

RPL ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was highlighted as one of the key aspects of the emerging education and training system of South Africa in the *Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework*. During 2001 and 2002 intensive consultation took place on the development of an RPL policy.

In June 2002, SAQA's RPL policy, *The Recognition of Prior Learning in the context of the South African National Qualifications Framework*, was adopted by the SAQA Authority. Nevertheless in Chapter 3 it is acknowledged that the development of such an RPL system takes time.

"It cannot be assumed that because the policy has been approved, the system is now in place. As in the case of all the approaches, processes and procedures in the new education and training system, it is thoroughly acknowledged that the development of such a system takes time".

In adopting the policy, the Authority agreed that the possibilities and benefits that RPL holds for the ordinary person in the street must be made known to stakeholders. It was considered critical that awareness be raised for RPL as a viable and credible option within education and training development. This led to the running of an extensive RPL advocacy campaign from September to November 2002.

The key message of the advocacy campaign was expressed in the theme "Putting the pieces together." Addressed to education and training practitioners, and human resource and skills development practitioners, the message was conveyed in two levels:

- Regardless of where learning was achieved, i.e. through formal, non-formal or informal means, it was valuable and should be recognized in relation to NQF registered qualifications. The development of a national RPL policy will now make this possible.
- The dynamism between a policy and its implementation - a policy is only as good as its implementation.

The very necessary preparatory work and actual implementation of RPL is the responsibility of education and training providers and their constituent ETQAs.

These two 'pieces' must be 'put together' before talking about any significant move towards achieving the objectives of redress and enhanced access for learners is possible.

The campaign included a marketing strategy, seminars, editorials and the assessment of the impact of the campaign.

The marketing strategy was aimed at the decision-makers and those responsible for implementing education and training in the workplace, particularly those people responsible for skills and human resource development.

The target audience included the following:

1. Human Resource Practitioners
2. Training and Development Practitioners
3. Workplace-based providers of education and training
4. Skills Development Facilitators
5. Relevant labour organizations
6. Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and their Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs)
7. Professional body ETQAs and band-ETQAs
8. The Department of Education, particularly Further Education and Training (FET) institutions
9. The Department of Labour.

Advertising was carried in regional and national newspapers and editorials were published in two national newspapers.

Between 31 October and 27 November 2002, a series of seminars were held in seven major centres throughout the country. These were very well attended and an attendance figure of approximately 1 500 participants was achieved. Through the evaluation questionnaire, it became evident that the target audience was reached. Approximately 90% of participants represented one or other of the identified target markets for the campaign.

The primary objective of the campaign, however, was to communicate the essence of RPL. More than 90% of the respondents indicated that their understanding of RPL has improved as a result of their interaction with the RPL policy.

In addition, the evaluation questionnaire highlighted the fact that Recognition of Prior Learning has become a part of the psyche of education and training in this country and that providers are keen to find out how to implement such a system.

The RPL task team, consisted of representatives of the South African Qualifications Authority and the Department of Labour. It is satisfied that the main objectives of the campaign were achieved, i.e. to inform the target audience of the developments around RPL and to raise awareness of the benefits this may hold for the main beneficiaries, the employees in workplaces.

The task team wishes to commend the foresight of the Authority in recognising the need to communicate the RPL policy to stakeholders and wishes to thank the Department of Labour (NSF - Marketing) for making this possible through their funding.



Director for DQAD, Mrs Vuyelwa Penxa

RPL IMPLEMENTATION

During the RPL advocacy campaign held between September and November 2002, it became evident that providers of education and training and practitioners in human resources, skills development and training, were keen to find out how to implement RPL in their environments. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is of the opinion that any new policy needs to be supported with an implementation guide because a policy is only as good as its implementation. To this end, SAQA explored a number of RPL initiatives in 2002 to assist in conceptualising an implementation guide. On 16 January 2003, the first draft of the Criteria and Guidelines for the Implementation of RPL, was tabled at the ETQA Sub-Committee. A consultative workshop took place on 12 February 2003 with local experts in the area of RPL. A further draft submission to the SAQA ETQA Sub-Committee and the Authority will be made available for public comment.

