



# **2014 Assessment of the Impact of the South African National Qualifications Framework**

**FULL REPORT, March 2017**

**Disclaimer**

This report was compiled by Dr Heidi Bolton on the basis of research conducted and inputs provided by the people acknowledged below. Views expressed in this document are not necessarily those of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

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# List of acronyms

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ABSA	Amalgamated Banks of South Africa
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ACE	Advanced Certificate in Education
AEAA	Association for Educational Assessment in Africa
AEI-NOOSR	Australian Education International - National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition
AET	Adult Education and Training
AGRISETA	Agricultural Sector Education and Training Authority
AHPCSA	Allied Health Professions Council of South Africa
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANA	Annual National Assessments
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AQFC	Australian Qualifications Framework Council
AQP	Assessment Quality Partner
AS	Advanced Subsidiary
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
BANKSETA	Bank Sector Education and Training Authority
BCVO	Beweging vir Christelike Volkseie Onderwys
CAD	Coloured Affairs Department
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
CAS	Career Advice Services
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CAT	Credit Accumulation and Transfer
CATHSSETA	Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority
CDS	Career Development Services
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
CET	Community Education and Training
CETA	Construction Education and Training Authority
CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHIETA	Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority
CIE	Cambridge International Examinations
CIPELT	Certificate in Primary English Language Teaching
CISELT	Certificate in Senior English Language Teaching
COE	Certificate of Evaluation
COP	Community of Practice
COTT	Central Organisation for Trade Testing CPDContinuing Professional Development
CRA	Competent Recognition Authority
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CSSA	Chartered Secretaries Southern Africa
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DCS	Department of Correctional Services
DFQEAS	Directorate: Foreign Qualifications and Advisory Services
DENOSA	Democratic Nursing Association of South Africa
DET	Department of Education and Training
DHA	Department of Home Affairs
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training

DoD	Department of Defence
DoE	Department of Education
DoL	Department of Labour
DoT	Department of Transport
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DQP	Development Quality Partner
DRR	Directorate of Registration and Recognition
DSSD	Directorate for Standard Setting and Development
E&A	Evaluation and Accreditation
EAIA	European Association for International Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Elementary Certificate of Education
ECSA	Engineering Council of South Africa
EFAL	English First Additional Language
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
EQF	European Qualifications Authority
ERCO	Eksamenraad vir Christelike Onderwys (Examination Board for Christian Faith Education)
ESSD	Education, Science and Skills Development
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education Training Authority
ETF	European Training Foundation
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
EU	European Union
EWSETA	Energy and Water Sector Education and Training Authority
FAIS	Financial Advisory and Intermediary Services
FAL	First Additional Language
FASSET	Finance and Accounting Services Sector Education and Training Authority
FE	Further Education
FET	Further Education and Training
FETC	Further Education and Training Certificate
FETI	Further Education and Training Institution
FETMIS	Further Education and Training Management Information System
FoodBev SETA	Food and Beverages Manufacturing Industry Sector Education and Training Authority
FP	Foundation Phase
FPMSETA	Fibre Processing and Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority
FQEAS	Foreign Qualifications and Advisory Services
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GENFET	General and Further Education and Training
GENFETQA	General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GET	General and Education and Training
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
GETCA	General Education and Training Certificate for Adults
GFET	General and Further Education and Training
GFETQSF	General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation)
GPR	Gender Parity Index
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System

HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HEQCIS	Higher Education Quality Committee Information System
HEQMIS	Higher Education Quality Management Information System
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
HESA	Higher Education South Africa (now known as Universities South Africa)
HET	Higher Education and Training
HIV	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
HoR	House of Representatives
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
HRDS	Human Resource Development Strategy
HRD-SA	Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
HWSETA	Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority
IAEA	International Association for Educational Assessment
ICE	Intermediate Certificate of Education
ID	Identity (NQF Qualification Identity Number)
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INSETA	Insurance Sector Education and Training Authority
IPAP	Industrial Policy Action Plan
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
IRT	Item Response Theory
JIPSA	Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition
LEAP	Learn English Audio Project
LER	Learner-to-Educator Ratio
LG SETA	Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSR	Learner-to-School Ratio
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Materials
MAPPP	Media, Advertising, Publishing, Printing and Packaging Sector Education and Training Authority
MerSETA	Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority
MHET	Minister of Higher Education and Training
MIASA	Mining Industry Associations of Southern Africa
MICTSETA	Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MQA	Mining Qualifications Authority
MSP	Master System Plan
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NADSC	National Artisan Development Support Centre
NAMB	National Artisan Moderation Body
NAP	National Artisan Programme
NASCA	National Senior Certificate for Adults
NATED	National Technical Education
NAVCA	National Vocational Certificate for Adults
NBFET	National Board for Further Education and Training
NCAP	National Career Advice Portal
NCS	National Curriculum Statement
NCV	National Certificate: Vocational
ND	National Diploma

NDP	National Development Plan
NDPE	National Professional Diploma in Education
NECT	National Education Collaboration Trust
NEEDU	National Educational Evaluation and Development Unit
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGP	National Growth Path
NIC	National Independent Certificate
NIPF	National Industrial Policy Framework
NLRD	National Learners' Records Database
NMMU	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Body
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy NSLANational Strategy for Learner Attainment
NTB	National Training Board
NTC	National Technical Certificate
NTSI	National Training Strategy Initiative
ODL	Open Distance Learning
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OFO	Organising Framework for Occupations
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
ORF	Official Recontextualising Field
PAB	Professional Accreditation Body for Health and Skincare
PALC	Public Adult Learning Centre
PAT	Practical Assessment Task
PG	Postgraduate
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PHEI	Private Higher Education Institution
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PQE	Post-Qualification Experience
PRF	Pedagogic Recontextualising Field
PSET	Post-School Education and Training
PSETA	Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority
QAA	Quality Assurance of Assessment
QC	Quality Council
QCC	Qualifications, Curriculum and Certification
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
QDF	Qualifications Development Facilitator
QEP	Quality Enhancement Project
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RSA	Republic of South Africa
RTMC	Road Traffic Management Corporation
SA	South Africa
SAAEA	South African Association for Educational Assessment
SABC	South Africa Broadcasting Corporation



SABPP	South African Board for Personnel Practice
SACAI	South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Measuring Educational Quality
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAFCERT	South African Certification Council
SAGs	Subject Assessment Guidelines
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SAIVCET	South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training
SAMO	South African Mathematics Olympiad
SANC	South African Nursing Council
SAPS	South African Police Services
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAQA-HEDP	South African Qualifications Authority-Higher Education Data Project
SASCOC	South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee
SASSETA	Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority
SC	Senior Certificate
SDA	Skills Development Act
Services SETA	Services Sector Education and Training Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SGB	Standards Generating Body
SITA	State Information Technology Agency
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro-sized Enterprises
SNE	Special Needs Education
SSP	Sector Skills Plan
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TAFE	Technical Adult and Further Education
TETA	Transport Education Training Authority
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TO	Trades and Occupations
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVETMIS	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Management Information System
UG	Undergraduate
UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
UK	United Kingdom
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
UoT	University of Technology
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
USA	United States of America
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WETT	Worker Education Task Team
W&RSETA	Wholesale and Retail Sector Education and Training Authority
WP: PSET	White Paper: Post-School Education and Training
WSP	Workplace Skills Plan
XML	Extensible Mark-up Language

# Foreword

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The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is mandated through the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008 to conduct or commission investigations of issues of importance for the development and implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa, including periodic studies of the impact of the NQF on South African education and training (RSA 2008, Clause (k)[i]). SAQA is also required to publish the findings of these investigations (RSA *ibid.*: (k)[ii]).

Why an NQF Impact Study? The effectiveness of the set of policies that regulates education and training in the country needs to be known. Information needs to be publicly available. Democratic South Africa inherited a racially segregated, unequal and unfair education and training system. Different types of learning did not enjoy equal respect. The South African NQF was designed to integrate this system, make it accessible to everyone, and enable quality learning and transparency. It is important that dead ends are addressed so that people can progress in their learning and work pathways. There must be one system for all. The system must open up possibilities for individual development, and contribute to the social and economic development of the country as a whole.

## *What is the South African NQF?*

The South African NQF is unique in the world because of the comprehensive range of structures and services it integrates into one system. These include:

- All education and training sectors.
- Quality assurance as an integral component.
- Level Descriptors as transparency tools which make possible national and international comparability of qualifications and part qualifications.
- National policies for registering qualifications and recognising professional bodies.
- Legislated mechanisms to widen access and progression in the form of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).
- An NQF Advisory Service and advocacy initiatives.
- Evaluation and advisory services for qualifications obtained outside the country, and verification services for those obtained within the country.
- A National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) of all NQF information, including records of learning achievements in the country.

There are no other instances in the world where all of these services are integrated into a single system to enable easy use by the public.

SAQA's main roles are to advance the objectives of the NQF, to oversee further development of the NQF by implementing NQF-related policies, and to coordinate the NQF Sub-Frameworks managed by the three Quality Councils. After 20 years of democracy, South Africa has arguably made much progress in relation to establishing a fairer society. More people have access to housing, water, sanitation, medical services and education in democratic South Africa than was previously the case. But widespread poverty, inequality and unemployment remain. A strong economy is needed to create jobs.

The NQF has the potential to support social development by maximising learning opportunities for all. In the years since the South African Qualifications Authority Act (Act 58 of 1995) was promulgated, what impact has the NQF had on the integration of the education and training system? What progress has there been regarding quality and transparency in this system? What progression has there been regarding redress, and learner access and success?

The 2014 *NQF Impact Study Report* addresses these questions. The NQF is a complex construct, with many sectors, role-players and initiatives. While in some instances direct links can be drawn between the NQF and certain actions taken, it is generally difficult to draw clear lines of cause and effect. When this study commenced the NQF

organisations were at very different stages of development – some, like SAQA, Umalusi and the Council on Higher Education, had existed for over 10 years. Others, like the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), had only been established for a year. For these reasons, the study was based on three foundational decisions.

#### *Foundational decisions for the NQF Impact Study*

1. First, the study made use of two *broad* indicators, namely (i) the extent to which there had been systemic integration, and (ii) the extent to which learners benefitted from the system. These indicators enabled the use of existing data, and consideration of the impact of entities and initiatives at different stages of development, in ways which would not have been possible with more specific and differentiated indicators.
2. Second, developments and learner achievement patterns *associated with the NQF* were analysed. This was not to draw direct lines of cause and effect between the NQF and learner achievement trends – which was not possible – but rather to point to the trends occurring at the same time as the NQF developments in the 18-year period discussed.
3. Third – Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was used to provide analytical categories to compare and contrast different education and training tools, communities of practice and roles in the country, over time. Using CHAT made it possible to analyse shifts in the understanding of NQF objectives over time, and in developments relating to these objectives. It made possible the linking of developments in education and training to the NQF and it enabled analysis of how the different parts of the system were linked. These analyses shaped the design of the study, and data collected for the study.

#### *Drawing on the 2014 NQF Impact Study Report*

Regarding trends in the directions desired, this report provides evidence of the shifts between 1994 and the present, regarding the extent to which the NQF objectives of systemic integration, transparency, quality and redress in education and training, and learner access, success and progression have been achieved, including evidence of:

- **deepened understanding** of the NQF objectives; particularly as a device that connects different parts of the education and training system;
- a shift from seeing integration as being ‘seamless’, to understanding it in terms of **learning pathways which can be articulated in a variety of particular ways**;
- a shift from a severely divided system, to one which is **structurally integrated**, and has moved on to the current focus on **deeper conceptual integration, as exemplified by curriculum alignment work under way**;
- superseding of the ‘turf wars’ under the SAQA Act, with **collaborative relationships and smaller contestations** in the context of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks coordinated by SAQA and reporting to the DHET in terms of the NQF Act;
- **striking shifts towards enhanced transparency**, which is defined as the extent to which national processes and services are available, known and used by the public;
- **a broadening of the quality assurance net**, with enhanced tools to get the quality assurance of education and training providers, curricula and assessment into the system;
- **increasing public support** of NQF events, **increasing volumes of NQF-related research**, and **increasing numbers of NQF-related initiatives**, over time;
- steady **progress regarding redress**, especially regarding access to all the education and training sub-sectors, and both access and throughput in Higher Education (the only sector where this kind of data is available);
- **shifts in the tools and rules** used in the education and training system (e.g. policies, curricula, admission criteria, flexible provision), which have seen greater alignment with the values in the Constitution of the country over time;
- steadily increasing communication and collaboration over time, regarding **communities of practice** in education and training;
- **sub-sector trends in the directions desired**, over time, such as those regarding access to pre-school, National Senior Certificate pass rates, increasing pass rates and achievement levels as learners progress to higher levels in the NCV and N qualifications, high pass rates at some TVET colleges, increasing proportions of learners, studying at public rather than at private TVET colleges, increasing throughput in Higher Education and with

increasing levels of qualifications in the Higher Education sector, greater proportions of students making use of distance learning opportunities, demographic trends in the achievement of qualifications in the Trades and Occupations sector, and steadily increasing initiatives – and numbers of learners in these initiatives – to get people into the education and training system; and

- **the steady movement towards the completion of datasets** over time that show the redress, learner access, success and throughput data needed.

The following trends are still a cause for concern:

- **learner dropout** across the course of schooling, with particular primary and high school grade hotspots, in the N and NCV courses at TVET colleges and, to a lesser extent, in Higher Education;
- **steadily decreasing proportions of school learners writing and passing Mathematics** over time, compared to the proportions writing and passing Mathematical Literacy;
- **the relatively low enrolment and success rates of male** versus female learners in all sub-sectors of the NQF – although the differences are smaller in private than in public institutions of learning across the board.

