Qualification Trends

General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF)

Overview

The number of qualification achievements per year in the GFETQSF grew from 351 233 to 514 021 over the 20-year period between 1995 and 2014. This represents an overall increase of 46%. The majority of these achievements, approximately 93%, were at NQF Level 4 and in the “Further Education and Training - General” field (i.e. mostly Senior Certificate achievements); see Figures 1 and 2 respectively. The second most popular field was Field 6 (Manufacturing, Engineering, and Technology), accounting for only 3% of the qualifications.

Figure 1a. GFETQSF – Trends by NQF Level¹

![Figure 1a. GFETQSF – Trends by NQF Level](image)

Figure 1b. GFETQSF – Trends by NQF Level, excluding NQF Level 04

![Figure 1b. GFETQSF – Trends by NQF Level, excluding NQF Level 04](image)

¹ Figures 1a and 1b are based on data shown in Appendix B, Table 2.
**Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF)**

**Overview**

Due to the high number of qualifications awarded by the South African Nursing Council in the OQSF, nursing data were separated to allow for closer examination of all other qualifications. While nursing qualifications have exhibited substantial growth, from 6,834 in 1995 to 24,028 in 2013\(^6\) (an increase of 252%), the remaining fields grew exponentially from fewer than 50 qualifications in 1995 to 51,635 in 2014.

Nearly a third of non-nursing achievements were at NQF Level 4. Less than 2\% of non-nursing qualifications were awarded at NQF Levels higher than 5. The most common field in the OQSF – other than Nursing – was Field 6 (Manufacturing, Engineering, and Technology), closely followed by Field 3 (Business, Commerce and Management Studies), Field 5 (Education, Training and Development), Field 11 (Services) and to a lesser extent Field 8 (Law, Military Science and Security).

**Figure 6a. OQSF, excluding Nursing – Trends by NQF Level**\(^7\)

![Graph showing trends by NQF Level excluding Nursing](image)

**Figure 6b. OQSF (Nursing) – Trends by NQF Level**\(^8\)

![Graph showing trends by NQF Level for Nursing](image)

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\(^6\) The South African Nursing Council (SANC) has not completed its data loading for 2014.

\(^7\) Figure 6a is based on data shown in Appendix B, Table 6.

\(^8\) Figure 6b is based on data shown in Appendix B, Table 7.
Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)

Overview

The number of annual achievements in the HEQSF nearly tripled over the 20-year period between 1995 and 2014\textsuperscript{13}, from 70,020 to 202,653. Just less than 90% of these achievements were at NQF Levels 6, 7, and 8. The most popular field was Field 3 (Business, Commerce and Management Studies) at 29% of the achievements. This was followed by Field 5 (Education, Training and Development) and Field 9 (Health Sciences and Social Services) at 22% and 13%, respectively.

Figure 13. HEQSF – Trends by NQF Level\textsuperscript{14}

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\textsuperscript{13} The Public Higher Education component of the HEQSF data for 2014 was uploaded only in March 2016, one month after most of the data analysis was completed for this report. Refer to the methodology in Appendix A for how the 2014 dataset was incorporated.

\textsuperscript{14} Figure 13 is based on data shown in Appendix B, Table 11.
Pathways

Overall movement

Approximately 9.5 million people obtained at least one qualification or professional designation in the 20-year study period between 1995 and 2014. Each qualification or designation is considered a step in the learner’s educational and professional pathway. Steps from before 1995 and after 2014 were not included in the study, even for learners whose pathways included one or more steps taken during the study period.

It was observed that on average, learners take 4 to 5 years between the completion of their first step in the pathway and the completion of their second. Therefore, the pathway analysis has been limited to individuals who were awarded their first qualification or designation before 2010, which is around 6.7 million people. The graph below is a snapshot in time, and depicts a cohort of learners moving through the system between 1995 and 2014. Four-fifths of them showed a single-step path. The last fifth went on to continue their education and development by acquiring further qualifications or designations; see Figure 18.

Figure 18. Number of steps

A total of 47% of learners who first obtained nursing qualifications pursued additional qualifications, followed closely by 35% of learners who first obtained a Higher Education qualification; see Figure 19. Although it might be expected that learners who first obtained a qualification at a lower NQF Level would choose to continue their education at higher levels, it was found that NQF Level 07 had the highest proportion (43%) of learners with 2 or more steps; see Figure 20. There were three fields that had more than 35% of the learners progress through a multi-step pathway: Field 7 (Human and Social Studies), Field 10 (Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences) and Nursing; see Figure 21.
Figure 27. Most common thirty learning pathways followed between 1995 and 2014 other than the single-step path, Further E&T (GFETQSF, 04) followed by 4.45 million people.