The draft guidelines suggest that the five main areas critical for implementation are:

1. An investigation into current practices and regulations that may inhibit and/or encourage the implementation of RPL
2. The development of sector and provider-specific implementation plans, inclusive of appropriate policies and procedures
3. The capacity building of staff and resources as identified in the plan mentioned above
4. The design and moderation of appropriate and valid assessment approaches, methodologies, tools and instruments
5. The quality assurance of the RPL process, mechanisms and results.

RPL is fast becoming a topic on every provider's lips. This is partly due to the requirement that providers have to ensure that they have policies and practices in place to accommodate learners who wish to access education and training via this route, but also, particularly, because they understand that this country has an opportunity to make an impact on the unjust educational policies of the past. Increasingly, providers are engaging with RPL because they sense that this is the right thing to do!

For more information, contact SAQA: DQAD & Speak to Vuyelwa Penxa at 012 482 0808 or vpenxa@saqa.co.za.



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SAQA'S COMMITMENT TO THE LEARNERSHIP CAMPAIGN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR



Executive Officer, Mr Samuel Mofosi

SAQA's mission is "to ensure the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which contributes to the full development of each learner and to the social and economic development of the nation at large". The learnership campaign is therefore one of the processes that will ensure that SAQA's commitment is seen to be a vital component of learnerships now and in the future.

Learnerships are defined as the new professional and vocational education and training programmes. They combine theory and practice and culminate in a qualification that is registered on the NQF. A person who successfully completes a learnership will have a qualification that signals occupational competence and which is recognised throughout the country.

SAQA'S COMMITMENT

SAQA is committed at two different levels:

- SAQA's role at the Standards Setting Level
- SAQA's role at Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) Level

SAQA'S ROLE AT THE STANDARDS SETTING LEVEL

SAQA encourages the participation of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in the Standards Setting process and invites them to have representation in National Standards Bodies (NSBs) as well as Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs). A Standards Generating Body (SGB) generates the qualifications and standards required by its sub-field while the NSB ensures that these qualifications and standards meet SAQA's requirement for registration on the NQF. SETA representation on these bodies ensures that SETA's interests are taken into account when qualifications frameworks are designed and

qualifications generated by SGBs. It also ensures that the quality demanded by the NSB for the qualification is realistic in terms of learnership requirements as well as for registration on the NQF.

At the more practical level, Joint Implementation Plans (JIPs) are entered into between SAQA and a SETA whereby qualifications that are required for learnerships are identified jointly and then passed on to the relevant SGB by SAQA for generation. SAQA, through the Directorate for Standards Setting and Development (DSSD), manages the processes, ensuring that the SGB in question meets the deadlines and that the qualifications and associated unit standards are of a high standard and fit-for-purpose. In this way, learnerships can be registered in the shortest possible time with an assurance that learners enrolled in the learnership will become knowledgeable and skilled workers who can be employed in the field or sector in question.

SAQA'S ROLE AT EDUCATION AND TRAINING QUALITY ASSURANCE LEVEL

SAQA interacts closely with ETQAs, in particular the ETQA Learnership Managers, in order to promote quality in learnerships. Quality Assurance cuts across all activities involved in the learnership from provision of programmes to assessment of learner achievement.

One of SAQA's responsibilities is to ensure that quality assurance functions are honoured and this is carried out through accrediting all ETQAs. They in turn:

- Accredit Providers
- Promote quality amongst constituents
- Monitor provision
- Evaluate assessment and facilitate moderations
- Register assessors
- Certify Learners
- Co-operate with relevant moderating bodies
- Recommend new standards or qualifications to NSBs for consideration
- Maintain a database
- Submit reports
- Recommend the review of registered qualifications and standards

SAQA will ensure that it provides the necessary support during all phases of the learnership campaign to promote a quality education and training system that will lead to quality qualifications in South Africa thus contributing to the economic growth of this country.