Specific recommendations are made for supporting integration, transparency, and quality and redress-related work already under way, and for simplification of the NQF. Recommendations are also made for monitoring learner access and success trends that are already in the directions desired, and for developmental initiatives as well as monitoring in cases where trends fluctuate over time or are not yet in the directions desired. Lastly, a recommendation is made to establish a working group of representatives from each of the main NQF partners, to develop integrated differentiated indicators for the next NQF impact study.

I trust that key NQF stakeholders and the public in general will find the report a useful mirror of developments in education and training since the establishment of democracy in South Africa, and a base on which to build a more equitable, fair, flourishing country with quality learning and work opportunities for all who live here.



**Joe Samuels**

**Chief Executive Officer, SAQA**

# Introductory note

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In assessing the impact of a complex construct like the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF), with all its sectors, structures, organisations and role-players, it is not possible to draw direct lines of cause and effect. The approach used in this study was thus to analyse the related policy baskets at selected moments in time and associated data that had potential to show the impact of the NQF, and argue for the impact made and remaining developmental challenges.

This introductory note highlights three ideas of central importance and sketches the eight chapters in the report.

The first key idea is that the NQF in South Africa is a *means to relate* the different parts of the education and training system in the country – a system that was split into unequal and unfair parts under *apartheid*. The NQF is also potentially a means to overcome the class-related divides between the status of differing forms of learning such as academic learning, experiential learning, education, training and indigenous knowledge. The South African NQF is a *relational device*. While it may take different forms over time, what it consistently aims to achieve are *relationships between* the different parts of the system.

The second key idea is that *relational agency* is needed to implement the NQF. Relational agency requires that people, institutions and sectors work together to achieve national needs, and sectoral and institutional needs within the national context. Relational expertise involves knowledge and skills over and above specialist core expertise (Edwards 2014). It involves understanding and engaging with the motives of others (Edwards *ibid.*). Relational agency focuses on the common knowledge created through a shared understanding of the motives of others, and going forward together (Edwards *ibid.*).

The NQF Impact Study set out to identify relational agency in practice in the NQF, and at the same time to develop relational agency in the system. This report is therefore built on inputs from SAQA, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Quality Councils – Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training; the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO); and the Council on Higher Education (CHE).

The third key idea is the importance of understanding the NQF Impact Study, its report and future research into the effectiveness of the South African NQF as opportunities for NQF-related dialogue, collaboration and development.

The research questions addressed in the study were:

- (1) What is the impact of the NQF on the integration of the education and training system?
- (2) What progress has been achieved to date in enhancing redress and access to and success in learning?
- (3) What initiatives are under way to enhance inclusivity?
- (4) How has systemic transparency been enhanced and what are the challenges in this regard?
- (5) What is being done to enhance quality in the system and how effective has it been?
- (6) Has learner progression through the system improved over time?
- (7) What have been the gains in the last 20 years in fulfilling NQF objectives?
- (8) Where are the current challenges and areas for improvement?

Section 1.5 outlines, by chapter, how the study addressed the research questions. This report is based on valuable inputs from the NQF partners, whose contributions are acknowledged with gratitude for the opportunities enabled for the many learners in the country.

**Dr Heidi Bolton**

**Director: Research, SAQA**

# Abstract

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The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa was established in the post-*apartheid* rebuilding phase of the country after 1994, as the means to integrate a racially divided and unequal education and training system, where different forms of knowledge were not equally respected. From the start the South African NQF aimed to create a single integrated system to enhance access, redress, mobility within the system, and the quality and transparency of the system, for the benefit of all learners in the country (RSA 1995, 2008c).

SAQA and the Quality Councils must work *together* towards these objectives. While each Sub-Framework needs to be internally coherent, each is obliged to work together with the other NQF entities and to integrate its work into the whole integrated system desired.

The South African NQF is unusual in that it encompasses all education and training sectors in the country as well as a relatively comprehensive range of structures and services. Assessing its impact is important to ensure the best use of the available human, financial and infrastructural resources to achieve the nationally desired objectives, for social justice and South Africa's participation in the world community.

The central question addressed in the study was: What impact has the NQF had? There were eight sub-questions relating specifically to the impact of the NQF on systemic integration, systemic transparency, redress, learner access, success, progression and systemic quality.

Methodologically, in assessing the impact of a complex construct like the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF), with all of its sectors, structures, organisations and role-players, it is not always possible to draw straightforward lines of cause and effect. The NQF was thus conceptualised as an activity system. Data were collected that showed trends in relation to the NQF objectives, and were linked to the activity system of the NQF through Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987, 2001). The links between these trends and the system were analysed.

Documentary analysis and first-level analyses were done using readily available national datasets. Inputs were obtained from the NQF partners. The CHAT theory, and concepts of 'recontextualisation' (Bernstein 2000) and 'relational agency' (Edwards 2014) were used to shape the meta-analysis.

The impact indicators of '**systemic integration**' and '**beneficiary gain**' were selected for the study, given their potential to reveal the footprint of the achievement of NQF objectives on the education and training system. These indicators are 'stretch indicators' in that they are sufficiently general to enable the evaluation of transformations and developments *over time*. Arguments could be made to link NQF-related developments to systemic integration and beneficiary gain. The generality of the indicators enabled the three Quality Council analyses of quality-related initiatives over time, and beneficiary gain from these initiatives, allowing for differences in the Sub-Framework contexts, and for the different developmental stages of the Quality Councils.

The findings of the study show the impact of the NQF on understandings and developments regarding:

- systemic integration and articulation over time,
- redress,
- learner access, success and progression,
- quality and transparency,
- communities of practice in the education and training sector, and
- 'tools' used for and in education and training, including structures, legislation, curriculum and professional relationships.

The theory of change used – that of *expansive learning for transformation* – enabled:

- systematic analysis of the impact of the NQF over time;
- pinpointing of specific aspects where the NQF has had an impact;

- identification of relationships between particular parts of the system;
- deepening understanding of the elements of an activity essential for a successful outcome when interacting activity systems are involved;
- retrospective reflection on why a successful activity succeeded; and
- planning for future activities, and for ensuring that the elements necessary for success, are present.

Importantly, the NQF Impact Study report integrates, or brings into relationship, information usually held in disparate places. Future developments and trends can be juxtaposed against those shown in the present report.

Specific recommendations are made in relation to further enhancing understandings and developments relating to articulation and integration, redress and learner access, success and progression, quality assurance and transparency, and simplification of the NQF. A recommendation is also made to establish a working group made up of representatives from each of the main NQF partners, to develop integrated differentiated indicators for the next NQF impact study. The differentiated indicators required to show the footprints of NQF policy implementation under the NQF Act, and integration of these indicators, need to be specified. This will inform the research that needs to be conducted – *what* is to be researched, and *how* it is to be researched – in order to report against the indicators in the agreed time period.

# Executive summary

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## 1. Introduction: context and research questions

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa was established in the post-*apartheid* rebuilding phase of the country after 1994, as the means to integrate a racially divided and unequal education and training system into a quality national system aligned to the democratic constitutional dispensation in the country. It was a means to overcome the class-related divides between the status of differing forms of learning such as academic learning, experiential learning, education, training and indigenous knowledge. In 1994, small sections of the population had access to the strong parts of the system, while the majority had to navigate separate parts of the system varying greatly in quality and with no single unified way of mapping the system. World-class and officially recognised institutions existed alongside their inferior and fly-by-night counterparts.

From the start, the South African NQF sought to be a single integrated system that aimed to enhance access, redress and mobility within the system, and the quality and transparency of the system, for the benefit of all learners in the country (RSA 1995, 2008c). An essential part of learner benefit comprised empowerment to protect human rights within the system.

SAQA and the Quality Councils must work *together* towards these objectives. While each of the Sub-Frameworks needs to be internally coherent, each is *obliged to work together with the other NQF entities and to integrate their work into the whole* articulated system desired.

Importantly, the South African NQF is a *relational device*. While it may take different forms over time, what it consistently aims to achieve is effective relationships to relate the different parts of the system to each other. The NQF incorporates all the parts of the education and training system in the country. It is often argued that some parts, such as early childhood development, schooling, the university system or other discrete parts of the system, are separate to the NQF and that progress or otherwise within these sectors has nothing to do with the NQF. This view is fundamentally false, in that every education and training structure and role-player potentially affects others which are below, above and alongside it. Learner progression depends on the quality of every part of the system.

The NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008 (RSA 2008c: Section 13[k(i)-(ii)]) requires SAQA to: "Conduct or commission investigations on issues of importance to the development and implementation of the NQF, including periodic studies of the impact of the NQF on South African education, training and employment" and "publish findings of the investigations". The present report is on the impact study conducted in 2012-2014, and reported in the 2014-2015 financial year.

The central question addressed by this NQF Impact Study was: What impact has the NQF had? The sub-questions addressed in the study were:

- (1) What is the impact of the NQF on the integration of the education and training system?
- (2) What progress has been achieved to date in enhancing redress and access to and success in learning?
- (3) What initiatives are underway to enhance inclusivity?
- (4) How has systemic transparency been enhanced and what are the challenges in this regard?
- (5) What is being done to enhance quality in the system and how effective has it been?
- (6) Has learner progression through the system improved over time?
- (7) What have been the gains in the last 20 years in fulfilling NQF objectives?
- (8) Where are the current challenges and areas for improvement?



## 2. Methodology

In assessing the impact of a complex construct like the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF), with all its sectors, structures, organisations and role-players – it is not always possible to draw straightforward lines of cause and effect. The NQF was thus conceptualised as an activity system. Data were collected that showed trends in relation to the NQF objectives, and were linked to the activity system of the NQF through Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987, 2001). The links between these trends and the system are analysed in Chapter 7.

Data and information were obtained mainly from the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), the Higher Education Quality Management Information System (HEQMIS), publications issued by the Minister and Department of Higher Education and Training (MHET and DHET), the Department of Basic Education (DBE), SAQA and the Quality Councils. Documentary analysis accompanied the analysis of the quantitative data.

Discussions were held with, and data and first-level analyses obtained from, 10 senior staff members from SAQA and the Quality Councils, in response to the research questions. Feedback was sought on all analyses conducted by the lead researcher as part of the study. The substantial analyses of developments within the three Sub-Framework contexts were provided by the three Quality Councils in collaboration with the lead researcher.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was used for a meta-analysis of the first-level analyses of documents and quantitative data. The concepts of 'recontextualisation' (Bernstein 1999, 2000) and 'relational agency' (Edwards 2014) also informed this analysis.

The impact indicators of '**systemic integration**' and '**beneficiary gain**' were selected for this study, given their potential to reveal the footprint of the achievement of NQF objectives on the education and training system. They are presented as 'stretch indicators' as they are sufficiently general to enable the evaluation of transformations and developments *over time*. Arguments are made to link NQF-related developments to systemic integration and beneficiary gain. The generality of the indicators enabled the three Quality Council analyses of quality-related initiatives and beneficiary gain, over time, as well as allowed for differences in the Sub-Framework contexts, and for the different developmental stages of the three Quality Councils.

## 3. Structure of the report

Chapters 1 and 2 sketch the background and context of the study, and detail the method followed and analytical tools used. Chapter 1 explains what the South African NQF is, and why the country has an NQF. It provides tools towards building common understanding and acknowledging the differentiated motives of the various NQF partners.

Chapter 2 sketches the national policy and socio-economic contexts in which the NQF is being implemented.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 present the readily available data and first-level analyses on which the deeper analysis in Chapter 7 is based.

Chapter 3 addresses Research Questions 2, 3 and 6. It presents data and analyses relating to the NQF objectives of redress, access and success in the different education and training sectors, and to initiatives to get people into the system.

Chapter 4 addresses Research Question 1. It presents an analysis of data that reflect the extent of systemic integration linked to the NQF.

Chapter 5 addresses Research Question 4, analysing the NQF's transparency initiatives, and the extent to which systemic transparency has been achieved.

Chapter 6 addresses Research Question 5. In this chapter each of the three Quality Councils presents an analysis of its approach to quality assurance, how these approaches have been developed over time, and some of the effects and implications of the approaches adopted.

Chapter 7 addresses Research Questions 7 and 8. It draws on threads from the whole report, and especially on the data and first-level analyses in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, using the tools provided in Chapter 1, to show that while the identified challenges remain, South Africa is slowly but increasingly moving in the desired directions. The role of the NQF in promoting this movement is explored.

Chapter 8, the concluding chapter, draws on the whole report to provide recommendations for the way forward.

#### **4. Findings**

The findings of the meta-analysis relate to the impact of the NQF on shifts in understanding of, and developments relating to, systemic integration, transparency, quality, redress, and learner access, success and progression, over time. Comments are also made on the theory of change used, and what the methodology of the study enabled and limited.

##### ***Impact of the NQF on shifts in understanding of systemic integration, transparency, quality, redress, and learner access, success and progression: 1994-1995, SAQA Act, NQF Act***

The categories of 'subjects', 'objectives or outcomes', 'mediating tools', 'rules', 'communities of practice' and 'divisions of labour' from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987) were used to analyse the impact of the NQF on understandings and developments in education and training in 1994, under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) and under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). The findings of this meta-analysis are integrated and summarised as collectively they show the impact of the NQF.

