are different forms of knowledge being allowed to flow together into qualifications? Such questions are implicit in the sets of indicators, but it may be that cumulative, persuasive, in-depth narratives of the multiple, varied real-life responses to the transformative challenge of the NQF, backed by national, regional and sectoral statistics, would be more telling than indicators?

There is much force in this argument. Indicators are no more and no less than the name implies. They provide an *indication* of the main trends in the system and can offer a 'big picture' view over time. They do not provide the 'fine grain' of practice or point to solutions except in the most general terms. However, indicators can indicate where more research might be valuable. It is not necessary to choose between having an Impact Study and the type of research to which French refers. Both are needed. However, there are clear indications that practice is changing, and that there is great awareness for the need to change.

More in-depth research is required in respect of some Indicators, particularly those where the detail of institutional practice and the quality of the learners' experience needs to be understood more clearly. There are some inter-related areas where, in the view of the project team, further research would be particularly valuable.

### Access

How are issues of access perceived by people from previously excluded groups? Do they share the view that access is more open? What institutional practices encourage or discourage access?

### Recognition of Prior Learning

What are the characteristics of good practice in the emerging RPL system? What are the key barriers to effective implementation? How easy or difficult is it for learners to transfer RPL credits to new programmes?

### Career and learning pathing

How clear are progression routes to learners? How important an issue is it for them? What needs to be done to meet learner needs better?

The results of the Impact Study suggest that there are four key areas for development (possibly with some associated research):

1. Simplification of assessment

The perceived complexity of assessment processes remains a significant issue. Indeed, had it not been for the negative comments about processes, Assessment Practices would have been rated High Positive. Consideration could be given to setting up a Review of Assessment to determine the scope for simplification.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### 2. Clarification and simplification of responsibilities for Quality Assurance

Concerns about quality assurance focus on overlapping responsibilities or uncertainty about responsibilities. The Impact Study findings suggest that there is an urgent need to clarify and simplify responsibilities.

### 3. Development of Communities of Trust

This question lies at the heart of the lack of progress towards an Integrative Approach, Portability of Qualifications, and Redress. Consideration could be given to establishing a national programme that facilitated local consortia of providers from different sectors of education/training to work together to establish effective access and progression routes and to build mutual understanding and trust.

### 4. Clarification of the integrative intentions of the NQF

Unlike the other development areas, which are concerned with quite practical matters, this issue is still at a conceptual level. It is suggested, however, that it is of considerable symbolic importance and that there is a need to clarify and come to a common understanding of the notion of an integrative approach. The question of what 'integration' really means has been with the NQF since its inception and remains a barrier to achieving a consensus on the direction the NQF should take. The typology of NQFs presented in Chapter 3, drawing on the work of international experts, may offer part of the basis for debating and resolving this question.

## Conclusion

The purpose of Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study was to *establish a baseline against which to measure the progress of the NQF*. The research process, developed around a suite of 17 Impact Indicators, involved numerous interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and partners. An independent national survey was also undertaken to triangulate findings. The findings were categorised according to the Impact Indicators after which the impact of each was determined using a continuum of levels ranging from high positive, moderate, minimal/mixed to negative: three Impact Indicators were rated as high positive, six as moderate, eight as minimal/mixed and none as negative.

This baseline report presents the second step by SAQA towards achieving the effective measurement of the impact of the NQF on the South African education and training system. With the release of this report in 2005, the NQF Impact Study stands as a pioneering study, susceptible to criticism, but also open to intellectual scrutiny and public debate. The NQF Impact Study presents NQF implementers, within and beyond South Africa, with empirical data that can be used to improve NQF development and implementation in the years to come.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