NEWS FROM HUMAN RESOURCES



HR Director, Dr W. Mohapi

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE

It has been a wonderful opportunity for SAQA to participate in the 'Investors in People Standard' as one of the 40 selected pilot sites in South Africa. The 'Investors in People Standard' is a framework based around four principles of good practice that are shown through 12 indicators and 33 evidence points.

Formative assessment was done on the 3 and 4 July 2002. The three indicators out of 12 that were not fully met with, are indicators 8, 9 and 11. These relate to 'Management Effectiveness and Communication', 'Evaluation of Training', and 'Induction of new employees'. Two 'Investors in People' (IIP) practitioners were assigned to assist our organisation to improve on the three indicators that were not met. An action plan was drawn up and implemented.

A summative assessment was held on the 25th and 31st of March 2003. Recommendations about our recognition has been forwarded to the IIP in London for confirmation.



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SAQA RESPONDS TO THE EDUCATION MINISTER'S DECLARATION

2003 FET YEAR

The Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, in his recent opening address at the Second Annual Further Education and Training Convention, declared 2003 as the Year for FET, something all should celebrate. It is an established fact that the future of employment, education and training in South Africa lies in the current changes within the FET sector.

Stakeholders, therefore, need to conduct an analysis with the aim of developing a macro vision for the FET sector, incorporating input from the DoE to ensure effective transformation. Recently the DoE document for FET Schools was released for public comment.

In November 2002, the DoE started work on the first draft of the *Proposed Framework for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications and Programmes*. The purpose of the document is to provide policy and guidelines to develop relevant and responsive qualifications and programmes in the FET College Sector that are in line with the NQF. In this first draft which incorporates levels from ABET to NQF Level 5, the needs of local and provincial communities, government and industry are being addressed.

The principles on which the process of developing a macro vision for the FET sector would be based on the following:

- Clearly defined learning outcomes for schools
- Flexible curricula for colleges
- High quality learning programmes leading to high levels of attainment
- Teaching practices that address barriers preventing realization of full potential
- Assessment strategies that deepen understanding and promote application of skills
- Articulation and portability

- Comprehensive quality assurance systems.

The FET pathway should be sensitive, making use of partnerships and linkages to ensure relevance, e.g. NCSGs [National Curriculum Statements for Grades (10-12)] based on the Convenor Technikon model currently in use. Curricula should be based on prioritized national, provincial and local skills' needs. Learners must be able to move between pathways. Critical systems should be instituted to ensure that learning is acknowledged and recorded. This is an interesting aspect of the document. However, in the form in which it is described, it does raise a lot of elements for debate, more particularly amongst NSBs and SGBs.

New curricula will be driven by the NCSGs, each linked to a relevant SETA, to be led by a Convenor College. The curriculum should be phased in, and should be linked to a three-year strategic objective plan. Staff development should be prioritised.

Three general pathways have been proposed, as listed below:

- General Academic
- General Vocational
- Occupational

These pathways make use of the nested principle, incorporating aspects such as literacy, numeracy and life skills in the Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) and more specialized critical factors such as Financial and IT literacy in the General Vocational and Occupational routes.

An approach for cooperation between national college clusters and SETAs was also included in the document, making provision for SAQA to participate in processes.

In establishing a way forward, the links between learning outcomes and qualifications and



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between unit standards and assessment standards respectively, should be clarified. A process should be established which will create an intimate environment for SAQA and the DoE to arrive at a consistent understanding of these terms in order to avoid confusion throughout the system.

The Proposed Framework for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Qualifications and Programmes is in the process of being placed in the public domain. NSBs and SGBs are invited to read the document and to comment on it as soon as it is in the public domain.

