



A critical reflection on the proposed quality assurance framework for occupations

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Background

- In 1994 South Africa witnessed its first democratic elections after more than 40 years of deprivations suffered by the majority of its citizens.
- One of the legacies of apartheid was the differentiated education and training systems. The first democratic government faced at least two major challenges:
- The first was to remove divisions inherited from the effects of apartheid
- The second was to prepare South Africa for economic competitiveness in the face of globalization.
- To these ends a series of education and training reforms were initiated and witnessed the passage of the SAQA Act in 1995, and the establishment of the SAQA Board in 1996.

- These provided a framework for the development and implementation of the NQF, with SAQA as the overseeing authority.
- The NQF is intended to overcome the imbalances created from the apartheid education and training systems and bring together, under a single overarching qualifications framework, the certification of learning in a range of settings.
- Its concern is to facilitate the vertical and horizontal mobility of learners over a lifetime

Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the NQF

- In July 2001, the Minister of Education with the agreement of the Minister of Labour, decided to set up an external Study Team review on the implementation of the NQF
- The purpose of the Study was to investigate the efficiency and effectiveness of the NQF/SAQA operations and to strengthen the NQF
- This was in response to widespread criticism of the systems and procedures adopted by SAQA to implement the SAQA Act.

Recommendations of the Study Team

- 10 level NQF
- Unit standards based and whole qualifications will be equally valid
- Number of ETQAs to be limited
- RPL implementation should be accorded priority
- SAQA to be an apex national organization responsible for leadership in the field of quality assurance and qualifications
- SAQA Board to be limited to about 15 members
- Three Quality Councils proposed

Changes in Organizational Structure

- Following the review of the NQF, the Joint Policy Statement by the Ministers of Education and Labour points out to the need of change in the organizational structure of the NQF.
- The new policy retains the original objectives of the NQF
- There will be three qualification frameworks instead of one National Qualifications Framework. These are:
- The Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF), gazetted on 5 Oct 2007; the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework (GFETQF) and the Occupational Qualifications Framework (OQF)
- Although the three QFs will still be part of one NQF, the challenge is how these will articulate and talk to each other.
- This entails the establishment of the three Qualification and Quality Assurance Councils (QCs) to manage the three frameworks

Three Quality Councils

- The Council on Higher Education (CHE) with its Higher Education Quality Council Committee (HEQC)
- Umalusi for general and further education
- The Qualifications and Quality Assurance Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), the new body responsible for quality assurance of occupational qualifications.
- The Department of Labour has put forward a Conceptual Draft Policy for the quality assurance framework for occupational qualifications.
- According to this draft paper the new framework will build on current good practice while reorganizing and refocusing resources to achieve greater consistency and more coherence in the design and provision of occupational qualifications

QCTO

- The new body responsible for quality assurance of occupational qualifications
- Too many ETQAs
- Need suitable structures to deal with work-based learning
- The establishment of the QCTO to be equivalent to the CHE and Umalusi
- QCTO on all levels of the NQF
- Mobility and portability across different learning paths?
- The notion of education, training and skills development formulated

Roles of the QCTO

- Legislation will be developed by the Minister of Labour to establish a QCTO with quality assurance roles related to:
- The coherent design of occupational qualifications, curriculum and assessment in line with labour market needs;
- The quality assurance of education and training provision related to occupational qualifications
- The conduct of integrated summative assessments for occupational competence
- The issue of National Occupational Awards, Skills Certificates and National Occupational Access Certificates; and
- The monitoring and reporting of the impact of learning interventions and the implementation of measures to improve their effectiveness.
- Maintain collegial relations with SAQA, other QCs, NSA, SETAs and professional bodies
- Submit qualifications and standards that meet the national criteria to SAQA for registration

Implications of the QCTO

- The possible implications of this centralized quality body are:
- Coherent and coordinated quality assurance in the occupational sector
- Standing agreements with other QCs, thus avoiding MOUs
- Professional bodies will have the option of working within the OQF for certain qualification and within the HEQF or GFETQF for others
- QCTO seeks voluntary cooperation with professional bodies and recognizes the independence of these bodies, both statutory and non-statutory
- SAQA will be the apex organization responsible for the NQF. The OQF will form an integral part of the NQF
- QCTO will be accountable to the Minister of Labour
- Umalusi and CHE will remain accountable to the Minister of Education
- Interdepartmental collaboration through HRD Coordinating Committee

Transitional Arrangements

- The DoL will be working with SAQA in setting up the quality assurance systems
- Detailed consultation with relevant bodies
- New systems and models will be piloted
- Clarification of roles delegated to SETAs and other bodies
- Amended SAQA Act and associated regulations will form the central legislation
- In the interim, existing arrangements will continue unless specified
- Date of implementation?

Implications for Learners and Providers

- What are the possible consequences, positive and negative for providers and learners in terms of:
- The OQF within the NQF
- Quality assurance of assessment
- Quality assurance of certificates
- Quality assurance in terms of analysis and trends and impact assessment.