

Occupational Qualifications on the NQF: Communities of Mistrust?

Proposals for an Occupational Learning System

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Should professional qualifications be included on the NQF?

- **This is 2005**
 - *over 10 years since SAQA Act passed*
 - *Professional (and occupational) qualifications were always conceived to be part of the NQF*
 - NTSI , Ways of Seeing, NQF literature
- **Bizarre question - so why ask it?**
 - *Could it be that the NQF never really was 'an integrated national framework for learning achievements'?*
 - *Could it be that the 'provider-paradigm' has become the norm for learning?*
 - *Could it be that those marginalised previously – those who learned 'on-the-job' - continue to be marginalised?*
 - *Could it be that there is no systemic way of dealing with occupational learning?*

Occupations are part and parcel of the NQF!

- There has been a **broadening** of the concept of 'competence' to embrace the notion of **applied competence**. The behaviouralist limitations that have dogged competency models to date exist only if irresponsible educators promote them... The **curriculum principle of praxis** – the **integration of action and reflection in a particular context**, is consistent with this understanding of competence. **Critical self-evaluation** ought to reveal shortcomings in this area. The concept of applied competence incorporates the notion that **there are different kinds of knowledge**.
 - ***SAQA, 2000. The National Qualifications Framework and Curriculum Development***

Some criteria for calling an occupation a profession

A profession

- ***draws on a well-defined body of intellectual knowledge.***
- ***uses scientific methods to enlarge that body of knowledge, improving education and service.***
- ***educates its practitioners in institutions of higher learning.***
- ***functions autonomously in control of professional policy and activity and functions within a code of ethics.***
- ***is composed of individuals who consider this occupation as their lifework, contributing to the good of society through service to others.***
- ***requires continuous professional development.***
 - “Examples of Professions are molecular biologist, biochemist, instructor, winemaker, doctor, lawyer, etc”

The key requirement of any profession, occupation or trade is occupational competence

- To be competent is to be able to perform. The word occupational competence brings to mind terms like **self-reliance** and the ability to **participate within social groups** in ways that are **productive** and **satisfying**. Competence implies **goal attainment**, whether the goal involves addressing the **practical necessities** of living or **lifestyle choices** in leisure, recreation, or play that are related to **rest, renewal, or enjoyment**. Occupational competence is similarly appropriate for describing **engagement in activities** that promote health and well-being.
 - *Charles H. Christiansen, Carolyn M. Baum, Julie Bass Haugen, 1997 Occupational Therapy: Performance, Participation, and Well-Being, Third Edition.*

The relationship between occupational competence and the NQF

- **"applied competence" means the ability to put into practice in the relevant context the learning outcomes acquired in obtaining a qualification**

What does that mean?

- **Be competent in terms of an occupational context**
 - *= be a butcher, a baker, a candlestick maker*
 - *= a thatcher, a basket weaver, a sangoma, an inyanga yensimbi*
- **So did the NQF deliver?**
 - *Ye...s and NO!*
 - *Occupations are still second class*
- **The conceptualisation and, increasingly, the implementation of the NQF is anti-occupation**

Overall conclusion – the NQF doesn't respond well to needs of the labour market

- **The Framework itself is occupation unfriendly**
- **The quality assurance focus is too tightly focused on provision and increasingly ETQAs are creating new criteria for standard setting**
 - *QA not just about programmes*
 - *What about transformation?*
- **The contestation is about**
 - *Who controls knowledge?*
 - *Who sets the standards?*
 - *Who assures the quality of the system?*

The major reasons for the marginalising of occupations on the NQF are the narrow conception of learning as that which is 'provided' ie courses, modules