## **REFERENCES**

---

1. Badat, S. (2004). Quality Assurance, Higher Education and Social Transformation: The Governance of Quality and the Quality of the Governance of Quality. Keynote address to the First Biennial Foundation of Tertiary Institutions on the Northern Metropolis (FOTIM) International Quality Assurance Conference, 23-25 June 2004, Johannesburg, South Africa.
2. Blackmur, D. (2003). A critique of the concept of a National Qualifications Framework. Paper delivered at the fifteenth international conference on assessing quality in higher education. Cape Town, South Africa.
3. Bouder, A. (2003). Qualifications in France: towards a national framework. *Journal of Education and Work*, 16: 3, pp.346-356.
4. Council on Higher Education. (2002). Proceedings of the CHE colloquium. Pretoria: CHE.
5. Crouch, L. (2000). Some Remarks on Sample-Based Studies in South African Education. Draft discussion paper.
6. Ensor, P. (2003). The National Qualifications Framework and Higher Education in South Africa: some epistemological issues. *Journal of Education and Work*, 16: 3, pp.325-346.
7. European Commission. (2004). Note to the Directors General of Vocational Training and the Group Coordinators of the ACVT. Developing common reference levels for VET. Director-General for Education and Culture, Brussels.
8. French, E. (2004). Those unheard ...a review of the presentations on the occasion of the SAQA Chairman's Lecture, September 2004. Paper commissioned by SAQA. *SAQA Bulletin*, 6: 2, pp.100-109.
9. Gibbons, M. (2000). Universities and the new production of knowledge: Some policy implications for government. In Kraak, A. *Changing Modes. New knowledge production and its implications for higher education in South Africa*. Pretoria: HSRC.
10. Granville, G. (2003). 'Stop making sense': chaos and coherence in the formulation of the Irish Qualification Framework. *Journal of Education and Work*, Vol. 16: 3, pp.259-270.
11. Granville, G. (2004). The NQF and the shaping of a new South Africa. Indications of the impact of the NQF in practice. Presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual SAQA Chairperson's Lecture, Gallagher Estate, 14 September, 2004.
12. Heyns, R. & Needham, S. (2004). An integrated approach to education and training: Exploring the issues. Paper presented at the Qualifications-Africa Conference hosted by the South African Qualifications Authority, Gallagher Estate, Midrand, South Africa, 15-16 September 2004.
13. Human Sciences Research Council. (1995). *Ways of seeing the NQF*. Pretoria: HSRC.
14. Jansen, J. (2001). Rethinking education policy making in South Africa: Symbols of change, signals of conflict. In Kraak, A. and Young, M. (Eds). *Education in Retrospect. Policy implementation since 1990*. Pretoria: HSRC, pp.41-58.
15. Jansen, J. (2004). Meta-evaluation study: the review of the South African Qualifications Authority and the National Qualifications Framework. *SAQA Bulletin*, 5: 1, pp. 47-61.
16. Jansen, J. (2004b). Do good ideas matter? A response to the SAQA Chairperson's Lecture titled: "The National Qualifications Framework and the Shaping of a New South Africa" paper commissioned by SAQA. *SAQA Bulletin*, 6: 2, pp. 87-93.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

17. Kraak, A. (2000). *Changing Modes. New knowledge production and its implications for higher education in South Africa*. Pretoria. HSRC.
18. Maja, B. (2004). Response to Gary Granville. A response to the SAQA Chairperson's Lecture titled: "The National Qualifications Framework and the Shaping of a New South Africa" paper commissioned by SAQA. *SAQA Bulletin*, 6: 2, pp. 94-99.
19. Mehl, M.(2004). The National Qualifications Framework: Quo Vadis? *SAQA Bulletin*, 5: 1, pp.21-46.
20. National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa, (2004). Comments on the draft discussion document on a Higher Education Qualifications Framework. (Unpublished).
21. Raffe, D. (2003). 'Simplicity itself': the creation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. *Journal of Education and Work*. 16: 3, pp. 239-257.
22. South Africa. Department of Education. (2004). *Education Statistics in South Africa at a glance in 2002*. Pretoria: The Department.
23. 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.
24. South Africa. Departments of Education and Department of Labour. (2003). *An interdependent National Qualifications Framework system: Consultative document*. Pretoria: The Departments.
25. South African Qualifications Authority. (2000). *The NQF and quality assurance*. Pretoria: SAQA.
26. South African Qualifications Authority. (2004). *National Qualifications Framework Impact Study. Report 1. Establishing the criteria against which to measure progress of the NQF*. Pretoria: SAQA.
27. South African Qualifications Authority. (2004b). *The monitoring trends emerging from SAQA's monitoring of ETQAs, September 2002 to July 2003*. Pretoria: SAQA.
28. South African Qualifications Authority. (2004c). *Trends in Public Higher Education in South Africa 1992 to 2001. Analysis of the National Learners' Records Database Report 1*. Pretoria: SAQA.
29. South African Qualifications Authority. (2004d). Response by the South African Qualifications Authority to the draft Higher Education Qualifications Framework policy for discussion. (Unpublished).
30. South African Qualifications Authority. (2005). *The auditing trends emerging from SAQA's auditing of ETQAs, July 2003 to August 2004*. Pretoria: SAQA. Forthcoming.
31. South African Qualifications Authority. (2005b). Investigation into the current state of Memoranda of Understanding between ETQAs. Forthcoming.
32. Tuck, R., Hart, J. & Keevy, J.A. (2004). The relevance of the National Qualifications Framework Impact Study to qualification framework development in the Southern African Development Community. Paper presented at the Qualifications-Africa Conference hosted by the South African Qualifications Authority at Gallagher Estate, Midrand, South Africa, 15-16 September 2004.
33. Young, M. (2005). National Qualifications Frameworks: their feasibility and effective implementation in developing countries. A report prepared for the International Labour Office.

