



**The South African Qualifications Authority
Report on:**

**Trends Emerging from the
Monitoring of Education
and Training Quality
Assurance Bodies**

September 2002 - July 2003

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DQAD	Directorate Quality Assurance and Development
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurance Body
ISO	International Standards Organisation
ITB	Industry Training Board
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
QMS	Quality Management System
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority



1. INTRODUCTION

Accreditation of an Education and Training Quality Assurance Body (ETQA), or the granting of an accreditation extension, should be seen as a two-way process between the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the ETQA concerned. The relationship should be seen as a mutually beneficial and reinforcing one, in which the interests of the learner and the users of learning outcomes are the principal focus of all concerned. During the monitoring and auditing of ETQAs, the challenge will be to ensure that this mutually beneficial relationship is maintained for the ultimate benefit of learners.

A Monitoring Intervention is a SAQA process described in the document *Procedures for the Monitoring and Auditing of ETQAs*. Monitoring is a continuous process of quality review that is both formative and supportive. It is desirable to have a combination of external and internal monitoring of quality. Monitoring has a formative emphasis with the focus on self-improvement rather than on judgment. Feedback from the monitoring process will incorporate recommendations, thereby contributing directly to quality improvement in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) implementation processes by the ETQA.

An audit is an event conducted within a specified time period. The outcome of a quality audit is a summative evaluation of attainment of quality. To generate an audit report, relevant information is interrogated against set criteria with the assistance of available evidence. During a Monitoring Intervention, evidence is gathered on the success of the implementation of the NQF, which is measured by gathering both qualitative as well as quantitative evidence. Evidence is gathered against set criteria and using instruments as outlined in the document: *Procedures for the Monitoring and Auditing of ETQAs*.

2. PURPOSE OF A TRENDS ANALYSIS

The purpose of a monitoring trends report is to identify common areas of good practice, strengths and weakness, and also to enable SAQA to identify areas of best practice and models of excellence in ETQA functioning for the purpose of continuous system improvement. Through this analysis it is envisaged that systemic issues and individual ETQA issues can be identified clearly and resolved.

3. THE MONITORING STRATEGY

Firstly, in initiating the monitoring procedures, the Directorate Quality Assurance and Development (DQAD), requested all ETQAs to conduct a self-evaluation exercise and to forward these self-evaluation reports to DQAD. The purpose of this exercise was to enable ETQAs to identify the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in their functioning and to address these prior to the Monitoring Intervention. These reports also enabled DQAD to gain a snapshot of the progress made by the ETQAs regarding their implementation of the NQF.

Secondly, a preliminary monitoring meeting was conducted with each ETQA to familiarise the ETQA with:

1. The monitoring procedure
2. The monitoring brief
3. Monitoring Priorities
4. The monitoring instrument
5. The monitoring report

Lastly, the DQAD Monitoring Team conducted a Monitoring Intervention over two days at the premises of the ETQAs. During this time the Monitoring Team conducted interviews with staff, requested demonstrations and conducted a site visit of the ETQAs. The Monitoring Intervention validated the findings of the self-evaluation reports of ETQAs and assisted the ETQAs in their preparations for the SAQA quality audits.

4. METHODOLOGY

Evidence for the monitoring trends was gathered during the Monitoring Interventions conducted by the DQAD over the period September 2002 to July 2003 with 30 ETQAs.¹ Various monitoring teams, constituting different combinations of DQAD staff were utilised for the Monitoring Interventions, resulting in standard unbiased reports that accurately reflected the requirements of Schedule C as contained in *Procedures for the Monitoring and Auditing of ETQAs*.

Statistics were gathered from data captured in 30 monitoring reports, which provided both qualitative and quantitative data. Three ETQAs² were not monitored due to other processes and do not form part of this document.