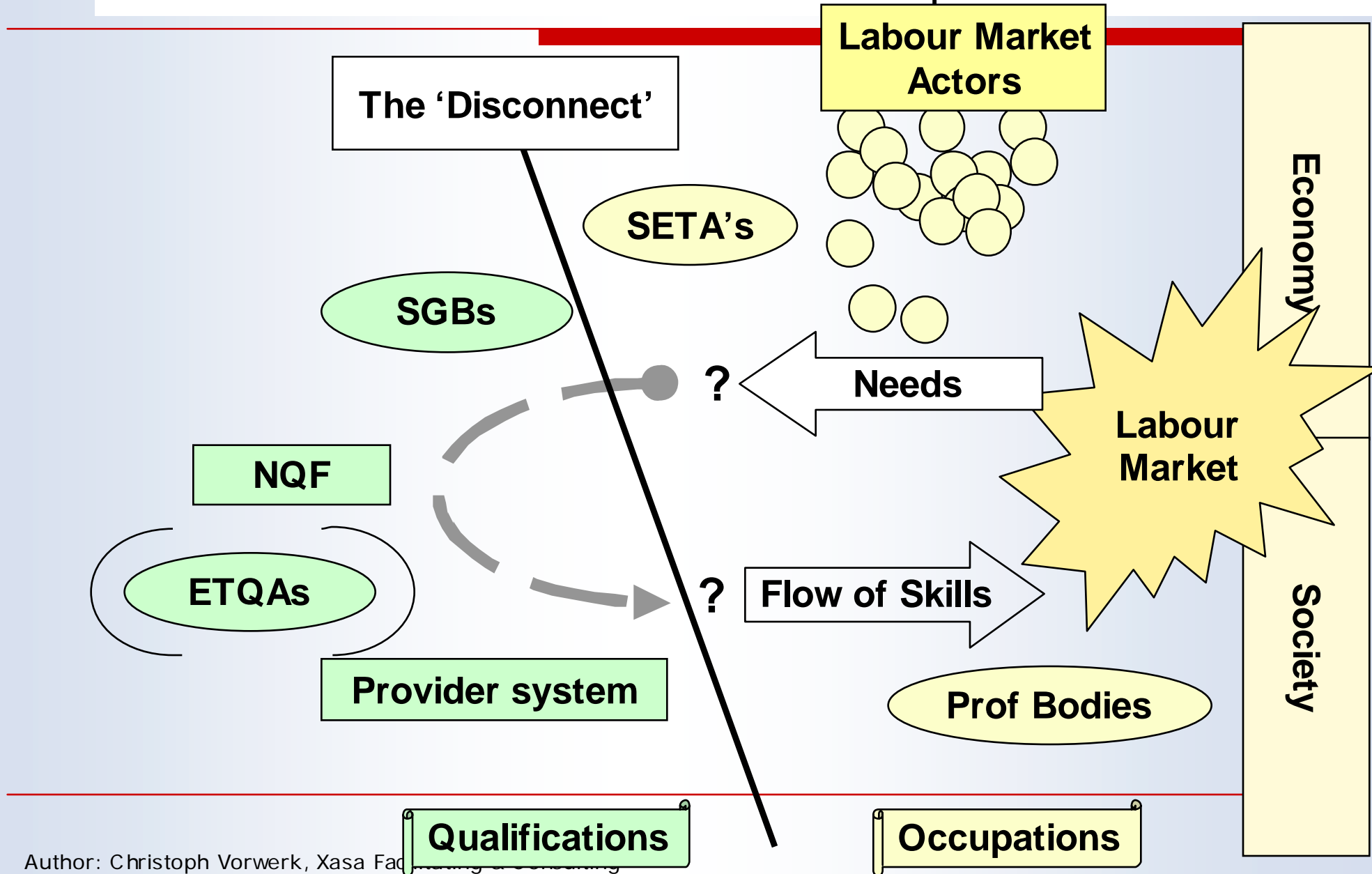
The narrow view is reflected in:

- **The NQF definition of qualifications**
 - *Certificate, diploma, degree*
 - *8/10 level*
 - **Criteria for registration of qualifications**
 - *Step-wise qualifications and 60:40 rule*
 - *Learning assumed to be in place*
 - **ETQA regulations**
 - *Restriction of quality to programmes*
 - Education, yes; training, maybe; development, hardly at all
 - *Band ETQAs as primary QA bodies (buttressed by other legislation)*
 - Marginalisation or even total exclusion of professional bodies
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A coherent implementation of the NQF is increasingly being threatened by a simplistic plug-and-play logic

- **The focus is on interchangeable bits**
 - *pull out this unit standard and plug in that one*
- **Qualifications must stand on their own**
 - *therefore no connection to anything else*
- **Providers must develop courses or modules for each unit standard and learners must be assessed in terms of the course or module**
 - *Just ignore the work experience, the transfer of learning from classroom to the workplace, the critical reflection*

The fundamental problem is that there is an inadequate systemic link between the world of the occupation and the NQF