##### ***Impact of the NQF on understandings and developments regarding systemic integration and articulation over time***

- In 1994-1995 the education and training system in South Africa was **deeply divided** along demographic lines and different forms of knowledge had different statuses. There was both a **desire for integration and resistance to the idea** of integration, based on differences between the leaders of academic learning, and training, respectively.
- Under the SAQA Act the NQF impacted on the education and training system through radical **structural integration** within the spread of sectors making up the system. The NQF also impacted on public thinking, in which it was seen variously as (a) the Level Descriptors and 'grid of qualifications', (b) the activities of the integrating body 'SAQA and its partners', and (c) the focus in education and training on systemic integration, transparency, redress, and learner access and success. NQF implementation impacted on the views of the then-Departments of Education and Labour, narrowing the differences between them. It also impacted on academic discourse, where the ideas of learning pathways, and the blockages in these pathways, emerged (Carrim 2010; Cosser 2009).
- Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), there was further **restructuring of the main education institutions**, including the establishment of the Departments of Basic Education (DBE) and Higher Education and Training (DHET), and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO). The NQF impacted on understandings, **differentiated forms and contexts of learning** were acknowledged and given equal weight in the form of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks. The NQF focused attention on **'learning pathways', 'articulation' and 'articulated pathways'**.

Understandings of these pathways broadened and deepened – learning pathways are currently understood in at least three different ways, each of which can be supported to assist learners (see Sections 4.3.1.1 and 7.1.1). **Collaboration between role-players in education and training** has increased, as evidenced in the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011), the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) and the suite of NQF policies developed collaboratively. Initiatives to build '**relational agency**' (Edwards 2014) commenced.

- Attention was drawn to the fact that the NQF and **debates around integration** are located in wider and **centuries-old debates around knowledge**, and the **politics of knowledge**. Integration has a social justice agenda. In addition, there are blurred lines between traditional dichotomies. An example is the division between 'contact' and 'distance' provision where increasingly, there is technology and off-site participation in contact modes, and residential blocks in distance teaching and learning.

#### ***Impact of the NQF on understandings and developments over time regarding redress***

- From stakeholder discussions around education and training for the new democracy in 1994, **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** was central for redress.
- Following the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995), SAQA developed the *National RPL Policy* (SAQA 2003) and *RPL Criteria and Guidelines* (SAQA 2005) with contributions from RPL experts. RPL processes were seen as being generic. Islands of excellent RPL practice developed in the country (ILO 2008).
- Under the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008) barriers to **development of a national RPL system** were identified and work commenced within SAQA and the Ministerial Task Team to address these barriers. The differentiation of the NQF Sub-Frameworks impacted on RPL, for which **differentiated purposes and methods** were recognised. Revision of national RPL policy involved collaborative work with RPL stakeholders across the board, including incorporating inputs from representatives from all sub-sectors of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks.

#### ***Impact of the NQF on understandings and developments regarding learner access success and progression over time***

- Access was initially understood in terms of **physical access** to institutions of learning within the country, as well as internationally. Under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) the focus was on enabling access for all learners regardless of population and gender group categorisation. Over time, the understanding of access shifted to emphasise **learner throughput and success rates**, and **international mobility**.
- Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) the understanding of access developed to include learners' ability to progress through the sub-systems in which they were studying, and to achieve success or '**deep access**<sup>1</sup>' to the forms of knowledge and skills they sought to develop. Access was associated with **learner support** via national career advice and flexible provision, among other ways. Analysis of available data from the years 2002-2012 showed that overall, the numbers of learners accessing the system and progressing through it increased. There were more female than male learners, female learners achieved at higher levels than their male counterparts, and *apartheid* patterns were disappearing over time. Patterns per sector varied as follows:
  - In the schooling sector, **enrolment in Grade R (pre-school) increased steadily** between 2006 and 2014, and there was **almost universal enrolment** in primary school. Integration in the form of the **introduction of national testing** at school Grade 1 to 9 levels occurred – **learner**

<sup>1</sup> Deep access refers to access to, or deep understanding of, knowledge and skills within disciplines or areas of learning, as shown by learner success.

**achievement levels were low** in these tests, **but improved** across the three years of implementation.

- The numbers of full-time learners registering to write the National Senior Certificate (NSC) exams **decreased steadily** across 2008-2013. The numbers of **part-time learners increased**. There were low percentages (**about half**) of learners registered to write the NSC exams relative to numbers in the corresponding age cohort in the general population. Pass rates of 64-78% in the NSC exams were achieved in 2008-2013. However, after taking into account those enrolling to write the NSC exams and those actually writing, and a further 20-30% drop between those writing and passing, the **actual pass rates were 58-62%**. The numbers of learners who passed the NSC exams in the years analysed constituted around **one-eighth** of the original corresponding numbers of learners enrolled for Grade 1.

Regarding the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) and N programmes, there was deep access for relatively small numbers of learners; learner success increased steadily with NQF level. Importantly, variation in the pass rates across colleges, with some achieving 100% pass rates, opened the possibility of spreading good practice. Growth in the proportions of students enrolled at public TVET colleges across 2011 and 2012, and overall growth in the numbers of learners enrolling at TVET colleges were noted.

In Higher Education, student enrolment and completion numbers increased steadily between 2005 and 2012, with more female than male students in this period, and the gaps between proportions of students from different population groups on one hand and the proportions of those population groups in the general population on the other, narrowed across this period. The student throughputs were lower than desired but increasing proportions of students graduated across these years. Female students had higher success rates throughout. Differences between the graduation rates of students in the different population groups narrowed between 2005 and 2012. The overall numbers of students graduating via distance modes increased in the 2005-2012 period. The percentages of African students graduating via distance modes decreased slightly across these years. The gender distribution of students graduating across the 2002-2012 period was more balanced at private than in public HEIs. The mode of provision – distance, contact, public, private – in combination, clearly contributed to the overall access, redress, success and progression rates of students.

- There was an **overall increase in the achievement of occupational qualifications** between 2002 and 2012, and the relative increases in the proportions of achievements by female learners and by learners from all population groups – and especially by African learners – point to **increased access, redress and success**. The importance of including data on **artisan training** in the NLRD was noted, as was the importance of tracking learner movements across **learning pathways in the occupational sector**, towards assessing the extent of ‘deep access’ in the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) context. There was a **general increase in the total numbers of learnerships** completed and recorded on the NLRD between 2004 and 2012, and **more unemployed or pre-employed** than working people registered for and were certificated for learnerships in both 2011 and 2012. Although fewer unemployed/ pre-employed than working people registered for and were certificated for **skills programmes** across both years, **significant numbers of unemployed/ pre-employed people** were involved in these programmes. Between 2011 and 2012 there were **increases in the numbers of unemployed/ pre-employed people** registering for and being certificated for internships, and certificated for skills programmes. These patterns suggest that learnerships, internships and skills programmes are important access routes to learning and work.
- The **new Adult Education and Training (AET) Certificates**. The General Education and Training Certificates for Adults (GETCA), National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) and National Vocational Certificate for Adults (NAVCA) have potential to enhance access to AET.

A small amount of related data featured in national publications: in 2011-2012, most adult learners enrolled at public centres, but there was clearly a role for private centres. There were increases in enrolments at AET Levels 3 and 4, and for Grades 10 and 12; enrolment trends dipped at the other levels. There were **insufficient data** to analyse access and success trends over time.

- Considering access, success, redress and progression via the **Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign** in 2008-2013, numbers of learners generally increased over time. The demographic profile of learners in the programme is 71% female and 99% African.

### ***Impact of the NQF on understandings and developments regarding quality and transparency over time***

- Education and training in *apartheid* South Africa was **not transparent**. Quality assurance under *apartheid* was more about '**quality control**' than quality assurance, and focused on 'measuring outputs, *post facto*, based on inspection and sampling' at school level. Prior to 1994 there was **no national quality assurance system for Higher Education**. Quality assurance in this sector was limited to institutional arrangements, and involved the use of external examiners and the accreditation of individual programmes. In the Trades and Occupational sector, the **Manpower Training Act**, Act 56 of 1981 (RSA 1981) provided for the regulation of 'manpower training'. Any employer, employee or organised business or labour group could establish a Training Board in a particular sector by creating a constitution in line with this Act. The biggest challenge with this system was the **legislated unevenness of opportunities** for people from different population groups. Other challenges included the absence of standardisation of curricula and training fees.
- The NQF impacted on this system through the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) by introducing a **national standards-based system** that included unit standards, learning outcomes and assessment standards. This approach has been criticised for "fragmenting learning into little boxes that can be ticked off even by those without insight into the discipline or skills domains in question" (French 2009: 51) and, similarly, for de-linking curriculum content from its disciplinary bases and traditions (Allais 2005, 2014). Measures taken to counter this fragmentation included:
  - using 'learning outcomes' rather than 'competencies';
  - taking the whole qualification and its purpose as the starting point in each instance; and
  - requiring reference to underlying bodies of knowledge.

While the approach was also criticised for being bureaucratic and 'wordy', its merits included providing national quality criteria which are at the core of worthwhile qualifications and which could scaffold development, thereby protecting the public from fraudulent practices and providing transparency. Both Umalusi and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) have developed transparent national quality assurance systems for their sectors.

- Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) the inadequacy of this centralised system led to the current **devolved and decentralised national quality assurance model**. Standard setting and quality assurance are housed 'under the same roof' for each of the three coordinated Quality Councils, and the differentiated approach of each is recognised. Each Quality Council is responsible for aligning its qualifications with the relevant qualifications in the other two Sub-Frameworks, and has begun to do so. These processes, together with SAQA's registration of the qualifications on the NQF – a process which includes assessing the extent to which the qualifications are internationally comparable – ensure the benchmarking of the qualifications for quality, and the inclusion of RPL, Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) and articulation possibilities. This system shows the impact of the NQF, which aligns quality with values expressed in the Constitution of the country regarding redress, and learner access, success and progression in education, training, development and work.

- The **transparency features** of the NQF, its Level Descriptors and the National Learners' Records Database, have been strengthened by greater collaboration between SAQA and the Quality Councils than was the case under the SAQA Act. This approach is evidenced by the NQF bodies reporting against the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011) and *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c). The following developments have also served to enhance transparency in the system:
  - development by SAQA, after consultation with the Quality Councils, of policies for (a) the registration of qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF, (b) recognition of Professional Bodies and registration of professional designations, (c) assessment, (d) RPL and (e) CAT;
  - the establishment of Verification Services, agreements and accords between South Africa and other countries for the recognition of qualifications across countries, and
  - the establishment of national career and NQF advisory services.

Despite the impact of the NQF on the system in these ways, there are currently variations in the quality of education and training provision, learning achievements and the extent to which information is available to different NQF beneficiaries. These differences constitute contradictions with the potential for expanded learning and change (Engeström 1987).

***Overarching comment on the impact of the NQF on the achievement of systemic integration, redress, learner access and progression, quality and transparency***

Looked at over time, the shifts in the understanding of NQF objectives – redress, learner access, success and progression, and systemic integration, quality and transparency, show deepening awareness of these elements, and matching changes in the organisational structures and processes that effect these elements. Along with this growth in understanding came awareness of the complexity of the objectives and differentiated ways of achieving them, based on experiences in different contexts, and research.

***Impact of the NQF on understandings and developments regarding education and training communities of practice over time***

- The post-1990 stakeholder negotiation led to the push by organised labour for an '**integrated system**' of education and training with equivalence between learning pathways, and for a '**single system**' which excluded the 'integrated system' elements of institutional reform, a corporatist state, and the integration of education and training in the Human Resource Development sector.
- The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), with the Department of Labour (DoL) responsible for skills development to meet the needs of the economy, and the Department of Education (DoE) overseeing supply-side provision. There were three entities in a 'single system': the **DoL, SAQA**, and the **DoE**. It is commonly understood that 'turf wars' raged between these role-players around standards and quality assurance.
- The NQF Act (RSA 2008c) provides for **three coordinated NQF Sub-Frameworks**, each **overseen by a Quality Council**, with **SAQA as the coordinating body**. Each of these organisations shares involvement in the NQF, is allocated and expected to play a distinct role, and is legally bound to work with the others. The Minister of Higher Education and Training must "encourage **collaboration** amongst the Quality Councils and between the Quality Councils and SAQA" (RSA 2008c: Clause 8[3(c)]).

As evidenced by reporting against the System of Collaboration (SAQA 2011c) developed by the NQF partners to guide mutual relations between SAQA and the three Quality Councils, and the NQF Implementation Framework (SAQA 2011), the main NQF organisations are working

together.

Initial **understandings of articulation have deepened** since the promulgation of the NQF Act. It is now better understood that the establishment of learning pathways takes different forms, all of which can be supported by an interventionist state. Learning pathways can involve 'linked qualifications', where articulation possibilities are declared in the grid of qualifications making up the NQF. Importantly for all three Quality Councils, learning pathways usually also involve conceptual and curriculum-alignment work – and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) – that require collaboration between the communities of practice involved, advance planning and time. Learning pathways can also be individualised, as individuals take up opportunities available to them. Individual learning pathways need state support in the form of career advice, resources and flexible provision that goes beyond the traditional idea of distance education. NQF elements – without which articulation would not be possible, or at least would be more difficult than at present – were developed between 2010 and 2014. In addition to the determination of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in 2013-2014, national career advice services were established in 2010, and the suite of NQF policies required by the NQF Act was developed. The NLRD has made steady progress towards completion.

The **impact of the NQF Act (2008c)** has included revision of the related Acts governing the main NQF partners, creation of the working structures needed for systemic integration, and processes for NQF entities to enter into dialogue and joint work with each other. Where the requirements of the NQF Act and related Acts have been accompanied by Ministerial Guidelines, resources, agreements or support, the NQF role-players have worked together to achieve the targeted objectives. The impact of the NQF itself is such that the education and training system is currently populated with institutions that are able to accomplish systemic integration, transparency quality, and learner access, success and progression, and have shown steady progress in doing so. These institutions are well-positioned to address the systemic challenges that remain.

- The **NQF includes an expanded range of communities of practice**. The three NQF Sub-Frameworks cater for most education and training sectors<sup>2</sup>. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013) speaks to the public and private sectors. There are roles for both employers and for organised labour. Similarly, Professional Bodies and professional designations are part of the NQF and its communities of practice.