## **APPENDIX 1: INDICATIVE FINDINGS FROM CYCLE 1**

### a) Impact Indicator-related observations

- 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 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 Recognition of Prior Learning (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 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.
- 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 outcome-based approaches had enhanced teaching and learning.
- There is evidence of significant socio-cultural impact on the way people and organisations think and talk about and act upon lifelong learning.

### b) General observations

- 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. Integration of education and training remains problematic. Disparity of esteem continues to be seen as a barrier to portability and access.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

## APPENDIX 2: FINDINGS INTENDED TO INFORM THE CONDUCT OF FUTURE CYCLES

---

The findings from Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study were:

- Impact Indicators should continue to form the nucleus of the research design.
- The 17 revised Impact Indicators can be used over time to measure the impact of the NQF with minor adjustments during each application.
- The links between Set 4 of the revised Impact Indicators and Impact Indicators 16 and 17 will have to be made more explicit.
- The main point of reference for the Impact Indicators, as well as the Study in general, must remain the five NQF objectives.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- The specification and piloting of research instruments are a priority for the next cycle of the NQF Impact Study.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Consideration should be given to the length of intervals between studies. Two- to four-year intervals are suggested.
- 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.
- Representative sampling must form part of subsequent cycles of the Impact Study.
- 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.
- 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).
- 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.

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

### **APPENDIX 3: CODES USED DURING QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS**

---

<b>The extent to which qualifications address the education and training needs of learners and the South African society (Q)</b>	
1. Number of qualifications (N)	Q: N: number
	The interviews may offer limited info on this indicator but it has been included nonetheless
2. Effectiveness of qualifications design (ED)	Q: ED: access
	Race, gender and disability
	Q: ED: mobility
	Between providers and levels
	Q: ED: progression
	Particularly recognition of qualifications in the workplace
	Q: ED: fit-for-purpose
	Addresses contextual needs
	Q: ED: increased-employability
	Employees with NQF qals are more employable
3. Portability of qualifications (P)	Q: P: horizontal
	Portability of qualifications across vocational, professional and academic streams
	Q: P: diagonal
	Portability of qualifications across streams including change in level
	Q: P: vertical
	Portability of qualifications across levels within one stream
	Q: P: awareness
	Awareness of portability options
	Q: P: parity-of-esteem
	Qualifications offered by different institutions
	Q: P: comparability
	NQF qualifications and non-NQF qualifications (e.g. non-aligned training)
	Q: P: credit-transfer
	Recognition is given for incomplete qualifications (non-RPL) including the ability to move between institutions
	Q: R: workplace
	Relevance to the workplace and industry
4. Relevance of qualifications (R)	Q: R: society
	Relevance to society in particular - much more general than workplace
	Q: R: availability
	The availability of relevant qualifications
	Q: R: new
	Qualifications in new and emerging field of learning
	Q: R: internationality
	International comparability of NQF qualifications
	Q: R: skills-shortage
	Qualifications (through learnerships and skills programmes)
5. Qualifications uptake and achievement (UA)	Q: UA: cost-quals
	The cost of completing NQF qualifications
	Q: UA: provider-distribution
	Distribution of accredited providers across South Africa including availability and variety
	Q: UA: employees
	New and prospective employees having completed NQF qualifications
	Q: UA: learners
	Extent in general in which learners in general complete NQF qualifications
6. Integrative approach (IA)	Q: IA: articulation
	Movement of learners between vocational and academic streams
	Q: IA: co-operation
	Co-operation between formal education and world of work
	Q: IA: value
	The comparative value of educational and vocational qualifications
	Q: IA: theory-and-practice
	The inclusion of both theory and practice in NQF qualifications
	Q: IA: unification
	Extent to which SA has adopted a unified approach - i.e. Integrated
	Q: IA: pathing
	Influence of integration on career and learning path