In addition, an overview of the Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) Policy, as presented by SAQA, was provided, highlighting differences between the FETC for Schools and the FETC for Colleges. The issue relating to the FETC and Multi-lingualism will continue to be addressed throughout 2003. The FET Schools and the first draft of the FET College documents, presented by the DoE, address all the criteria contained in SAQA's FETC Policy document, a stance which endorses the work and impact of the NQF in shaping national debates.

The Directorate Standards Setting and Development (DSSD) will embark on a process of collating and feeding the comments of the NSBs and SGBs to the DoE. The Year of FET will also be highlighted through the SAQA Chairperson's lecture which will take place on 9 April 2003.

SHORT COURSES AND SKILLS PROGRAMMES

The SAQA discussion document *Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes* was made available for public comment from 8 November 2002 to 7 February 2003. The intention of the document was to formulate a systemic approach to the provisioning of short courses and skills programmes, or 'short learning programmes'. Excellent public comment was received that has facilitated the understanding of this type of provisioning.

Short course provisioning is one of the most dynamic features of South Africa's newly emerging education and training system. These courses are particularly associated with 'just in time' and 'just enough' learning to meet specific needs in workplace environments. This approach is a viable and common method for optimal workplace functioning in many contexts. It makes access to learning manageable, and saves the employers and employees money, time, energy and resources.

In the new approach to education and training, short course provisioning has a particular place in the system and is important in the development, up-skilling and multi-skilling of human resources. Because short course provisioning occurs in all education and training sectors and bands, and it makes such a large contribution to the development of human resources in this country, it needs to be subject to quality assurance processes. Quality assured short course providers and programmes will support and enhance the achievement of the NQF objectives. Among the many benefits to be gained from a coherent approach to the quality assurance of short course providers are:

- Quality assurance will enhance the articulation possibilities and mobility of learners within education and training by ensuring that short learning programmes are credit bearing and that the learning is portable.

- Quality assured short learning programmes will provide learners with flexible pathways to achieving education and training qualifications.

- Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs) will quality assure short learning programmes and thereby protect learners who acquire education and training by these means.

- Short learning programmes will be developed and delivered to enable the development of a 'seamless' system of access to, and articulation with other education and training programmes.

- The dynamic nature of short learning programmes will increasingly support the setting of standards, and the development and the review of qualifications.

Since 2000 when the 'Recording of Short Courses' was undertaken by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), short course provisioning has been the topic of intense debate and discussion. Much of the debate was sparked off because short course provisioning in South Africa has not been fully conceptualised and formalised. A second round of consultation is planned to bring this important type of provisioning into the existing quality assurance processes for providers offering full qualifications. The SAQA Update will keep you informed.

Short course provisioning is seen as a necessary and flexible tool to support the Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) and National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). These strategies have as their objectives the development of people to meet the imperatives of an increasingly globalised society and the demands placed on twenty-first century workplaces.

The SAQA Resource and Information Centre provides information resources to SAQA staff and members of the Authority and its sub-structures, to enable them to carry out their mandate to develop and implement the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). SAQA stakeholders and members of the public, such as researchers, students and government departments, are encouraged to use it for reference purposes.

The Centre collects works relating to the NQF and SAQA, such as conference proceedings, discussion papers, journal articles, books, legislation and so on. SAQA publications that have been recorded on tapes for the blind include the *SAQA Act, ETQA and NSB Regulations* and the publication *NQF: an Overview*. The collection also includes works on the national qualifications frameworks of countries such as New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, Mexico and others. Discussion papers and those delivered at various forums on the SADC and the regional qualifications framework are also available.

The main focus of the collection is on education, specifically on assessment, curriculum development, outcomes-based education, lifelong learning and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Material on RPL includes books, conference papers and journal articles.

The Centre, together with the Communications Division, runs a non-electronic mailing list for people who would like to receive hard copies of SAQA publications as they become available. Requests for this service can be sent to sqainfo@saqa.co.za or call (012) 482-0836.

Should you wish to know more about the Centre, please contact Ms. Ntsiki Gumbe at (012) 482-0836 or e-mail ngumbe@saqa.co.za.



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