### ***Impact of the NQF on education and training tools and rules***

The NQF impacts on the education and training system through 'artefacts' (tools) (Engeström 1987) such as the following:

- national NQF legislation, and related policies developed by the main NQF entities;
- national NQF structures and sub-structures;
- the internal organisation of NQF structures and sub-structures; and
- the other key elements of curriculum, NQF events and relational agency.

### ***Impact of the NQF on national legislation***

The **national legislation** at the time of the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995) included the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (Act 58 of 2001), the Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997), and the Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998). This legislative framework laid out

<sup>2</sup> The *Guidelines for good practice for learning that does not lead to a qualification or part-qualification* have been developed by SAQA in collaboration with a representative Reference Group, and are due to be gazetted for public comment in April 2015.

the quality assurance responsibilities for the respective sectors. Standard setting located under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) allocated to SAQA the responsibility to develop policy and criteria for:

- “the registration of bodies responsible for establishing education and training standards or qualifications” (RSA 1995: Clause 5[1]A[ii]aa); and
- “the accreditation of bodies responsible for monitoring and auditing achievements in terms of such standards or qualifications (RSA 1995: Clause 5[1]A[ii]bb).

The impact of splitting the locations of standard setting and quality assurance in this way, together with the centralisation of standard setting, led to a deepening of the divisions between the education and training sectors. The skills-development sector worked readily with SAQA, transforming many of its qualifications into the required unit standards-based formats. The Council on Higher Education (CHE) and Umalusi perceived SAQA as controlling standard setting in ways that contradicted the historical traditions in their sectors and wanted no part of it.

Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) SAQA and the three Quality Councils are allocated distinct responsibilities as well as collaborative work. The suite of NQF policies were collaboratively developed, including policies on the NQF Level Descriptors, registration of qualifications and part-qualifications, registration of Professional Bodies and recognition of professional designations, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), assessment and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) and the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011).

### ***Impact of the NQF on curriculum***

The curriculum is an element of the education and training system on which implementation of the South African NQF has had a radical impact. The transformation of the school curriculum – from differing curricula for different population groups and provinces in the country under *apartheid*, to the post-1994 single national curriculum based on learning outcomes and assessment standards, is an example of this impact. Higher Education curricula under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) progressively involved more ‘scaffolding’ in the form of learner support, as awareness of trends in learner success and progression rates grew and the need for learner support was realised. Regarding learning content in the Trades and Occupational sector, the proliferation of unit standards-based qualifications has been noted, as have difficulties relating to the ‘wordiness’ of learning outcomes and assessment standards. Also noted on the other hand, were the increasing numbers of learners accessing these qualifications over time, including unemployed/ pre-employed people, and employers for their staff. The National Technical (N) Qualifications, seen to be lacking in theory, were phased out and then reintroduced due to demand. The National Certificate: Vocational (NCV), with its curricula and elements of both general and vocational education, was implemented in an attempt to increase useful learning pathway options in the vocational sector.

The form and content of curricula were used as tools to achieve redress and learner access, success and progression, the trends for which are shown elsewhere in the report. From these patterns it is clear that the NQF impacted on the education and training system at the micro-level of the classroom, through curricula. Curriculum advances under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) reflect progress regarding *integration*, in that *national* curricula were developed within the sectors for General and Further Education and Training, and Trades and Occupations. National criteria were designed to inform the development of Higher Education programmes. National quality assurance systems included the quality assurance of curriculum. Transparency was sought via curriculum elaboration in the General and Further Education and Training sector, specified programme approval processes in Higher Education, and the use of unit standards in the occupational sector – with differing levels of success.

Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), the pace of transformation slowed in some sectors as the curricula reached the forms desired. For example, the extent of change in successive waves of curriculum reform in Basic Education has decreased over time. The current Curriculum and Assessment Policy



Statements (CAPS) have swung back to a teacher-centred syllabus-type curriculum, while retaining learning outcomes and clear assessment specifications. Higher Education curricula under the NQF Act continue to need ‘scaffolding’ in the form of additional learner support. It is expected that the recently published national policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) (SAQA 2014b) will lead to greater curriculum alignment across HEIs, and ease progression for learners over time. Importantly, while the unit standards-based qualifications developed in the Trades and Occupational sector under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) remain registered on the NQF, the new occupational qualifications developed under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) are *curriculum-based*. There is increased potential for these qualifications, which are made up of knowledge standards, practical standards and workplace experience standards, each of which has a curriculum, to articulate with qualifications in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) and the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF).

Awareness of the importance of curriculum for implementation of the NQF as evident under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) continued under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). A number of post-2009 curriculum-related initiatives represented steps towards understanding and implementing credit transfer and other articulation possibilities. These included:

- Strengthening the curricula of qualifications in each of the Sub-Framework contexts.
- Research towards understanding the nature, overlaps and differences between the curricula of selected National Senior Certificate (NSC), National Technical Certificate (N), and National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) qualifications (Umalusi 2010a, 2012e, 2013b).
- Action research involving curriculum alignment between selected TVET qualifications and related qualifications at selected universities and Universities of Technology, for the purposes of learner progression (Nel, in SAQA 2013b).
- Partnering between a University of Technology and its surrounding TVET Colleges to enable the progression of students from the colleges to the university (Needham 2013).
- Mapping learning pathways for selected scarce skills (Lotz-Sisitka and Ramsarup 2014).
- Mapping qualifications matrices for the purposes of strategic national RPL initiatives (SAQA 2015).

### ***Impact of the NQF on education and training structures***

The NQF structures and sub-structures under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) – the DoE, DoL, SAQA, and ETQAs of different types, including SETA-ETQAs and Band ETQAs (CHE, Umalusi) – were streamlined into a smaller number of structures under the NQF Act (2008c). The main NQF partners – the DHET, DBE, SAQA and the Quality Councils – are tools that make possible joint differentiated and integrated work. While each of the structures is enabled to separately formulate and develop the conceptualisations and approaches suited to its historical trajectories and stakeholder bases, there are forums that bring the distinct practices into dialogue with each other. The NQF Forum, Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee, CEO Committee, Board and Council meetings, and other policy development forums are examples of tools for collaborative work to achieve common goals.

### ***Impact of the NQF on collaboration and ‘relational agency’***

There is growing recognition of the importance of an additional NQF implementation tool, that of ‘**relational agency**’ (Edwards 2014). The suite of NQF policies developed since promulgation of the NQF Act is now complete<sup>3</sup>. As the country moves into an enhanced implementation phase, collaborative relationships need to be further developed and strengthened.

<sup>3</sup> The suite of NQF policies and related documents include the *System of Collaboration*, the *NQF Implementation Framework*, the *NQF Level Descriptors*, and national policies for registering qualifications, part-qualifications, and professional designations on the NQF, recognising Professional Bodies, Assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

To kick-start this deepening collaboration, in 2014 SAQA hosted workshops on *relational agency* and *relational expertise* for staff from key NQF organisations. The aims of the workshops were (a) to raise and garner support for relational work that needed to be done, and (b) to identify and explore ways in which key organisations could support each other (see Section 4.3.2).

Four ideas are central to relational agency work. The first idea is that relational expertise involves additional knowledge and skills over and above specialised core expertise. Second, relational expertise involves understanding and engaging with the motives of others. It allows the expertise (resources) offered by others to be surfaced and used. Third, relational expertise is useful vertically (in authority hierarchies), but it is also relevant for horizontal collaboration across practices at similar levels in authority hierarchies. Lastly, relational expertise respects history, but is focused on the common knowledge created through shared understanding of the different motives of those collaborating, and going forward together.

Representatives of SAQA, the Quality Councils, the Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, several other government departments, SETAs and the National School of Government participated in the initial relational agency workshops. While the openness of these organisations to the ideas, and their commitment to work with them, was a historical achievement, much work remains to be done to use the ideas in the implementation and further development of NQF policy.

### ***Impact of the NQF on other tools in the education and training system***

**NQF-related conferences, workshops and other events and initiatives** are further examples of tools that have enabled dialogue and mutual understanding under the NQF Act. The foci in these events reflect deepening understanding of the nuances of the NQF objectives and implementation needs. SAQA, the Quality Councils and the Departments of Basic Education (DBE) and Higher Education and Training (DHET) participate in each other's events.

Each of the tools noted here, and others, encompass the 'rules' for operating and cooperating effectively in the education and training system. Importantly, the NQF has impacted on this system by requiring and opening the spaces for the development and use of the kinds of tools described. Where there were contradictions – such as in the under-specification in school curricula, the unit standards-based occupational qualifications, unknown learning pathways or gaps in learning pathways – research, development and expanded learning have taken place. These processes need to continue to address (or challenge) the contradictions that remain.

### ***Comment on the theory of change used***

The CHAT *categories* (Engeström 1987) of **subjects** (actors or acting entities), **objectives** (individual or collective goals), **mediating artefacts** (tools or devices used by actors or entities in a transformation process), **rules** (norms and conventions), **communities of practice** (groups of collectives that share values and purposes) and **divisions of labour** (the roles of different actors) were used to analyse the impact of the NQF on the education and training system over time.

Some of Engeström's (2001: 136-137) CHAT *principles* were used for a more detailed analysis of one instance of transformation, to deepen understanding of the changes achieved. His ideas of **interacting activity systems**, **collectives**, **multi-voicing**, **historicity**, **contradictions**, and **expansive learning and transformation** were used in this detailed analysis. The example of the development of the *revised* Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy (SAQA 2013a) was used, given its centrality in the system, and its successful link to the national implementation of RPL.

Using these CHAT *principles* (Engeström 2001) with the CHAT *categories* (Engeström 1987) was useful for **identifying the elements** of an activity essential for a successful outcome when interacting activity systems are involved. It was useful for retrospective **reflection on why a successful activity succeeded**.

It is also **useful for planning future activities** and for ensuring that the elements necessary for success are present and considered.

The example analysis focused on the contradiction presented by the outdated RPL policy developed under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995). Similar analyses could be conducted for all the other elements for which development was accomplished under the SAQA and NQF Acts. An analysis of *expansive learning* was presented, towards understanding the transformation experienced in the development of the new RPL policy in 2013, as it could assist other change processes required for NQF development. The CHAT categories and *expansive learning* spiral were found to be useful for:

- systematic analysis of the impact of the NQF over time;
- pinpointing specific aspects where the NQF has had an impact;
- identifying relationships between particular parts of the system;
- understanding the elements of an activity essential for a successful outcome when interacting activity systems are involved;
- retrospective reflection on why a successful activity was successful; and
- planning future activities, and for ensuring that the elements necessary for success, are present.

The concepts were found to be limited in their separation of macro system elements and the micro-level objects used in everyday practice. The theory allows for individual interpretation in this regard. For example both macro-level policy and micro-level curricula can be categorised as ‘tools’. The concepts do not elaborate when distinguishing between power (system divisions) and control (elements that maintain system divisions), allowing for individual interpretation in this regard. While a community of practice incorporates power relations, and all of the CHAT categories could be said to contribute to these power relations, there is no direct relationship (theoretically) between power relations in the communities of practice and control exercised by elements in any of the other categories. Lastly, the concept of ‘rules’ is under-theorised. Bernstein’s (1996) ideas of a *pedagogic device* and *recontextualising rules* were used to understand the cascading of rules in the integrated differentiated system.

### ***Impact of methodological choices made***

The methods used to gather information for this study included the following:

- documentary analysis of the ‘NQF policy baskets’ and related developments associated with the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) and NQF Act (RSA 2008c);
- analysis of trends in readily available datasets and first-level analyses relating to redress, and learner access, success, and progression between 2000 and 2014, depending on data availability, across the NQF sub-sectors; and
- use of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987, 2001) and ‘expansive learning for transformation’ (Engeström 2001) as the theory of change to conduct a meta-analysis of shifts in developments in the education and training field showing the impact of the NQF.

Impact studies usually involve empirical investigation against carefully constructed indicators designed to show change in relation to a particular phenomenon. In the present study, the **broad indicators** of ‘**moves towards systemic integration**’ and ‘**beneficiary gain**’ were selected because (1) aspects that could be evaluated *over extended time*, including post-hoc analysis, were needed, and (2) the Quality Councils were at different stages of development at the start of the study, preventing the use of detailed uniform indicators.

### ***What the methodology enabled***

In the conclusions to the first South African NQF Impact Study (SAQA 2003), it was recommended that impact indicators be used in future NQF impact studies. In addition, the importance of taking into account the NQF context and analyses based on NLRD data were noted. Without these contextual

links, there is a danger of adopting an apolitical ‘technicist’ approach. SAQA’s subsequent NQF Impact Study Reference Group, Research Committee discussions, and preparatory research (Taylor 2010) made clear that the different priorities and voices of NQF organisations under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) called for a theoretical framework that could systematically capture progress and impact in the different NQF Sub-Framework contexts. With the devolved and differentiated coordinated Sub-Framework model, it was not feasible to use the same indicators across the different contexts.

The impact indicators of ‘systemic integration’ and ‘beneficiary gain’ were selected for the study, given their potential to reveal the footprint of the achievement of NQF objectives on the education and training system. These indicators are ‘stretch indicators’ in that they are sufficiently general to enable the evaluation of transformations and developments *over time*. Arguments could be made to link NQF-related developments to systemic integration and beneficiary gain. The generality of the indicators enabled the three Quality Council’s analyses of quality-related initiatives over time, and beneficiary gain from these initiatives, allowing for differences in the Sub-Framework contexts and for the different developmental stages of the Quality Councils.

The use of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) with its expansive learning theory of change (Engeström 1987, 2001) made possible the inclusion of contextual features in the analysis – including the features of NQF communities of practice with their actors and roles, NQF tools with their rules, and interacting activity systems (see Section 7.1). SAQA and Quality Council researchers agreed on the indicators and theory to be used.