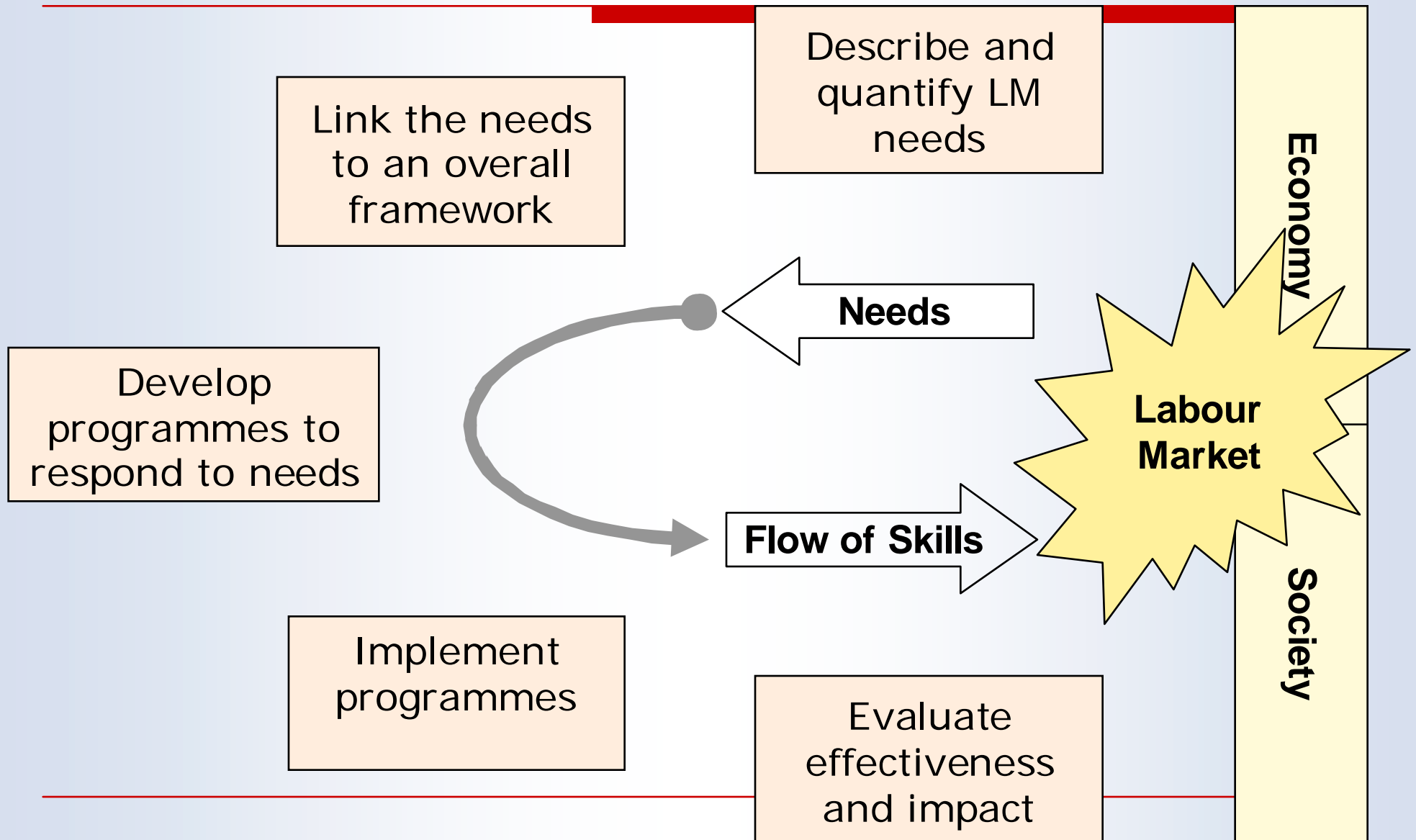
The outcome of these various problems and the contestation within the system is an emerging sense of mistrust

- **There is a deepening frustration among**
 - *Employers*
 - *Employees*
 - *Learners in the workplace*
 - *Learners exiting the education system*
 - *Providers, especially private and specialised providers*
 - *SGBs*
 - *Professional bodies and associations*
- **So why have an NQF?**

If we put aside the NQF and design a **system** that deals with **occupational learning** what would it look like?

- The most relevant and important qualification in your possession can't be got from an education institution or from SAQA
- It's your **curriculum vitae**
 - *Your record of life-long learning*
 - formal learning
 - + work and social experience
 - You CV defines you and allows you and others to assess your suitability for a variety of purposes
- An **Occupational Learning System** would structure and credential all these types of learning
- In addition the **OLS** would identify what society and economy needed in order to respond more effectively to these needs

What would the Occupational Learning System look like?