Statistics were gathered from all inputs under two headings:

1. “Good practices”
2. “Area of improvement”

It is the opinion of DQAD that the “Good practices” and “Area of improvement” captured in this manner reflect a fair analysis of the progress ETQAs have made towards the implementation of the NQF. Some statistics changed during the period of the Monitoring Intervention, and it would be fair to assume that the situation has improved over the period of monitoring to the present date. The quality audits completed subsequent to the Monitoring Intervention affirm this assumption.

¹ Only 30 out of a total of 33 ETQAs were monitored for the Reporting Period 2002-2003. Two of the remaining three ETQAs had been audited and one was “deemed” to be accredited.

² UMALUSI, PSIRA and SAICA



Seven areas of priority were identified and the trends analysis was developed around these:

1. Process for provider accreditation
2. Electronic database compatible with the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)
3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
4. Quality Management System (QMS)
5. Assessment, moderation and verification
6. Certification of learners
7. Monitoring of providers

5. FINDINGS

5.1. Process of provider accreditation

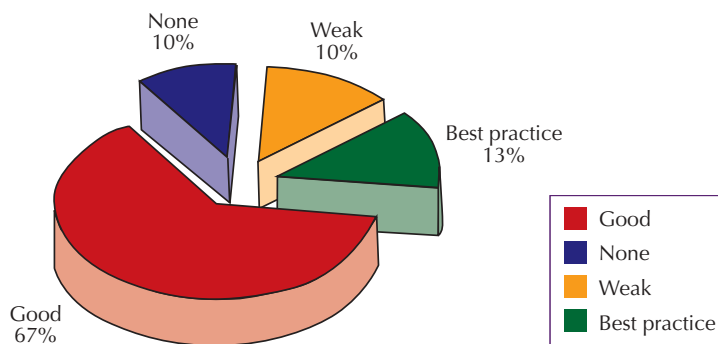
The majority of ETQAs meet the minimum requirements in terms of accrediting constituent providers according to SAQA *Criteria and Guidelines for Providers*.

The documents for accreditation of providers of these ETQAs are well designed, thorough, clear and user-friendly and provide a high level of support and information on accreditation. The ETQAs have accreditation manuals, application forms, evaluation forms and standard response letters to assist providers in their application for accreditation.

The ETQAs have ensured that requirements for accreditation of providers are defined and contextualised in their policies and procedures and not just paraphrased. Tools and mechanisms for verifying provider information are clearly outlined and timeframes regarding provider accreditation conditions are stipulated in accreditation requirements.

Notable elements of the above from the ETQAs constitute an area of best practice that could be shared with other ETQAs in strengthening their process of accrediting of constituent providers.

There are at least three ETQAs that have not aligned their provider accreditation processes with the minimum criteria as per SAQA requirements. Two of these still employ old Industry Training Board (ITB) procedures.



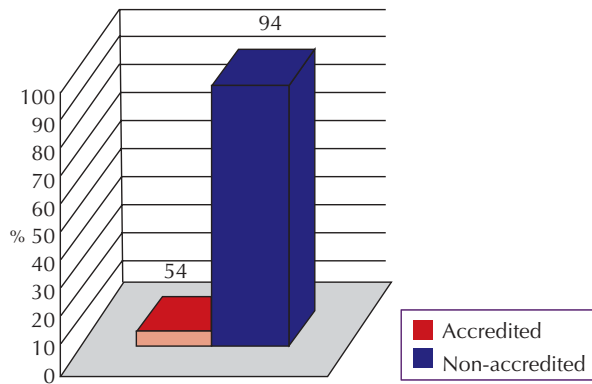
Figures. 5.1.1
Accreditation practices of ETQAs

In some instances there is no mechanism for ensuring that a provider is not accredited by another ETQA.

In many instances no policy or procedure for de-accreditation or appeals processes against unfavourable accreditation decisions exist, and where they exist this has not been communicated to constituent providers. Therefore the recent trend is that providers are approaching SAQA directly on issues of de-accreditation and appeals instead of approaching their respective ETQAs as required by ETQA Regulations.