Existing datasets were used for the analyses. In the early South African NQF impact studies (SAQA 2003, 2005), a notable limitation was that there were insufficient data to analyse trends regarding redress, and learner access, success and progression. In the present study, extensive data were available in the national databases linked to the NQF which made it possible to include an analysis of the state of the datasets, shifts in the state of the national datasets over time, and the extent of gaps to be addressed which are shown to be decreasing over time.

### ***Limitations of the methodology***

There were two limitations linked to the methodology selected for the study.

Firstly, the triangulation of data is imperative for the credibility and reliability of research. Ideally in the study, the first-level analyses of data should have been discussed with the stakeholders involved and their understandings, insights and critiques incorporated – especially given the interacting activity systems involved in the NQF sub-systems. The Scottish impact study (SCQA 2005) was based on a wide range of interviews that used sets of interview data to triangulate other interview data. The Irish study (NQAI 2009) triangulated data by combining documentary analysis, reports from key NQF implementers and NQF implementer engagement with sectoral stakeholders, in-depth case studies, public submissions and consultative forums. Both studies involved large research teams, large budgets and five-year study periods, none of which were feasible for the SAQA study.

In 2009-2010, SAQA commissioned an external organisation to lay the groundwork for the study, using a traditional ‘before’ and ‘after’ approach. At the time, the Ministries and Departments of Higher Education (DHET) and Basic Education (DBE), and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations had not yet been fully established. Also, SAQA, Umalusi and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) were in the process of aligning their functions to the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). It proved difficult to develop indicators to measure impact, when implementation structures were still in the process of being set up, or in transition. In 2011-2012, SAQA and the Quality Council researchers agreed to the theoretical framework for the study, which commenced in earnest in 2013-2014. As it stands, the data are presented according to the sources cited, and the data and analyses are visible for readers. Analyses of policy and developments are presented alongside hard data. SAQA developed the main text, while the Quality Councils contributed the whole of Chapter 6 drawing upon the data and first-level analyses

generated in the NLRD, CHE, DHET and DBE contexts.

The second limitation is a more fundamental one. Given that the NQF is a complex object, it is difficult to draw direct lines of cause and effect between trends and single interventions. The study seeks to address this difficulty by presenting the policy and development basket *associated with* the trends. The argument could be advanced, however, that since cause and effect cannot be assumed, the idea of *association* is not acceptable either. It is countered that the meta-analysis which makes use of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987), expansive learning for transformation (Engeström 2001) and the idea of re-contextualisation (Bernstein 1996) provides the necessary links.

### ***Impact and readiness for impact***

The extent to which data and analyses in the current study show progress in relation to education and training targets or developmental focus areas in the HRD-SA (RSA 2009a) and White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013) was considered. Data and analyses in the study were found to fully address three of the 11 HRD-SA targets, to provide some insights regarding a further two areas and to be insufficient to address the remaining six. Of the five broad areas identified in the White Paper (*ibid.*), data and analyses in the study were found to fully address two and provide some insights for the remaining three.

While the timing of the study meant that it could address the impact of NQF implementation plans and initiatives in line with the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), broader social impacts were out of reach. However, the necessary NQF structures are now in place and are in the process of being consolidated. Related SAQA and Quality Council policies have been developed and implementation has either commenced or is about to commence. It will be feasible for the next NQF impact study to address the impact of its footprint (French 2015) directly. In order to do so, advance planning, adequate resources and the collaboration of the communities involved will be needed.

## **5. Recommendations and closing comments**

Recommendations are made in relation to the following elements:

Firstly, regarding **further enhancing understandings of and progress in articulation and integration**, recommendations are made for evidence-based development of a full map of learning pathways, including fleshing out the nature and contextual enablers of specific pathways within and across the three NQF Sub-Frameworks. Existing research and developmental initiatives that support the development of the learning pathways, including the implementation of national RPL and CAT policies and flexible provision – as the tools to achieve enhanced articulation – should be expanded. Relational work between the NQF partners responsible for articulation needs to increase.

Second, regarding **redress, and learner access, success and progression**, the achievements and developmental areas identified in the present study need to be used to select areas for ‘assessment of progress’ on the one hand, and ‘developmental initiatives as well as the assessment of progress’ on the other, for reporting in future studies. Assessment of progress is recommended where trends are already in the directions desired. Both developmental initiatives and the assessment of progress associated with these initiatives are required where there are currently fluctuations in the trends, and where these trends are not in the directions desired. Advance planning is needed to generate the data required for analyses linked to these developments. The continued development and expansion of the NLRD must be prioritised, including the continued development and expansion of the databases that support it. The data gaps in the Quality Council databases, artisan training, and for learner achievements prior to 1994 and in the private sector, are priorities. Ways of assessing progress in occupational learning pathways need to be found. The teams of representatives of the different NQF partners needed for this work need to be established.

Third, regarding **quality assurance**, the main NQF partners need to consider ways in which the Quality

Councils can be supported in their work. Mutual understanding between the NQF partners of each other's motives and needs will aid the strengthening of the tools and communities involved in this work.

Fourth, regarding **transparency**, the understandings and uses of, and challenges relating to, the NQF Level Descriptors as learning outcomes need to be understood and existing good practices expanded. Work on the NLRD, the registration on the NQF of qualifications, part-qualifications, Professional Bodies and professional designations, Qualification Verification Services, national Foreign Qualification Evaluation and Advisory Services, NQF advocacy, and NQF and career advice services already progressing apace needs to continue and to be strengthened where needed to promote both transparency and administrative justice.

Fifth, regarding **simplification of the NQF**, management of the proliferation of qualifications and the de-registration of qualifications and part-qualifications not used needs to be prioritised. Programmes that have meaning in workplaces need to be recognised. While already showing progress, implementation and monitoring of the articulation framework, quality assurance systems and the suite of NQF policies need to be further strengthened.

Sixth, for effective implementation and further development of the NQF, the three main systemic **levers need to be coordinated**, namely planning, quality and funding.

Seventh, it is recommended that **a working group** made up of representatives from each of the main NQF partners be established to develop integrated differentiated indicators for the next NQF impact study. The support of the CEO Committee would be useful in this regard. The differentiated indicators required to show the footprints of NQF policy implementation under the NQF Act, and how the indicators can be integrated, need to be specified by SAQA after consultation with the Quality Councils. The research that needs to be conducted – *what* is to be researched, and *how* it is to be researched – in order to report against these indicators in the time period agreed, needs to be planned.

# 1. Introduction: Assessing the effectiveness and impact of the South African NQF

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The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa was established in the post-*apartheid* rebuilding of the country after 1994, in line with the Constitution, as the means to integrate a racially divided and unequal education and training system. It was also a means to overcome the class-related divides between the status of differing forms of learning such as academic learning, experiential learning, education, training and indigenous knowledge. In 1994, small sections of the population had access to the strong parts of the system, while the majority had to navigate institutions varying greatly in quality and with no single unified way of mapping the system. World-class and officially recognised institutions existed alongside their inferior and fly-by-night counterparts.

From the start the South African NQF sought to be a single integrated system that aimed to enhance access, redress, mobility within the system, and the quality and transparency of the system, for the benefit of all learners in the country (RSA 1995, 2008c).

## ***Why evaluate the impact of the NQF?***

After 20 years of democracy, South Africa has made progress in establishing a fairer society. However, widespread poverty, inequality and unemployment remain. Although South Africa's performance in international studies is steadily improving over time, the country is still positioned at relatively low levels in international comparability studies such as the *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (Mullis *et al.* 2001, 2006 and *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS 2008, 2011). The country does not have the artisan skills it needs. Throughputs in Higher Education, while moving steadily in the desired directions, are slower than the ideal. There are widespread complaints about the quality of Basic Education.

Assessing the impact of the NQF is important to ensure the best use of resources – human, financial and infrastructural – to achieve nationally desired objectives for social justice within the country and for South Africa's effective participation in the world.

## ***SAQA's mandate and evaluating the impact of the NQF***

The National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008 (RSA 2008c: Section 13[k(i)-(ii)]) requires SAQA to: "Conduct or commission investigations on issues of importance to the development and implementation of the NQF, including periodic studies of the impact of the NQF on South African education, training and employment" and "publish findings of the investigations". The present report presents work done by SAQA between 2012-2014, with inputs from the key NQF partners, towards assessing the effectiveness and impact of the NQF. A *post-hoc* analysis of the overall impact of the NQF was conducted, with a particular focus on shifts under the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995) and under the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008) towards achievement of the NQF objectives.

## ***Focus of the study***

The central question addressed by this NQF Impact Study is: What impact has the NQF had on education and training in South Africa and on systemic integration, transparency, quality, redress, and learner access and progression in particular?

This opening chapter of the NQF Impact Study report has five sub-sections. In the first, the structure and services of the South African NQF are described. In the second, some metaphors for understanding the NQF in the country are presented. Third, the evolution of the South African NQF is noted, as related developments have a bearing on the study. Fourth, the methodology employed and why the

particular approach was selected, and research questions are sketched. Lastly, the chapters in the report are outlined for ease of navigation by the reader.

## 1.1 What is the South African NQF?

Following the description in the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008 (RSA 2008c), the South African NQF is a single integrated education and training system made up of three differentiated and coordinated NQF Sub-Frameworks. Its objectives are to:

- a) create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- b) facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;
- c) enhance the quality of education and training; and
- d) accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities.

The objectives of the NQF are designed to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large (RSA 2008c). As well as addressing past discrimination, the NQF is associated with avoiding unfair discrimination on an ongoing basis.

SAQA and the Quality Councils must seek to achieve the objectives of the NQF by:

- (1) developing, fostering and maintaining an integrated and transparent national framework for the recognition of learning achievements;
- (2) ensuring that South African qualifications meet appropriate criteria, determined by the Minister as contemplated in Section 8 of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), and are internationally comparable; and
- (3) ensuring that South African qualifications are of an acceptable quality.

In other words, SAQA and the Quality Councils must work towards systemic integration and transparency, quality and international comparability, as well as redress and learner access, success and progression in the education and training system. All of these entities – while some have independence and autonomy, are *obliged to work together and integrate their work into the whole* integrated system desired.

The South African NQF is unusual in that it encompasses all education and training sectors in the country as well as a relatively comprehensive range of structures and services. Established and emergent structures and processes are detailed here.

### 1.1.1 NQF structures

The South African NQF encompasses all education and training sectors in the country, the development of qualifications and quality assurance work, and interventions to enhance access to and progression within the system. It comprises three coordinated NQF Sub-Frameworks, each overseen by a Quality Council as follows:

- The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) is overseen by Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (DHET 2013a).
- The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) is overseen by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) (DHET 2013a).
- The Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) is overseen by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) (DHET 2014a).

Each Sub-Framework is made up of a grid of qualifications as shown in Figure 1. Each of the Sub-Frameworks is further elaborated upon in Chapter 6, where each Quality Council provides an account



of the evolution and impact of its work.

**Figure 1: The South African NQF**

NQF Sub-Framework/ Quality Council	NQF Level	NQF Sub-Framework and qualification type		NQF Sub-Framework/ Quality Council
Higher Education Qualifications Sub- Framework (HEQSF)/ Council on Higher Education (CHE)	10	Doctoral Degree Doctoral Degree (Professional)	-	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)
	9	Master's Degree Master's Degree	-	
	8	Bachelor Honours Degree Postgraduate Diploma Bachelor's Degree	Occupational Certificate Level 8	
	7	Bachelor's Degree Advanced Diploma	Occupational Certificate Level 7	
	6	Diploma Advanced Certificate	Occupational Certificate Level 6	
	5	Higher Certificate	Occupational Certificate Level 5 <sup>5</sup>	
General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub- Framework (GFETQSF)/ Umalusi	4	National Certificate <sup>1</sup>	Occupational Certificate Level 4	
	3	Intermediate Certificate <sup>2</sup>	Occupational Certificate Level 3	
	2	Elementary Certificate <sup>3</sup>	Occupational Certificate Level 2	
	1	General Certificate <sup>4</sup>	Occupational Certificate Level 1	

**Legend:**

1. Umalusi issues National Certificates for the SC, SC (Colleges), NSC, NCV, NASCA, NACVA (and N#, which is currently under revision).
2. Umalusi issues Intermediate Certificates for the NSC (Grade 11), NCV Level 3 and Intermediate Certificate of Education (ICE) (and N2, which is currently under revision).
3. Umalusi issues Elementary Certificates for the NSC (Grade 10), NCV Level 2, and Elementary Certificate of Education (ECE) (and N1, which is currently under revision).
4. Umalusi issues General Certificates for the General Certificate of Education (GCE), General Education and Training Certificate: ABET (GETC: ABET), and General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA).
5. The N4-N6 qualifications located at NQF Level 5 are currently under revision.  
- No qualifications have been determined at these levels on the OQSF as yet.

The South African NQF is however far more than these structures alone. It embraces a number of other tools, processes, communities of practice and integrating structures.

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is the legally mandated custodian of the NQF (RSA 1995, 2008c). SAQA's leadership and oversight roles involve advancing the objectives of the NQF in line with the South African Constitution, overseeing NQF development and coordinating the three NQF Sub-Frameworks that are managed by the Quality Councils.

## 1.1.2 NQF tools, policies and services

SAQA is mandated (RSA 1995, 2008c) to develop a number of NQF tools, policies and services towards NQF implementation and development, each of which requires elaboration against which progress is assessed.

Importantly, NQF tools and policies need to be developed collaboratively with the Quality Councils (RSA 2008c). While SAQA plays a leadership, oversight and coordinating role (RSA *ibid.*), collaboration is built, via legislation, into the system. The twin macro-level goals of allowing for differentiated approaches and qualifications in the different Sub-Framework contexts, and coordinating the different aspects within a single integrated system, can be seen at the micro-level of individual policy and criteria documents.