Each aspect in the process requires the appropriate tools and methodologies

1	Describe and quantify LM needs	Organising Framework of Occupations
2	Link the needs to an overall framework	Career Path and Awards Framework
3	Develop programmes to respond to needs	Curriculum model for occupations
4	Implement programmes	Link providers, workplaces and Communities of Expert Practitioners
5	Evaluate effectiveness and impact	Four tier quality assurance system

To develop an **occupational learning system** would require making conceptual and logical shifts

- Framework constructed on **occupations** not knowledge fields
 - *Similar occupations are grouped*
- Occupational progression mapped onto **career paths**
- Achieving the outcomes results in an **occupational award**
 - *Generic types of awards are defined*
 - *Eg trades, crafts, para-professional, professional*
- **Quality assurance** becomes broader and more systemic

The logic of occupations is based on sorting like with like and classifying at various levels of detail

- **SASCO**
 - *Major groups to specialisations*
- **Organising Framework for Occupations**
 - *Collect new occupations (scarce skills)*
 - *Collect new trends (critical skills)*
 - *Start of a management tool*

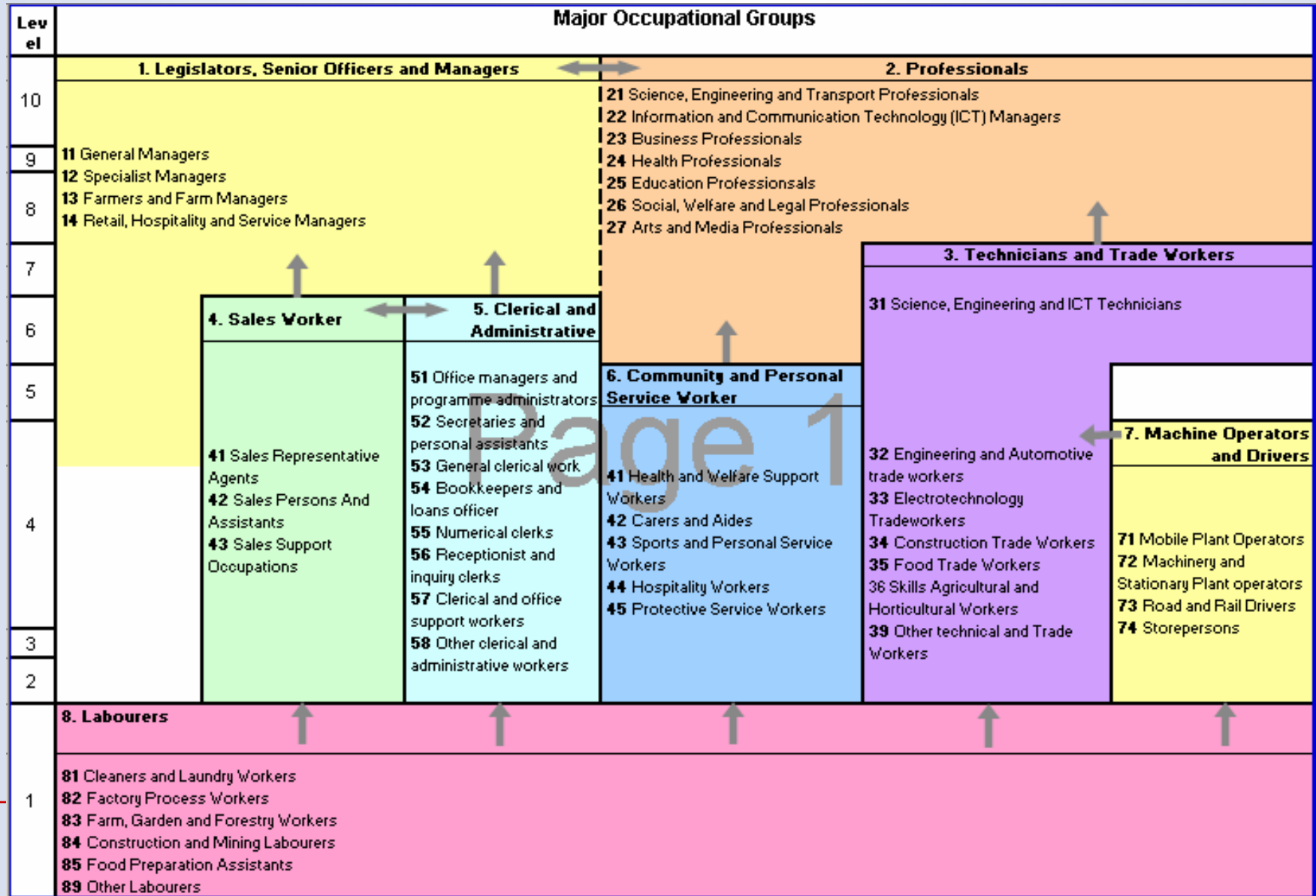
APPENDIX 4 : ORGANISING FRAMEWORK FOR OCCUPATIONS : SCARCE AND CRITICAL SKILLS TEMPLATE										
1	NAME OF SETA:									
2	RESPONSIBLE :									
3	CONTACT NUMBER:									
4	E-MAIL:									
5	SIGNATURE CEO:									
6										
7										
8	OCCUPATION	level	SS	Specialisation/Job	Critical Skills	Intervention	NQF Levels	NQF Aligned		Need
9								Y	N	Period
10										
11										
12	1	MANAGERS								
175	2	PROFESSIONALS								
631	3	TECHNICIANS AND TRADES WORKERS								
1097	5	CLERICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE WORKERS								
1232	6	SALES WORKERS								
1298	7	MACHINERY OPERATORS AND DRIVERS								
1412	8	LABOURERS								
1500										