STATISTICS: Provider accreditation practices of ETQAs

- Accreditation policies and procedures of 20 of the 30 ETQAs monitored, meet the minimum SAQA requirements
- The accreditation policies and procedures of three ETQAs do not meet the minimum criteria
- Of the three, two ETQAs are still aligned with the old ITB practices and also do not meet the minimum requirements
- The policies and practices of four ETQAs are not clear or user-friendly



Figures. 5.1.2.
% Accredited and non-accredited providers

However, although ETQAs are accrediting constituent providers, the number of accredited providers is not reflective of the size of the respective sectors and accreditation of providers is slow.

STATISTICS: Number of accredited providers

Of the approximate 19 078 providers across the 30 ETQA sectors monitored, only 1 036 have been accredited, reflecting a percentage of accredited providers of 5.43%

5.2. Electronic database compatible to the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)¹

Seventeen (17) ETQAs have developed and installed electronic databases that are compatible to the NLRD and which will facilitate data transfer from the ETQA to SAQA.

However, at the time of the monitoring intervention, these databases had either not been populated or where populated, the data had not been successfully up-loaded to the NLRD. This is of great concern to SAQA as a populated NLRD is a key deliverable for the organisation.

Five (5) ETQAs are currently developing databases, one with the assistance of IT consultants. There were eight ETQAs that do not have any form of database in place.

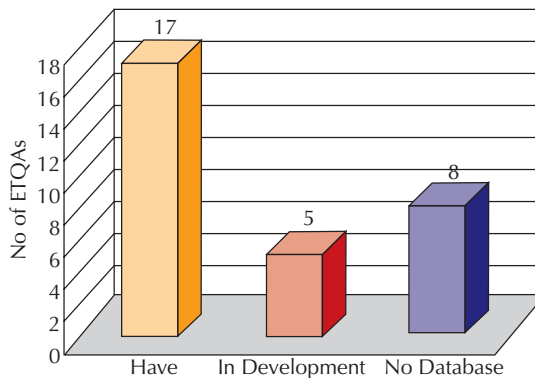


Figure 5.2
ETQA databases progress

¹ The NLRD is the information management system and the repository for learner achievements, qualifications, unit standards and provider data.

A systemic problem that emerged from the Monitoring Intervention is that the ETQAs have outsourced this function and are totally reliant on outside consultants who may or may not necessarily be delivering against service agreements. A lack of budgetary provision is also contributing towards this problem.

5.3. Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is one of the principles underpinning the objectives of the NQF. In applicable legislation, regulations and criteria and guideline documents, RPL is identified as one of the key strategies of ensuring equitable access to education and training and redress of past unjust educational practices in the emerging education and training system. As part of their statutory responsibility ETQAs are expected to give credit to learning – through assessment – that has already been acquired in different ways (SAQA, 2002).

ETQAs must ensure that the areas of practice listed below are adhered to by their constituent providers and that such assessment policies integrate and implement RPL. The areas of best practice include:

- institutional policy and environment;
- services and support to learners;
- training and registration of assessors and key personnel;
- methods and processes of assessment;
- QMS (moderation);
- fees for RPL services; and
- RPL and curriculum development.

There is an emerging trend indicating that ETQAs are not implementing RPL on a large scale and in accordance with the SAQA policy and criteria.

In most instances, a RPL policy exists, but very little or no implementation has taken place. In a few instances where implementation has taken place these were isolated initiatives. Sector-wide or cross-chamber implementation of RPL is lacking in most ETQAs monitored.

Many ETQAs are still at a stage of developing their RPL policies or their policies are only in draft form. Some of these RPL policies are not aligned with the SAQA RPL policy and criteria.