### 1.1.2.1 NQF Level Descriptors

The 10 levels in the South African NQF each have a Level Descriptor, a description of learning achievements or outcomes that are appropriate for qualifications at that level (SAQA 2012a). The purposes of the NQF Level Descriptors are to ensure coherence in learning, and to enable allocation of qualifications to particular levels in order to assess their comparability (SAQA *ibid.*).

Each Level Descriptor speaks to ten competencies, which are differentiated as they progress from one level to the next (SAQA 2012a). The rationale for the Level Descriptors is to provide a basic and general scaffold from which more specific descriptors can be developed by practitioners working within the three NQF Sub-Framework contexts.

### 1.1.2.2 Policy and Criteria for Registering NQF-aligned qualifications on the NQF

After consultation with the Quality Councils, SAQA must develop and implement policy and criteria for the development, registration and publication of qualifications and part-qualifications (RSA 2008c: Clause 13[1][h(i)]).

The *Policy and Criteria for the Registration of Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the NQF* (SAQA 2013c) document sets out the principles and criteria SAQA applies when it registers qualifications and part-qualifications on the NQF. The document is premised on general NQF principles. For example, qualifications and part-qualifications must include mechanisms for *alternative access* via Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)<sup>4</sup>. *Learner progression* needs to be made possible by linking part to whole qualifications and specifying the learning pathways of which they are part. Routes that learners can follow within and between the NQF Sub-frameworks need to be made clear. Requirements for sector relevance, coherence, clarity of learning outcomes and assessment, and international comparability speak to the *quality* of qualifications.

Education and training providers can submit proposed qualifications and part-qualifications to a Quality Council for review towards registration on the NQF. Qualifications and part-qualifications submitted by the Quality Councils to SAQA for registration are subject to mutual agreement that each meets the general registration criteria. This process ensures alignment with NQF objectives and enables the differentiated approaches of the respective Quality Councils.

Use of the registration policy and processes is analysed in Chapter 4 and linked to systemic integration.

<sup>4</sup> Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) involves the recognition, mediation and assessment of learning obtained non-formally and informally.

### **1.1.2.3 Policy and Criteria for Implementing the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) and assessment**

SAQA is also mandated to develop, after consultation with the Quality Councils, policy and criteria<sup>5</sup> for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) and assessment (RSA 2008c: Clause 13[1][h(iii)]).

#### *1.1.2.3.1 Policy and Criteria for Implementing the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)*

Two types of RPL are recognised in the *Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning* (SAQA 2013a). One type of RPL provides for alternative access routes into programmes of learning for registered qualifications and part-qualifications, for those not meeting formal entry requirements. The other type of RPL provides for the awarding of credits towards a registered qualification.

Both types of RPL involve recognition of learning obtained informally or non-formally. RPL has the potential to facilitate redress, and to increase opportunities for access to formal learning<sup>6</sup> as it broadens conventional access routes. It also has the potential to aid learner progression through the system every time it speeds up further learning.

RPL processes are usually tied to particular learning or employment situations. Reaching those who are outside the education and training system, and who are not employed, poses a challenge as costs for RPL processes are typically borne by individuals as well as organisations. The *Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign* and courses offered as part of Worker Education nationally are two of the initiatives developed to reach those outside the system.

Since RPL has been a focus within NQF policy for 18 years, it is important to assess progress made to date. Related developments are analysed in the closing sections of Chapter 3.

#### *1.1.2.3.2 Policy for Implementing Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)*

Overarching policies for CAT and assessment were approved by the SAQA Board in July 2014, bringing into being, for the first time in South Africa's history, a national *Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer* (SAQA 2014b).

CAT policy provides for credit accumulation and credit transfer, to help learners to move around, within or across institutions of learning, and to access work. CAT differs from RPL in that it deals with credits obtained in formal learning contexts. RPL is about recognising learning obtained informally and non-formally in the course of living and working.

According to the CAT policy (SAQA 2014b), credits previously obtained by learners can be used under specific conditions for different qualifications, or towards the same qualifications in different departments or institutions. The CAT policy (SAQA 2014b: Clause 15[a]), embodies the NQF principle of "access for success" and bridging courses are encouraged to address gaps in learning. Credit transfer – as for RPL – must be built into qualification design. Where there are differences in prerequisites, learners may be required to do "supplementary" work before credits are awarded (SAQA 2014b: Clause 15[d]). The rules, regulations and any register of precedents which inform CAT decisions must be valid, fair, reliable and transparent (SAQA 2014b: Clause 15[e]).

Education and training providers and professional bodies need to implement CAT in line with the NQF Sub-Framework CAT policies developed by the Quality Councils, which in turn are aligned to national CAT policy (SAQA 2014b). Providers need to demonstrate CAT practices in their quality reviews, and to

<sup>5</sup> The status of these policies is that of legal documents; their implementation is mandatory.

<sup>6</sup> Formal learning as prescribed in formal entry requirements.

provide career advice services that make CAT opportunities known to learners. The three Quality Councils need to develop linkages so that learners can progress within and between the NQF Sub-Frameworks. This work includes promoting the collaborative development of curriculum and qualifications pathways. SAQA plays a mediating role, supportively alerting institutions to unfair or exclusionary CAT practices, which it can publish (SAQA *ibid.*).

Two types of articulation are recognised in the CAT policy (SAQA 2014b). *Systemic articulation* is based on legislation, national policy and formal requirements, including within and between the Sub-Frameworks of the NQF, and the steering mechanisms available to the State, such as funding and planning within the education and training system (SAQA 2014 *ibid.*). *Specific articulation* is based on formal and informal agreements within the educational and training system, mostly between two or more institutions, and is guided by Sub-Framework and national policies, and accreditation principles.

Both RPL and CAT play important roles in enhancing learner access to education and training, and progression within the system.

#### ***1.1.2.3.3 Policy and Criteria for Designing Assessment in the Context of the NQF***

Overarching national Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment (SAQA 2014a) were developed in a context where a range of national assessment policies already existed.

The purpose of this policy is to enhance the quality of education and training by setting minimum standards for effective, valid, reliable, fair, transparent and appropriate assessment in accordance with the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). Importantly, it seeks to provide guidance. It contains detail that is meant to be instructive and enabling. Its aims are to build shared understanding and a holistic approach to assessment, to emphasise a range of appropriate types of assessment, to draw attention to the content of assessment, and to provide criteria and guidelines for each of the assessment principles noted.

As is the case with SAQA's other national policies, the policy elaborates general principles and criteria to facilitate differing sectoral approaches in a way that does not restrict innovation and that is aligned with NQF principles and international good practice. The Quality Councils are encouraged to take their specific contexts into account when implementing it.

#### ***1.1.2.4 Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation in the context of the South African NQF***

The main aims of the *Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008* (SAQA 2012b) include promotion of public understanding of and trust in professions, by establishing a nationally regulated system for recognising professional bodies and registering professional designations within the NQF context. The aims include encouraging social responsibility within the professional services community, pride across all professions and protection of the public against malpractice (SAQA *ibid.*). They also include building self-esteem and encouraging internationally recognised good practice, and the implementation of continuing professional development (SAQA *ibid.*).

The policy and criteria document (SAQA 2012b) has the potential to enhance quality and transparency in education, training, development and work, and through these aspects, the movement of individuals through the system. Links are made in Chapter 4 between implementation of the policy and criteria, and systemic integration.

#### ***1.1.2.5 System of Collaboration***

The *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) was developed collaboratively by the NQF partners to guide

relations between SAQA and the three Quality Councils in ways that promote constructive cooperation in line with the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) and the *Regulations for Resolving a Dispute in terms of the NQF Act* (Government Gazette 33483, August 2010).

SAQA and the Quality Councils, through the mechanism of the System for Collaboration (SAQA 2011c), *inter alia* agreed to:

- act reasonably and in good faith;
- avoid or prevent conflict;
- contain conflict if it occurs;
- maintain communication;
- communicate and adhere to confidentiality;
- declare disputes only when all procedures for preventing them have been exhausted,
- expedite the resolution of a dispute;
- encourage intellectual scrutiny and collaboration in order to advance debates on national, continental and international levels;
- be willing to take risks for the greater good;
- keep the social purposes of the NQF in mind;
- have a willingness to find new language in relation to old issues;
- show appreciation for achievements and difficulties;
- work across borders and boundaries;
- recognise and embrace differences;
- be accountable to one another; and
- work together on improving service delivery.

The *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) includes six integrating structures:

#### *1.1.2.5.1 Ministry of Higher Education and Training*

The Minister of Higher Education and Training (MHET) has overall responsibility for the NQF, SAQA and the Quality Councils, and plays an integrating role. The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is responsible for executing the decisions of the Minister.

#### *1.1.2.5.2 SAQA Board and Quality Councils*

The SAQA Board and Quality Councils established by the NQF Act (Act 67 of 2008), make up the second set of integrating structures. As determined by the NQF Act, the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of SAQA and the Quality Councils are members of the SAQA Board and Quality Councils. When serving on the SAQA Board or Quality Councils, the CEOs are “required to participate without prejudice or favour towards any specific Board or Council” (SAQA 2011c: Clause 9[d]).

#### *1.1.2.5.3 NQF Forum and Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee*

The third and fourth integrating structures are the NQF Forum and Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee. The NQF Forum comprises the MHET, the Director-General of Higher Education and Training, the CEOs of SAQA and the Quality Councils, and Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee members (SAQA *op.cit.*: Clause 10). The Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee was established by the Director-General of Higher Education and Training (DG DHET) with the agreement of the Director-General of Basic Education. Its members were chosen by the DG DHET (SAQA *op.cit.*: Clause 12). The purpose of the NQF Forum is high-level and strategic – it convenes four times a year, and is cancelled when there are no substantial issues to address. The role of the Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee is to coordinate the NQF responsibilities of the two departments, and to advise the DG DHET and the NQF Forum (SAQA 2011c).

#### 1.1.2.5.4 CEO Committee

The fifth integrating structure is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Committee comprising the CEOs of SAQA and the Quality Councils. The purpose of the CEO Committee is to develop high-level understanding of the inter-relationships between the three NQF Sub-Frameworks, and between the three Sub-Frameworks and the NQF (SAQA 2011c: Clause 11). It is a permanent sub-committee of the NQF Forum and is chaired by SAQA's CEO.

#### 1.1.2.5.5 Working Groups

Working groups, the sixth integrating structure, are set up by the CEO Committee for specific projects identified by the Committee, and chaired by SAQA or Quality Council staff nominated to do so by the Committee (SAQA 2011c: 13).

#### 1.1.2.5.6 Achievements and challenges regarding the System of Collaboration

The *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) was designed to promote systemic integration. The setting up of its structures is a measure of systemic integration— such structures were not present previously.

#### 1.1.2.6 NQF Implementation Framework

Like the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c), the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011) was developed to enhance systemic integration. It was developed under the guidance of the NQF Forum and is 'owned' by the CEO Committee (SAQA 2011: Clause 3). It identifies the processes by means of which SAQA and the Quality Councils will ensure full realisation of their roles regarding the implementation and further development of the NQF (SAQA *ibid.*: Clause 4).

Six priorities were identified for the 2011-2015 period (SAQA *ibid.*: Clauses 6-28):

- Completion of the transition from the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) to the NQF Act (RSA 2008c).
- Developing a System of Collaboration between SAQA and the Quality Councils.
- Coordinating the three NQF Sub-Frameworks.
- Establishing standard setting and quality assurance mechanisms in each of the Sub-Framework contexts.
- Completing the operationalisation of the progression and articulation apparatus of the NQF.
- Developing and improving the information and communication apparatus of the NQF.

#### 1.1.2.7 Achievements and challenges regarding the System of Collaboration

Three questions are of central importance to assessing the impact of the NQF: What has been achieved in relation to the *System of Collaboration* and the *NQF Implementation Framework*? What are the remaining challenges in this regard? And what impact have these two items had on the system?

The structures specified in the *System of Collaboration* were set up in 2011, and have operated as specified in the document (SAQA 2011c). It is worth looking at systemic achievements in relation to the six priorities identified in the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011). Each is addressed in the sections that follow.

##### 1.1.2.7.1 Transition from the SAQA to the NQF Act

The requirements for the transition from the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) to the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) included a coordinated effort from all the NQF partners, and secretariat support from SAQA (RSA 2011b: Clause 7); amendments to NQF legislation (RSA *ibid.*: Clause 8); and reviews of the GFETQSF, HEQSF, OQSF and related structural adjustments within SAQA and the Quality Councils (RSA *ibid.*: Clauses 10-13).

All of these developments were achieved (see Chapter 6) but were achieved later than expected. The

NQF Act-aligned GFETQSF and HEQSF were determined in 2013, one year later than projected, and the OQSF two years after the planned date. Structural adjustments to achieve these deliverables within SAQA included the establishment of cross-directorate working teams such as the Policy Project Group. The greatest structural changes occurred in the QCTO, which had to be constituted as a new organisation.

#### *1.1.2.7.2 Developing a System of Collaboration between SAQA and the Quality Councils*

The *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) was developed collaboratively once the QCTO Council had been established.

#### *1.1.2.7.3 Coordinating the three NQF Sub-Frameworks*

Coordination of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks required development of the NQF Level Descriptors and policies for registering qualifications on the NQF, assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), and recognising Professional Bodies and professional designations (SAQA 2011: Clause 18).

The Level Descriptors and above policies have all been developed and are known to be strong documents with wide buy-in from implementers (see Sections 4, 3.8.4 and 3.8.5). They were not however all accomplished by the planned date of 2012. The Level Descriptors and policy for recognising Professional Bodies were published in 2012, and their implementation commenced in that year. The policies for registering qualifications on the NQF and for RPL were published the following year. Implementation of RPL continued in line with the new policy from 2010. The policies for assessment and CAT were finalised towards the end of 2014. Planning for their implementation is under way.