The **OFO** works across knowledge fields and across economic sectors based on the key roles, skills and tasks

- Each occupation is described in detail
 - *primary roles and skill levels, tasks and specialisations*

631	3	TECHNICIANS AND TRADES WORKERS		
+ 710		32	Automotive and Engineering Trades Workers	
+ 780		33	Construction Trades Workers	
+ 811		34	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications Trades Workers	
+ 835		35	Food Trades Workers	
+ 846		36	Skilled Animal and Horticultural Workers	
. 847		361	Animal Attendants and Trainers, and Shearers	
. 848		3611	Animal Attendants and Trainers	
. 849		36111	Dog Handler or Trainer	3
. 850		36112	Horse Trainer	3
. 851		36113	Pet Groomer	3
. 852		36114	Zookeeper	3
. 853		36119	Animal Attendants and Trainers nec	3
. 854		3612	Shearers	
. 855		36121	Shearer	3
. 856		3613	Veterinary Nurses	
. 857		36131	Veterinary Nurse	3
. 858		362	Horticultural Trades Workers	
. 859		3621	Florists	
. 860		36211	Florist	3
. 861		3622	Gardeners	
. 862		36221	Gardener (General)	3
. 863		36222	Arborist	3
. 864		36223	Landscape Gardener	3

The **National Career Path Framework** maps occupations against 10 levels (NQF) and starts to show progression and articulation options

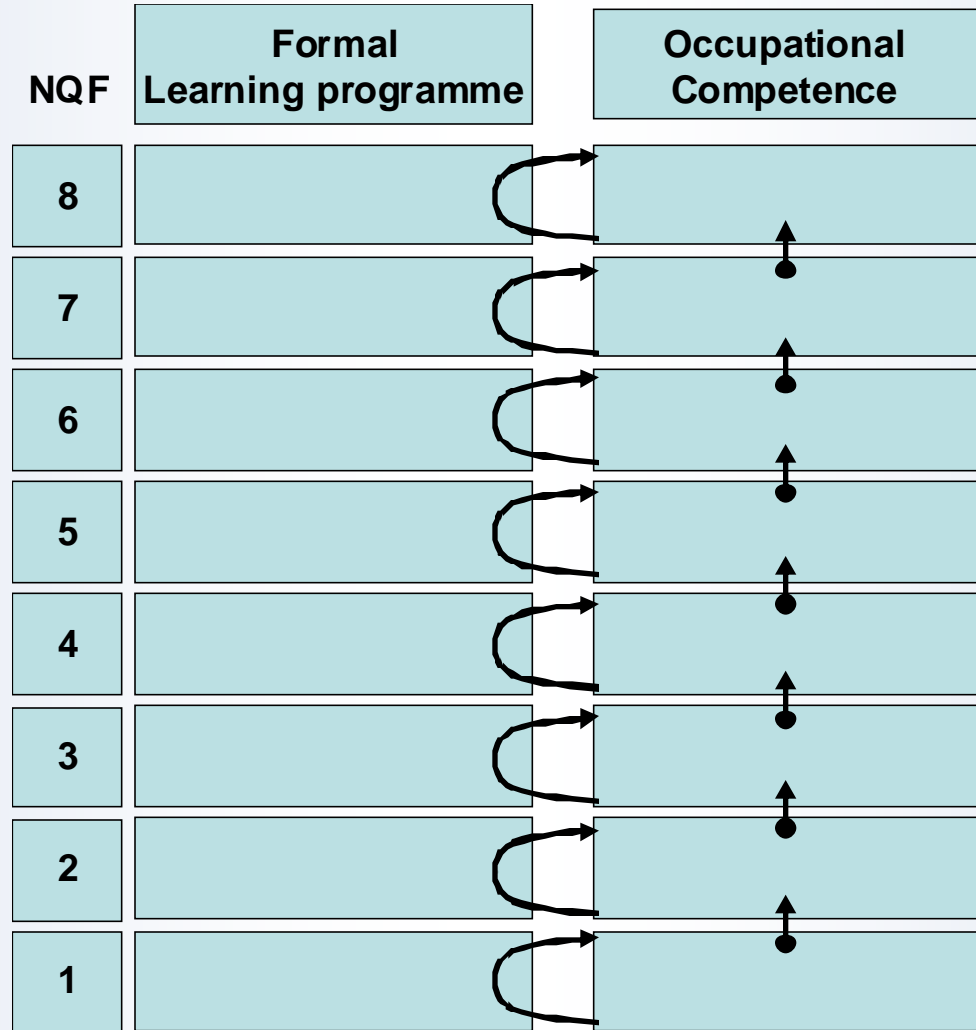


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The National Career Path Framework maps each occupation with other similar ones, and shows the development required