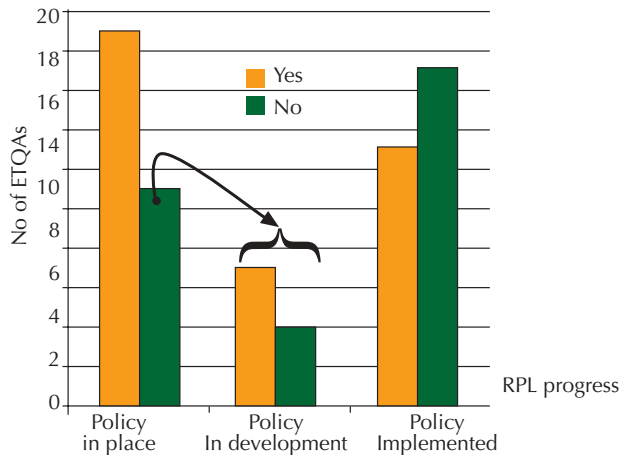


Figure 5.3.
Recognition of prior learning progress

However, there is one exceptional case where RPL has been implemented across the sector and by the majority of its constituent providers. This ETQA's level of implementation could be a benchmark of best practice for other ETQAs.

STATISTICS: RPL

Of the 30 ETQAs monitored, only 13 have implemented RPL. Of the 13, only three have a significant number of learners in RPL totalling 12 717 learners.

The total number of RPL learners in the system at the closure of the Monitoring Intervention was 13 745 learners.

5.4. Quality management system

While ETQAs have the basic policies and procedures for ETQA functions in place, very few have an integrated QMS. This does not lend itself to a coherent system of quality delivery of the NQF.

Within those organisations where policies exist, such policies were not all properly documented or integrated into a system.

In at least one worst-case scenario a QMS exists on paper only and no actual proof could be found that the system is implemented or is actually adhered to.

The 15 ETQAs that have a QMS still have gaps and as a result of this they do not meet SAQAs minimum requirements.

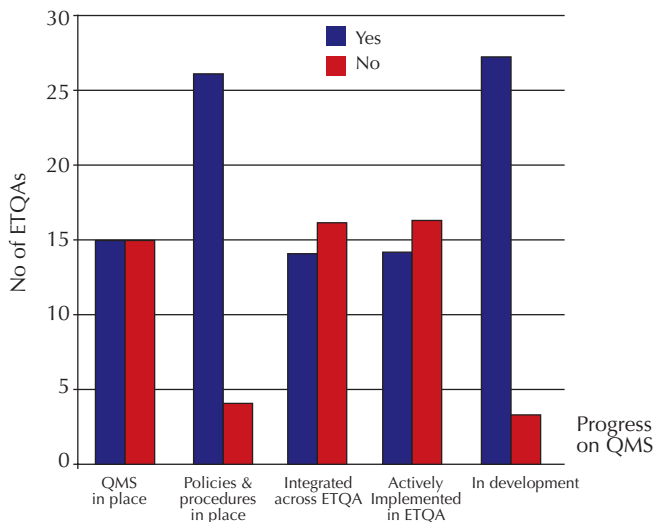


Figure 5.4.
Quality management systems

Many ETQAs have appointed, or are in the process of appointing consultants to assist in developing a QMS for them.

However, there is a good practice example where three ETQAs have developed a quality assurance toolkit for approval and accreditation as well as for registration of assessors and moderators. They are also ensuring that their providers adopt this QMS model.

At least two ETQAs are International Standards Organisation (ISO) - ISO 9001:2000 listed or are planning to be ISO-compliant and although they have indicated that it is not a requirement for their constituent providers to base their QMS on ISO, they are in the process of developing a QMS template for their providers. In these instances the QMS has already undergone review and speaks to the level of implementation and maturity of the QMS within the ETQA.

5.5. Assessment, moderation and registration of assessors

5.5.1 Assessment, moderation and verification

Constituent providers accredited by ETQAs must ensure that assessment, moderation and verification of education and training delivery take place. Overseeing compliance is one of the ETQA's responsibilities.

Whilst two-thirds of ETQAs have policies, procedures and schedules for their assessment, moderation and verification activities for their sectors, implementation and moderation activities are on average occurring only in 50% of ETQAs.