There was a measure of uncertainty for policy implementers such as Professional Bodies, the providers of education and training, SETAs and others while these policies were being developed. While these members of the NQF family continued to use the policies that they had been using under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), and to participate in NQF Act-related activities, they knew that changes were imminent. On the other hand, the policy development processes involved an element of maturity in the sense the NQF partners were working on the basis of experience gained while implementing the SAQA Act, in dialogue with each other, and in a way that took along the role-players from across the system.

The current challenge is to continue this collaborative work into full implementation across the board. There are islands of good practice in relation to each of the policies, and in some cases these islands have expanded to include wide reach (see Chapters 4, 5, 6). These developments need to continue.

#### *1.1.2.7.4 Establishing standard setting and quality assurance mechanisms in each of the Sub-Framework contexts*

In the five years since the establishment of the QCTO, the three Quality Councils have set up or aligned their standard setting and quality assurance mechanisms as required. Details are presented in Chapter 6. These developments were to have been completed by 2013 but were accomplished by 2014. Chapter 6 provides the background which explains the timelines.

#### *1.1.2.7.5 Completing the operationalisation of the progression and articulation apparatus of the NQF*

The requirements for completing the operationalisation of the progression and articulation apparatus of the NQF are less clearly specified in the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011) than are the other five priorities. The requirements for a “national careers advisory service” and that “professional bodies must be recognised by SAQA and their designations registered on the NQF” (SAQA *ibid.*: Clauses 24-25) are clear. The requirements that “the new progression apparatus must be completed” and “must include mechanisms for ensuring that learners are able to progress within the learning system

and along their chosen career paths” (SAQA *ibid.*: Clause 23) are far less clear, and are difficult to achieve. Clarity regarding what these items mean, and how they are to be achieved, need to be developed.

While there were achievements in terms of building clarity and common understanding in relation to progression (see Sections 1.1.2, 1.3, 1.4.1, 4, 5.5 and 6), the ‘progression and articulation apparatus of the NQF’ is not complete. Related achievements include the determination of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks (details in Sections 1.3 and 6), development of the suite of policies needed to implement the NQF in line with the NQF Act (Section 1.1.2), national career advice services (Section 5.5), the development and implementation of policy to recognise Professional Bodies (Section 4.1), research and development work to build common understanding and buy-in around articulation (Section 4.3), mapping of the pathways available (Section 4.2), commencing work on developing the relational agency needed (Section 1.4.1), establishing a Ministerial Task Team for Articulation, and the work of this task team.

The content of the Articulation Framework needs to be finalised and implemented as a matter of urgency, and the development of the relational agency to implement it needs to continue. One year was allowed in the *NQF Implementation Framework*, between the determination of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks and completion of NQF policies on the one hand and completion of this apparatus on the other. One year proved insufficient. As noted, much progress has been made and these initiatives need to be consolidated.

#### *1.1.2.7.6 Further developing and improving the information and communication apparatus of the NQF*

The improvement of the databases of the Quality Councils and the further development of the NLRD are discussed in detail in Section 3.1. Although some work remains to be done, there has been steady development in this regard since 2009 (see Section 3.1); the gaps are closing. The larger reports issued to stakeholders are detailed in Section 3.4.4.

#### *1.1.2.7.7 Overarching comment on achievements and challenges regarding the System of Collaboration and NQF Implementation Framework*

In summary, in the five years since the promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), the structures needed to implement the NQF were set up and operational; the transition from the SAQA Act to the NQF Act was accomplished, a *System of Collaboration* and the suite of policies needed to implement the NQF in line with the NQF Act were developed; the three NQF Sub-Frameworks were determined and the standard setting and quality assurance mechanisms of the three Quality Councils were established or consolidated, as needed. Some of these developments were accomplished in the time frames specified; others required an additional year or two.

While developments have been accomplished regarding the progression and articulation apparatus of the NQF and its databases, more remains to be done. On one hand, the knock-on effect of the extended timelines of related aspects of NQF development has had an effect. On the other hand, the time frames originally specified, giving the extent of systemic development needed to meet these targets, were too short.

#### **1.1.2.8 Communication and Advisory Services**

Advisory services and advocacy initiatives are important tools for NQF development and systemic cohesion. The first has the potential to provide advice, information and assistance to NQF stakeholders and the public. The second can potentially create public awareness and common understanding around what is available regarding education, training and development.



#### 1.1.2.8.1 Career-related advisory services

Before 1994 career-related advice was organisation-based and differed widely across contexts<sup>7</sup>. This kind of advice remains available to the public. In addition there has been an NQF Help Desk since 2009. While the aim of this service has been to assist the public with NQF-related matters, SAQA, following an agreement with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), developed and implemented a national Career Advice Services (CAS) Project. This service was located at SAQA between 2010 and 2014, and included walk-in services for the public as well as assistance via telephone, email and SMS; radio broadcasts; public career festivals; workshops and information sessions. The impact of these services is discussed at the end of Chapter 5.

The Career Advice Services Project – currently known as the Career Development Services (CDS) – has been located within the DHET since 1 October 2014. SAQA continues to provide information on the NQF through the NQF Advisory Services, to assist stakeholders and the public with general and specific information on the NQF, as well as to improve understanding of the relationships between the various apparatuses of the education and training systems and the world of work.

#### 1.1.2.8.2 Advocacy-related services

An NQF advocacy initiative was set up in SAQA in 2008 aimed at building understanding of the NQF. It included developing printed materials of various types, and workshops and other events for NQF stakeholders.

NQF research conferences, workshops, colloquia, seminars and dialogues are organised to spread understanding about the NQF and update the public around the latest developments regarding systemic integration, articulation, access, redress and quality.

Recent large NQF research events included:

- The *NQF Conference: Towards a map of NQF-related research*, held in Johannesburg 2010, aimed to enable the sharing of research focused on educational quality, redress, access and success, and systemic integration.
- The *National RPL Workshop: Bridging and expanding existing islands of excellent practice*, held in Pretoria in 2010, aimed to identify the main barriers to implementing RPL in the contexts of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks.
- The *National RPL Conference: Bridging and expanding existing islands of excellent practice*, held in Johannesburg in 2011, aimed to address the three main challenges regarding the implementation of RPL, namely, the resourcing of RPL, the effective delivery of RPL and the quality assurance of RPL.
- The *NQF Conference: Building articulation and integration*, held in Johannesburg in 2013, aimed to enable the sharing of research relating to progression pathways in the system for education, training, development and work.
- The *National RPL Conference: Tried and tested, tools, templates*, held in Johannesburg in 2014, aimed to share successful RPL initiatives and tools to expand islands of excellent practice.

#### 1.1.2.9 The National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), Verification Services, Foreign Qualification Evaluation Services

The main services that seek to make NQF-related information available to the public include the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), Verification Services and Foreign Qualification Evaluation Services.

<sup>7</sup> See SAQA's 11<sup>th</sup> Chairperson's Lecture 'Development of career development services within and international context and reflections on progress made in South Africa' (SAQA 2013g) for details on the development of career advice services.

#### *1.1.2.9.1 The National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)*

The National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) is the electronic management information system of the NQF. This comprehensive system integrates various elements which may be held in several separate systems in other countries (Shapiro 2013). Importantly, its major component is a relational database. It makes the relationships between parts of the system visible, and its information can be used to enhance relationships between NQF stakeholders. Categories of data housed within the NLRD include but are not limited to:

- all qualifications and part-qualifications registered on the NQF;
- all recognised professional bodies with their registered designations;
- information on quality assurance bodies accredited to quality assure particular qualifications, and on qualifications registered but still needing quality assurers;
- education and training providers accredited to offer registered qualifications and part-qualifications; and
- data on learners' enrolments and achievements for all studies in South Africa relating to qualifications and part-qualifications, as well as learnerships.

All NQF-related information is captured, stored and managed within the NLRD. Different groups of stakeholders are able to access it. The NLRD is both a register and a transactional system – stakeholders upload data, processed data can be accessed (Shapiro 2013). Personal learner achievement-related information is carefully managed through controlled access and fair and transparent processes. SAQA uses the information in the NLRD to identify trends in the education and training system.

The NLRD is used by decision makers and policy developers, education and training providers, learners and the public in general. The intention is to maintain NQF-related data in a relational form – in a way in which the different datasets can be related to each other – and to enhance transparency in the system.

Detailed information regarding datasets in the NLRD, development of the NLRD over time and use of the NLRD is provided in Chapter 3 (Section 3.1).

#### *1.1.2.9.2 Verification Services*

The Verification Services involve verification of the authenticity of learning achievements in South Africa<sup>8</sup>. Learner records held in the NLRD and in other formats can be queried by institutions of learning, employers and potential employers to verify whether individuals possess the qualifications that they claim.

This service has been used by both public and private sector employers to verify the qualifications of existing employees as well as prospective employees applying for advertised positions. More details regarding the service and its use are provided in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3).

#### *1.1.2.9.3 Foreign Qualification Evaluation Services*

SAQA's Directorate for Foreign Qualifications Evaluation and Advisory Services (DFQEAS) evaluates foreign qualifications in order to ascertain their authenticity and determine their equivalence on the South African NQF. These evaluations always include a verification component. SAQA works with both national and international counterparts and partners to fulfil this function.

SAQA foreign qualification evaluations are used by employers to inform decisions regarding

<sup>8</sup> The Verification Services linked to the NLRD, offered by SAQA, exclude the verification of school-leaving certificates, which are verified by Umalusi: Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training.

prospective employees, by the Department of Home Affairs for the issuing of work visas, and by institutions of learning for admissions.

The aim regarding the services provided by DFQEAS, as is the case for the Verification Services, is to enhance access to education and training and/or work, and progression within the system for education, training, development and work. Use of these services is elaborated in Chapter 5 (Section 5.4).

#### **1.1.2.10 Integrating NQF structures, tools and services for beneficiary gain**

Systemic integration has been effected via structures, policies, processes, agentive communities of practice and goals. The NQF objectives and the immediate goals outlined in the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011) were presented in Section 1.1. The section also describes NQF structures, policies, processes and communities of practice – and points to other sections in the report that show their development and/ or impact over time, such as the synthesis provided in Chapter 4. In Chapter 6, each Quality Council – in describing the evolution of its practices – shows the extent to which Sub-Framework initiatives have been shaped by the coordinating work in the *NQF Implementation Framework*.

Beneficiary gain is framed in the present report in terms of trends relating to redress, learner access, success and progression, and systemic transparency (Chapters 3 and 5).

## **1.2 Metaphors for understanding the South African NQF**

Since the concept emerged in the 1980s, NQFs have been and continue to be developed. Over 140 of the world's 242 countries currently have NQFs<sup>9</sup>.

It is clear that NQFs mean different things in different communities of practice: NQFs are understood in a variety of ways.

Early conceptualisation of NQFs was based on two ideas, one being the English *competence-based* model where learners are assessed according to competencies they can demonstrate (Keevy and Bolton 2011), the other being founded partly on the Scottish *outcomes-based* approach of the 1990s (Young 2005). In this approach, aimed-for *learning outcomes* shape learning itself. A related view is that strong divisions between academic and vocational learning create barriers to learning, and that more integrated models are needed (Young *ibid.*).

It has also been argued that thinking around qualifications frameworks is situated in the context of neo-liberal policies emphasising the primary role of the private sector in economic development (Allais 2007, 2009, 2014). This argument however falls away when considering systems which use NQFs to integrate education and training systems, and to embed learning outcomes and lifelong learning within these integrated systems – where lifelong learning is understood to be holistic learning in the context of human and social development (Walters 2015; Walters and Daniels 2015).

In an attempt to convey the multi-dimensional nature of the NQF in the country, the sections that follow describe the South African NQF as a grid of qualifications, a device for communication, coordination and collaboration, and an activity system.

<sup>9</sup> Many countries with 'first generation' NQFs (such as England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) regularly engage with countries developing NQFs, thus supporting global advance of national, regional and even transnational qualifications frameworks. It appears that there are no instances in which countries commence and then halt NQF development. Clearly, NQF development is ongoing.

### 1.2.1 Grid or register of qualifications

In South Africa, the NQF is widely perceived as being a *register of qualifications*, where a grid of specified conceptual levels and types serve as a map for the positioning of qualifications and relationships between them (Keevy and Bolton 2011). The idea behind this conceptualisation is that the positioning of individual types of qualifications in the register aids learner mobility vertically between qualifications spanning levels increasing in conceptual, social and technological complexity, and horizontally from one type of qualification to another. In this understanding learner mobility is not facilitated by NQF levels in isolation. Rather, NQF levels are used in conjunction with associated policies relating to mechanisms for alternative access, and to the articulation across differing parts of the system.

Around the world, the scope of national qualifications frameworks as registers of qualifications may differ from being broad and covering all sectors in a system, to being more narrowly confined to particular sectors such as initial education, adult education and training, or vocational education (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2009).

The South African NQF is a comprehensive one, encompassing the whole education and training system. Seeing it as being just a register of qualifications has been described as adopting a narrow and ‘technicist’ approach (Isaacs 2011).

### 1.2.2 Device for communication, collaboration and coordination

Raffe’s (2009) typology of NQFs names three types of NQFs. First, a *communications framework* takes an existing education and training system as its starting point and aims to make it more transparent and easier to understand and use. Second, a *reforming framework*, while also taking an existing system as its starting point, aims to improve it in specific ways, for example by enhancing quality. Third, a *transformational framework* is one in which a proposed *future* system is used as the starting point.