- *Sectors and occupational groups (prof. bodies) can develop their own **professional** or **sectoral** career path frameworks within the national one*
 - *The **development path** for each occupation can then be shown in terms of*
 - no. of years of training
 - linkage to other occupations
 - possible articulations
 - the broad educational, training and work experience requirements at each level
 - The early version of NCPF shown here is based on SASCO's 9 major groups
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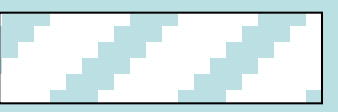



Advancement in a career path is dependent on passing through the **theory threshold** for that level of occupation



The Occupations in the Career Path Framework are linked to Occupational Awards

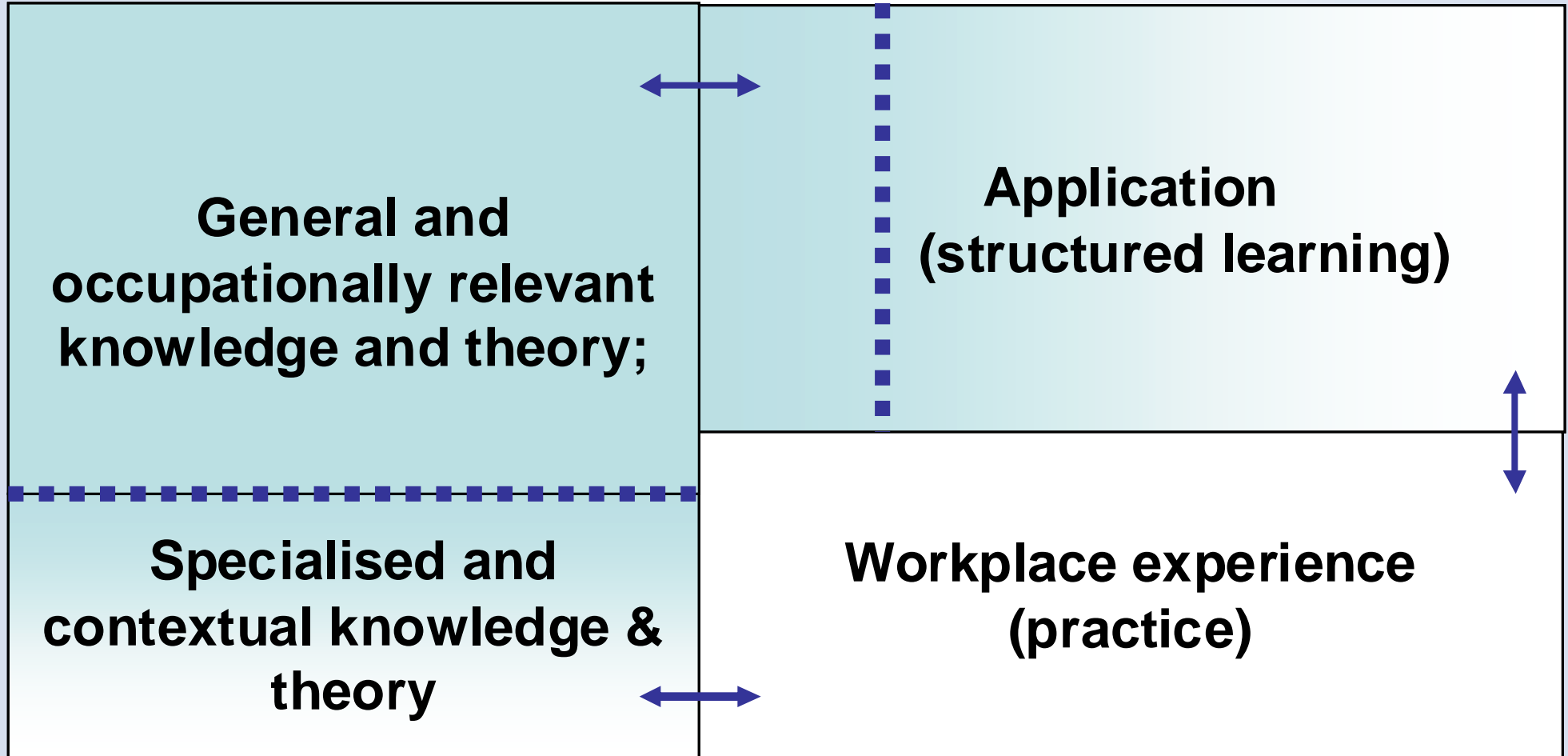
- **Occupational awards denote occupational competence at a given level in a given context**
 - *Occupation (Specialisation or context) Level x*
 - *Mechanician (Printing Equipment) Level 4*
 - *Auditor (Forensic) Level 8*

Models for achieving **occupational competence** are conceptually similar.