<b>The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes addresses the education and training needs of learners and the South African society (LP)</b>	
7. Equity of access (EA)	LP: EA: disabilities
	Access of learners (particularly those previously excluded) to NQF qualifications
	LP: EA: gender
	LP: EA: age
	LP: EA: race
	LP: EA: non-traditional-learners
	LP: EA: admission-requirements
	LP: EA: RPL-availability
8. Redress practices (RP)	LP: RP: credits-through-RPL
	Learners obtain credits towards NQF qualifications through RPL
	LP: RP: access-without-requirements
	Learners are granted access to FET and HE institutions whether or not they have a matriculation certificate
	LP: RP: promotion-without-requirements
	Employees are promoted whether or not they have a matriculation certificate
	LP: RP: redress-measures
9. Nature of learning programmes (N)	LP: N: demand
	Demand for learning programmes based on NQF qualifications
	LP: N: redesign
	The implementation of the NQF has led to the redesign of courses (to adopt an outcomes-based format)
	LP: N: quality-through-OBA
	The quality of learning programmes is improved by using an outcomes-based approach (OBA)
	LP: N: curriculum-development
10. Quality of learning and teaching (QLT)	LP: QLT: learner-needs
	NQF qualifications enable effective curriculum development
	LP: QLT: learner-support
	New and improved learner support systems have been introduced
	LP: QLT: employer-support
	Employers have introduced measures to support employees studying towards NQF qualifications
	LP: QLT: quality-through-OBA
	The quality of learning and teaching is improved by using an outcomes-based approach (OBA)
	LP: QLT: responsiveness
	Learning and teaching practices are responsive to the needs of the learners
	LP: QLT: professional-development
11. Assessment practices (AP)	LP: AP: fairness
	The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications is fair (unbiased)
	LP: AP: validity
	The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications is valid (measures what it is supposed to measure)
	LP: AP: reliability
	The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications is reliable (dependable and consistent)
	LP: AP: implementability
	The assessment of learning towards NQF qualifications can be implemented with/without undue difficulty
	LP: AP: changes
	Significant (positive/negative) changes to assessment practices over the past few years
	LP: AP: quality
	The quality of assessment practices over time
	LP: AP: workload
	Workload associated with the assessment of NQF qualifications
	LP: AP: feedback-and-appeal
	Feedback and appeal mechanisms have become more accessible to learners and employees
	LP: AP: cost-assessment
	The cost of assessing learning towards NQF qualifications
12. Career and learning pathing (CLP)	LP: CLP: learner-awareness
	Learners awareness of career opportunities associated with NQF qualifications
	LP: CLP: employers-support
	Employers encourage employees to improve their qualifications by providing learning pathways
	LP: CLP: CCFOs
	Learning programmes include CCFOs

# National Qualifications Framework

## IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2

The extent to which quality assurance arrangements enhance the effectiveness of education and training (QA)		
13. Number of registered assessors and moderators (NAM)	QA: NAM: assessors	The interviews may offer limited info on this indicator
14. Number of accredited providers (NAP)	QA: NAP: providers	The interviews may offer limited info on this indicator
15. Quality assurance practices (P)	QA: P: new-learning	New forms of learning, teaching and assessment developed as a result of the introduction of QA practices
	QA: P: quality	Has the quality assurance improved?
	QA: P: problems	Admin and bureaucratic problems
	QA: P: agreed-standards	Quality assurance ensures that qualifications are offered against agreed standards
	QA: P: provider-quality	Quality assurance practices have improved quality of education and training providers
	QA: P: accreditation	Accreditation as QA measure
	QA: P: standards-setting	Standards-setting as QA measure

The extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture (SEP)		
16. Organisational, economic and societal benefits (OS)	SEP: OS: employers-support-LLL	Employers support LLL
	SEP: OS: providers-support-LLL	Providers support LLL
	SEP: OS: institutional-policies	Changes in institutional policies and practice as a result of the NQF
	SEP: OS: RPL	Overarching comments on RPL
	SEP: OS: hope	Learning pathways offer hope for a better future
	SEP: OS: self-esteem	Achievement of qualifications contributes to self-esteem
	SEP: OS: NQF-awareness	General awareness of NQF and NQF-related issues
	SEP: ONS: HRD	Awareness and links to the HRD (through the NQF)
17. Contribution to other national strategies (ONS)	SEP: ONS: unemployment	NQF and a decrease in unemployment
	SEP: ONS: economic-growth	NQF and the development of new economic opportunities
	SEP: ONS: illiteracy	NQF and reducing illiteracy
	SEP: ONS: upskilling	NQF and upskilling of the labour force
	SEP: ONS: lifeskills	Life skills incorporated into qualifications, e.g. HIV/AIDS awareness
	SEP: ONS: regional-collaboration	SADC/African collaboration
	SEP: ONS: employability	Employability and sustainable livelihoods
	SEP: ONS: socio-economic-situations	Enables communities to take control of their socio-eco situations
	SEP: ONS: NSDS	Awareness and links to the NSDS (through the NQF)
	SEP: ONS: SMME	Self-employed/small businesses
	SEP: ONS: Tirisano	Awareness and links to the DoEs Tirisano Strategy (through the NQF)
	SEP: ONS: formal-education	NQF qals have made the formal edu system more relevant to the needs of learners

## APPENDIX 4: PROJECT TEAM AND ADVISORY GROUP

---

### The NQF Impact Study Project Team

#### 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.

#### 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 children, 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. Since joining SAQA, she has been involved in 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), *The Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes* (2004) and *The Guidelines for Integrated Assessment* (2005). She has also published work on quality assurance, including co-authoring a chapter in *Quality in the Classroom* (Heineman), as well as published articles in education journals. 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 understanding an Integrated Framework for education and training in South Africa.

#### 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. This 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.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

**The NQF Impact Study Advisory Group**

Samuel BA Isaacs (SAQA Executive Officer)  
Anne Oberholzer (SAQA Deputy Executive Officer)  
Shirley Walters (SAQA Chairperson)  
Ken Hall (SAQA Member)  
Wally Morrow (SAQA Member)  
Rooksana Rajab (SAQA Member)  
Palesa Tyobeka (SAQA Member)

## APPENDIX 5: OVERARCHING ISSUES THAT REQUIRE FURTHER INVESTIGATION

---

The following issues emerged from Cycle 2 of the NQF Impact Study. Due to a lack of sufficient evidence it was not possible to make substantial findings on each of these. They are nonetheless regarded as important.

1. Turn-around time of the registration of unit standards and qualifications;
2. Possible overlapping unit standards and qualifications;
3. Balance between the need for stringent requirements and the need for capacity building of SMME providers;
4. Uncertainties created by the ongoing review of the NQF as to who is responsible for what;
5. Alignment of short courses to NQF unit standards;
6. Difficulties around the matriculation certificate, particularly with regard to RPL;
7. Misconceptions around skills levy claims;
8. Learners that don't care if they get credits or not they just want the skills; and
9. Quality of registered assessors.

It is suggested that SAQA commissions a series of occasional papers to explore the issues in more detail.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

## GLOSSARY

Name	Acronym	Description
Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies	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 Strategy	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.
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.
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.

**National Qualifications Framework**  
**IMPACT STUDY REPORT 2**

South African Qualifications Authority	SAQA	Established 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.



This report  
is the outcome of the  
second cycle of the National  
Qualifications Framework Impact  
Study commissioned by the South  
African Qualifications Authority. The Study,  
envisioned as a long-term continuous  
exercise, aims to achieve the effective  
measurement of the impact of the National  
Qualifications Framework  
on the transformation  
of education and training  
in South Africa.



Funded by the European Union  
under the European Programme for  
Reconstruction and Development

THE REPORT IS PUBLISHED AND DISTRIBUTED BY THE DIRECTORATE:  
STRATEGIC SUPPORT  
SAQA POSTNET SUITE 248, PRIVATE BAG X06, WATERKLOOF, 0145  
TELEPHONE: 012 431 5000  
FAX NUMBER: 012 431 5147  
WEBSITE: [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za)  
EMAIL: [saqainfo@saqa.org.za](mailto:saqainfo@saqa.org.za)  
HELPDESK: 086 010 3188