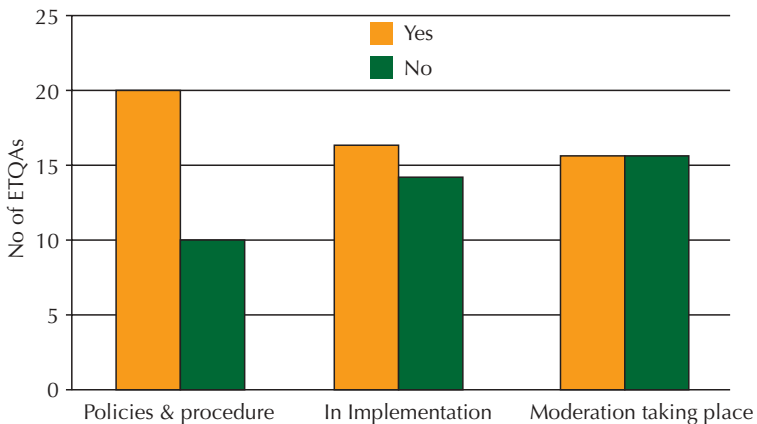


Figure 5.5.1
Assessment, moderation & verification

In at least two instances the assessment taking place in the primary focus area is not in line with *SAQA Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications*. The result is inconsistency and may compromise learners in terms of mobility and progression.

A further problem is the lack of documented evidence of the procedure to be followed in cases of validation of suspect learner results.

5.5.2 Assessor registration

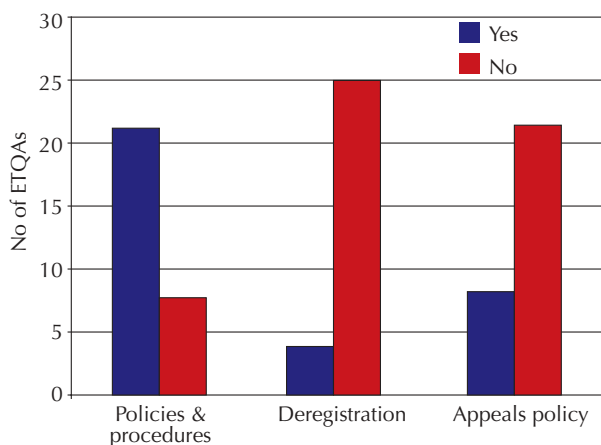


Figure 5.5.2
Registration of assessors

Only 21 ETQAs are adhering to the minimum requirement of SAQA for the registration of assessors, with policies and procedures in place.

However, in the majority of ETQAs policies and procedures for assessor deregistration, and appeals processes against such decisions, are missing.

5.6. Certification of constituent learners

One of the primary functions of an ETQA is to ensure the certification of successful constituent learners according to SAQA policy.

The majority of ETQAs are not meeting the minimum requirements in the following areas:

- policies and procedures for the issuing of learner certificates;
- recording of qualification registration numbers or credits on certificates; and
- delegation of certification accompanied by the required agreement ensuring the quality assurance and accountability of the ETQA.

A further concern is that these ETQAs are now in their third year of accreditation and there are examples of ETQAs not having issued a single certificate for NQF registered qualifications yet.

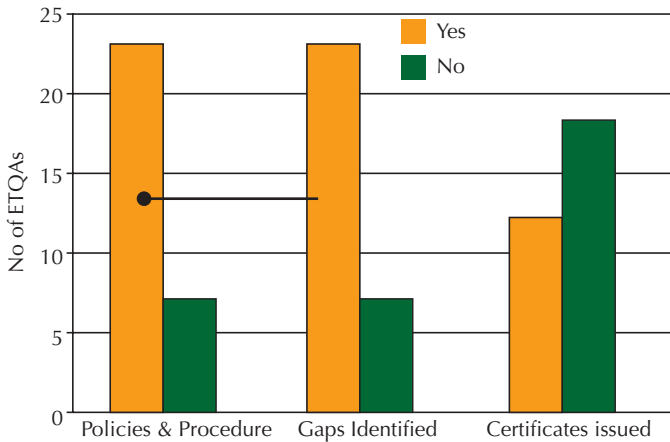


Figure 6
Assessment, moderation & verification

STATISTICS: Certification of constituent learners

Only 12 ETQAs had issued certificates to learners at the time of the Monitoring Intervention.