	Theory	Practice	
1. General occupations	 Qualification		General work experience
2. Professional	Formative Qualification	Professional registration	'Stage 1' and 'Stage 2'
3. Co-operative			Experiential learning integrated into Q
4. Learnership			Theory leads to credits
5. On-the-job			Work experience only
Learning site	Institution	Workplace	

 **Primary learning site**

Four learning modes are needed to achieve occupational competence



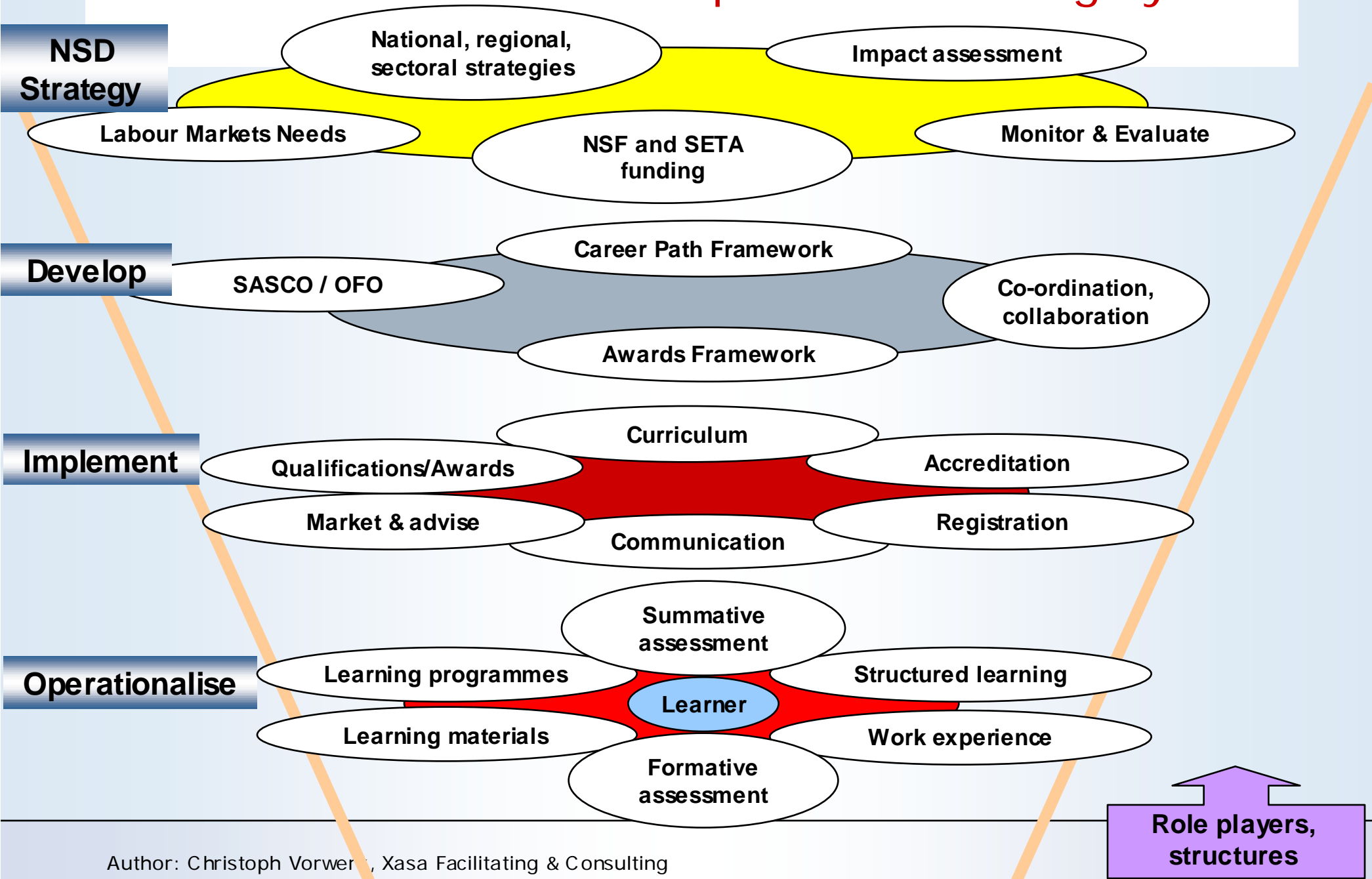
Analysing occupations shows that groups of occupations share similar content

- **General theory and knowledge can be defined for groups of occupations**
 - *subjects*
- **Common and specialised practical skills for groups of occupations can be defined**
 - *modules, assignments, practicals*
 - *Specialised theory and knowledge can be specified for individual occupations and specialisations*
 - topics
- **Work experience requirements can be defined**
 - *modules & integrating projects*
- **Common approach to curriculum and learning programme development will simplify QA**
- **This approach has worked well in converting apprenticeships to learnerships**

Five reasons for interventions failing provide the basis of an alternate way of thinking about quality assurance

- **The intervention is inappropriate**
 - not addressing the real problem
- **Implementation is poor**
 - poor quality delivery
- **Not all members of the target group receive the intervention as planned or do not receive the same intervention**
 - inadequate coverage
 - lack of standardisation
- **The intervention is appropriate, implementation is good but implementation is insufficient**
 - diluted intervention
 - insufficient dosage
- **The intervention is good, implementation is good and sufficient, but the target group is not receptive.**
 - Lack of minimum necessary conditions for change (Mouton, 2003:2)

Systemic view of quality assurance requirements of the occupational learning system



Flow of Information

NCPF & NAF



OFO

Needs
Trends
New technology
Statistics

SASCO

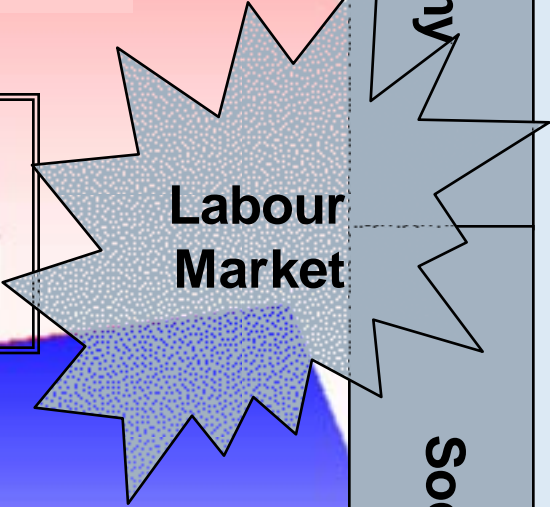
Economy

Society

Management Information System

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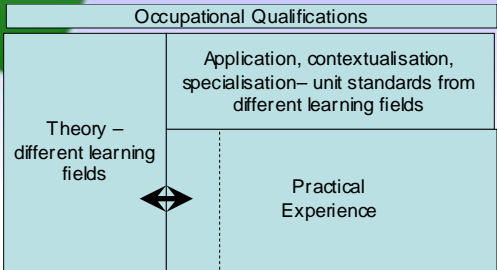
Quality Assurance System



NQAF



Provider System



ETQA

Flow of Skills

The key quality requirement of the occupational learning system is to involve the **expert practitioners**

- **Set up communities of expert practitioners –**
 - *Includes all professional bodies and associations*
 - *Where no such groups exist, SETAs can set up and structure them*
 - **Role of CEP**
 - *Reconfigured and extended SGB-type body*
 - *Set standards*
 - *Engage with providers around the curriculum*
 - *Support learners (coaching and mentoring)*
 - *Assist with quality assurance of providers, especially specialised)*
 - *Assess, moderate and verify assessments*
-

If we want to link the **OLS** to the existing **NQF** then a number of steps will be required

- **Accept occupational qualifications as a separate entity with additional definitions, different rules of combination and different types of quality assurance**
- **Redefine standards**
 - *Knowledge standards*
 - *Skills standards*
 - *Occupational competence standards*
- **Create QA around the proposed curriculum model**
- **Involve CEP and other labour market players in overall process**

“Why do you want a new NQF?”

- **I don't want a new NQF – I want a better NQF!**
- **If we want to include professional qualifications on the NQF we need to create the necessary framework**
- **If we don't, the NQF as a framework for all learning disintegrates**
- **We can take what's working and has worked and re-engineer the parts that don't work well**
- **We can evaluate the experience of the last 10 years more carefully**
 - *The lessons of the early pilot projects were never really interrogated and integrated*
 - *There has been insufficient dialogue with those working on the ground – (good/best) practice is not being shared – in fact some of it being summarily thrown out*
 - *South Africa is a pioneer in this area, trying to do things which haven't been done elsewhere - not surprising the initial concept needs some reconfiguring*