In total only 62 884 certificates had been issued to the 372 661 reported learners at the time of monitoring. This represents 16.87% of the total number of learners in the system that are certificated.

5.7. Monitoring of providers

The quality assurance of the delivery of education and training is compromised because most of the ETQAs are accrediting providers and implementing learnerships without the required monitoring thereof.

Reasons for this seem to emerge from the following three scenarios:

1. ETQAs lack human resource capacity to monitor providers;
2. ETQAs lack policies and procedures to give effect to this function; and
3. Where policies and procedures do exist there are low levels of implementation.

An emerging concern for SAQA is that in isolated cases the ETQAs are of the opinion that the monitoring of training provision stops short with self-evaluation on the part of the provider or a desk-top exercise by the ETQA without any form of site visit during the period of accreditation.

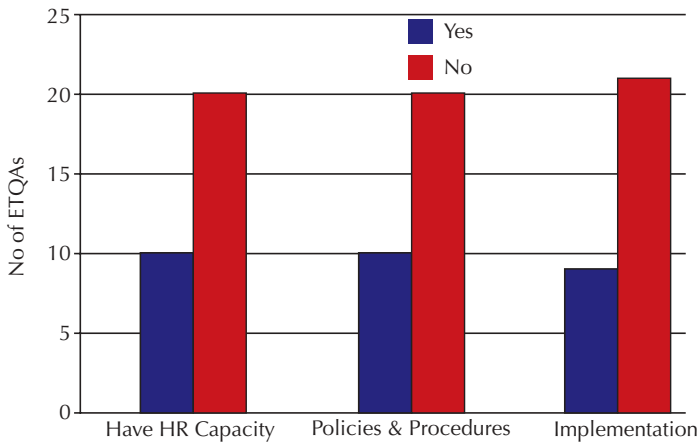


Figure 5.7
Monitoring of providers

STATISTICS: Monitoring of providers

Only nine ETQAs had implemented the process of monitoring the provision by accredited constituent providers at the time of monitoring.

6. STEPS TO FOLLOW THE MONITORING INTERVENTION

- In ensuring the continuum of quality improvement DQAD has requested ETQAs to submit individual development plans, which address the areas of improvement identified in the monitoring reports.
- The development plans received have been evaluated by DQAD and follow-up monitoring support interventions have already been scheduled for 2004.
- The remainder of the ETQAs are all scheduled to undergo quality audits during 2004.
- Upon completion of the individual quality audits, SAQA will re-enter the cycle of monitoring and supporting ETQAs during the next three-year accreditation cycle.
- A joint implementation plan has been developed to be rolled out with participating ETQAs for the implementation of a learnership through which data capturers will be appointed to assist in capturing data onto the ETQAs' databases for uploading onto the NLRD.
- The participating ETQAs are also financially supporting the position of a co-ordinator that will visit ETQAs and monitor the upload of data onto the NLRD.
- Sharing best practices in areas of excellence will be implemented in 2004.

CONCLUSION

DQAD has found the monitoring procedure to be extremely helpful in identifying strengths, weaknesses, gaps and best practices in the ETQA environment. Most ETQAs, with the exception of one, indicated that they experienced the Monitoring Intervention as a developmental and improvement-oriented exercise that was valuable in assisting them towards improved functioning.

As outlined in this report, the SAQA Monitoring Intervention of ETQAs proved to be a successful means of monitoring and driving the improvement of quality in the implementation of the NQF.

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