The South African NQF does not fit neatly into any of these categorisations. From the start, it has contained elements of each of Raffe’s (2009) types – there have been elements of transformation and reform throughout. Given the extent of developments described by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) in Chapter 6, it could be argued that changes in the vocational sector have involved deep transformation. Umalusi’s inputs in Chapter 6 show the extensive reforms in the General and Further Education and Training sector. Reforms in the Higher Education sector are also sketched in that chapter. The introduction of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and the focus on access, redress, success, progression, transparency, systemic integration and benefits for the majority of learners in the country, showed a radical break with the pre-1994 segregated system, while elements of the existing system such as curriculum content of some disciplines remained in place.

The shift from the centralised development of qualifications and quality assurance under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), to the differentiated Sub-Framework approaches under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) can be seen as a move towards a *communications* model.

Since promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), the three Quality Councils have developed the three NQF Sub-Frameworks in different ways comprising differing qualifications in different forms, and have adopted different ways of carrying out quality assurance. The suite of NQF structures and policies described in Section 1.1 were designed to make the education and training system transparent and coherent, and to encourage access and opportunities for transfer and progression between learning programmes (Raffe 2009).

The South African NQF is still more than both grid and communication tool. It is a *dynamic* entity, simultaneously played out by a number of actors and organisations. It is evolving over time, and its ongoing implementation involves building continually on its strong features and improving its weaker

parts. The metaphor of an activity system is elaborated in detail as it is important to the methodology followed in the study.

### 1.2.3 Activity system

The idea of ‘socio-material’ (Fenwick 2010a, b, c) is useful as it links social development with the material contexts in which development takes place. The idea allows for realities where the social and the material ‘co-emerge’ and shape each other (Varela *et al.* 1991, cited in Fenwick 2010a).

These ideas are useful for the NQF Impact Study as the implementation of NQF policies is likely to take differing forms when implemented in different contexts, such as those of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks. How each policy is implemented in the respective Sub-Frameworks will be shaped by the actors operating in that context, and the collective actions taken will shape the impact it has.

These ideas are central in the study and have shaped the methodology followed (see Section 1.4). At times the ideas have helped SAQA to describe how it implements its mandate: NQF objectives are achieved via the tools and services of the NQF, as ‘recontextualised’ in the different Sub-Framework contexts with their communities of practice.

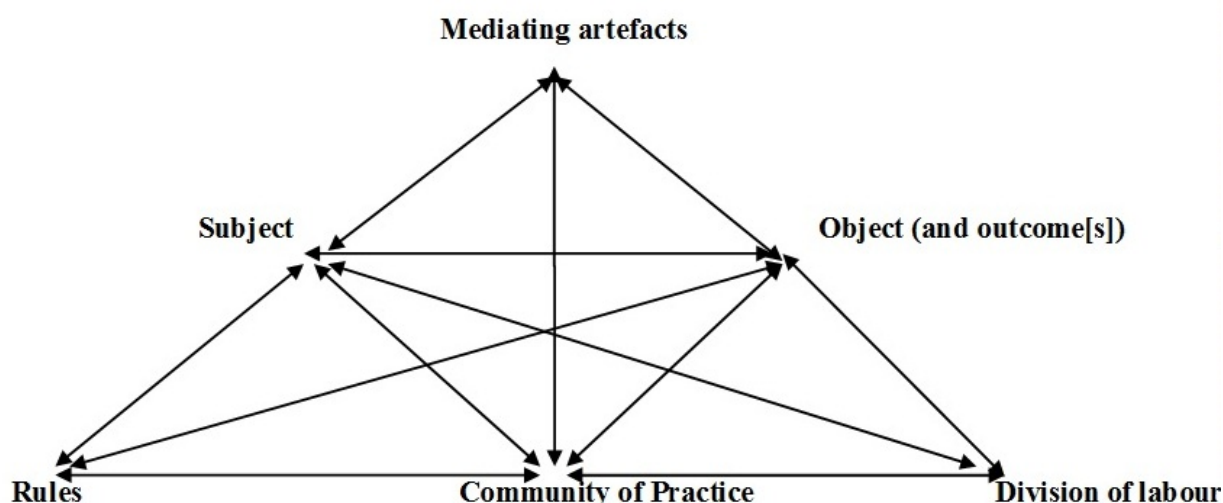
There is a cluster of theories working with the idea of socio-materiality, including *complexity theory*, *cultural-historical activity theory*, *actor-network theory* and others (Fenwick 2010b). What is common in these approaches, firstly, is that they tend to take whole systems (including human and material elements) into account (Fenwick *ibid.*). Secondly, the research conceptualised on the basis of these theories focuses on tracing the formations, and ongoing stabilisation and destabilisation of system elements (Fenwick *ibid.*). Thirdly, the approach understands human knowledge and learning as being embedded in material contexts (Fenwick *ibid.*).

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is elaborated here, because the analytical categories it provides – as illustrated in a wide range of research projects (such as Olvitt 2010) – were thought to be useful for the NQF Impact Study.

#### 1.2.3.1 Activity triangle

The *activity triangle* of Engeström *et al.* (1987) shows a network of relationships between a subject (individual or organisation) and its goals, and the mediating tools, rules, communities of practice and divisions of labour in its implementing context (Olvitt 2010). The arrows (see Figure 2) indicate directions of potential influence.

**Figure 2: CHAT ‘activity triangle’ (Engeström 1987)**



Engeström’s activity triangle provides a theoretical idea of what ‘activity’ incorporates. The two-way arrows show the dynamic nature of the nodes of the triangle and allow for what Engeström refers to as *expansive learning* – a useful tool for the study of new learning (Hardman 2008; Olvitt 2010).

Following Leontiev (1978), the ‘subject’ in an activity system can be an individual or an institution or other collective. The ‘object’ can be an individual goal or a collective outcome (Leontiev *ibid.*). The other elements of activity systems are explained in Table 1.

**Table 1: Elements of Activity Systems [excluding Subjects and Objects]**

<i>Tools</i>	Tools comprise anything used in the transformation process through which a subject achieves its object, including both material tools and tools for thinking. A tool mediates the relationship between the subject and the object. It can refer to a plan, a policy, an idea or other tools.
<i>Rules</i>	Rules are explicit and implicit norms, conventions and social relations within a community. Rules are imposed by ‘actors’ (individuals) in social groups, including larger organisational and professional communities.
<i>Communities of practice</i>	Communities of practice are groups of ‘actors’ (collectives) that share the same purposes and/ or values, and are bound by spoken/ documented or unspoken/ undocumented rules or criteria. Communities of practice mediate activities. Subjects can be members of multiple communities. Subjects can be positioned differently within communities of practice: leaders and the main members of a community of practice will subscribe most closely to the shared criteria; while others will participate more peripherally but this participation is still seen as being legitimate.
<i>Division of labour</i>	Division of labour refers to the allocation of responsibilities within or between collectives. Division of labour shows the organisation of a community in relation to the transformation process of the object into the outcome.

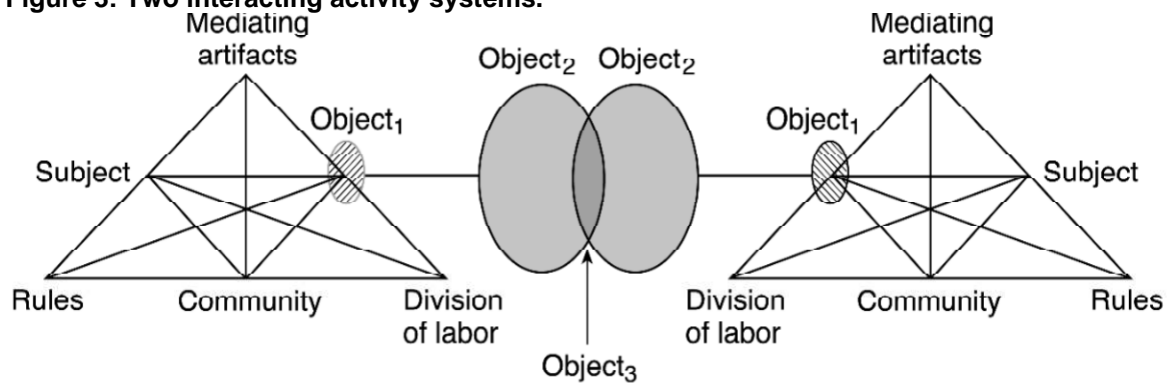
(Sources: Engeström 1987; Kuutti 1996 in Olvitt 2010)

The NQF can be seen as an activity system where SAQA or any of the Quality Councils could be seen as the subject, NQF implementation as the object, and NQF policies and communities as the mediating tools and agents. It is clear however, that this activity triangle is too simple. Hardman (2008), Mukute (2009), Masara (2010), Olvitt (2010), Mukute and Lotz-Sisitka (2011) and others have used the concept of the activity triangle to illustrate the mechanisms of how the actions of individuals or individual institutions are, as Olvitt (2010: 76) puts it, “bound up in networked interactions with other activity systems”.

### **1.2.3.2 Interacting activity systems**

The activity triangle or ‘second generation CHAT’ has been critiqued for not taking cultural diversity sufficiently into account (Engeström 2001). Third-generation CHAT addresses this shortcoming by providing tools to analyse the interaction between two or more *activity systems* (Engeström *ibid.*). The idea of two or more interacting activity systems is a useful way to see the South African NQF since each Sub-Framework can be seen as an activity system in its own right. Figure 3 illustrates the interaction of two activity systems, both of which have similar objects, but across which there is only partial overlap between the two objects.

**Figure 3: Two interacting activity systems.**



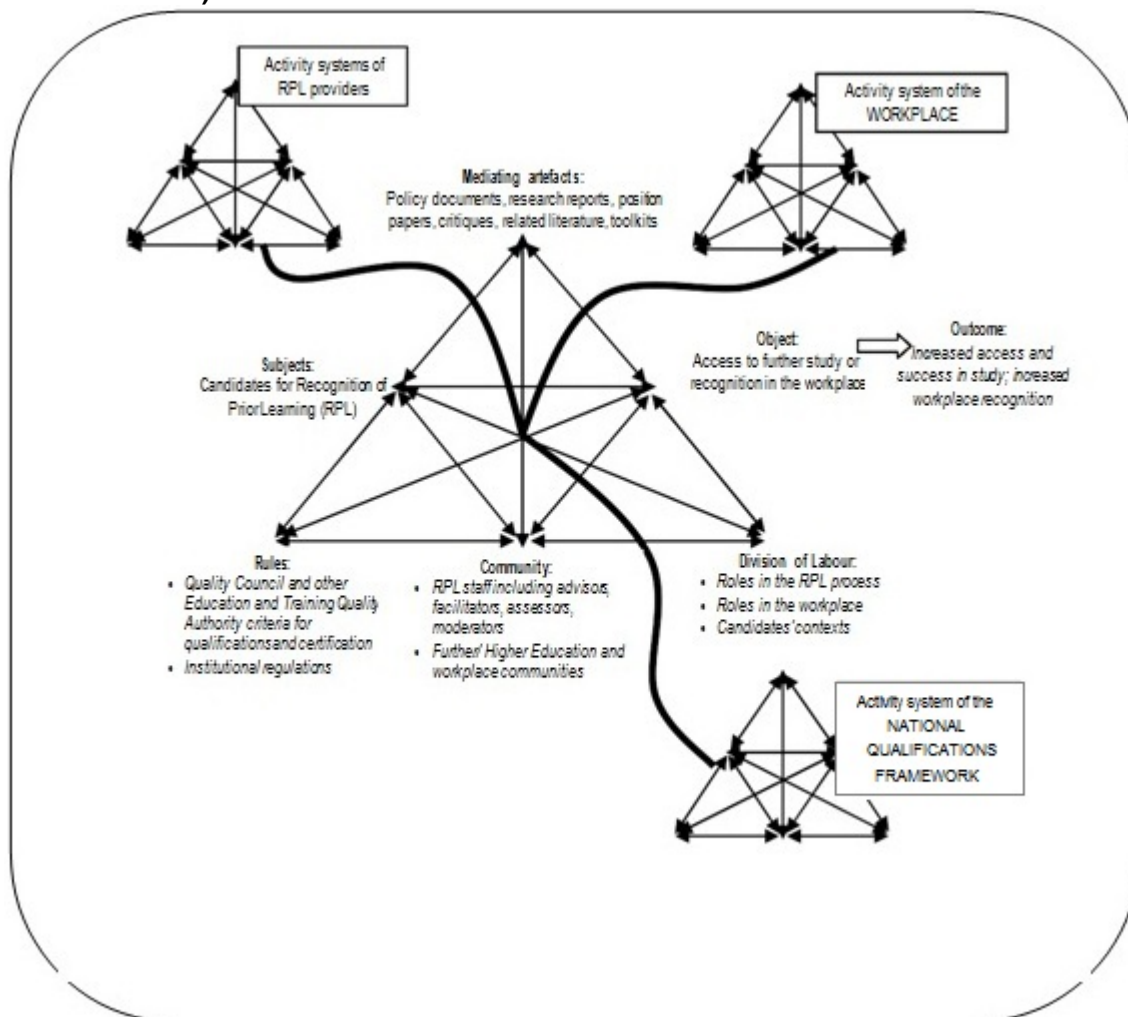
(Source: Engeström 2001)

The model in Figure 3 could be used to explain patterns in the implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy (SAQA 2013a).

In this example, one activity system could be the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) overseen by Umalusi and the other, the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) overseen by the Council on Higher Education (CHE). The object in each case would be the implementation of RPL. Achievement of the object in each case could take differing forms, with the overlap including things like alignment with the overarching *National Policy for the Implementation of RPL* (SAQA 2013a) imperatives, good RPL practice and some shared RPL advisors. The analysis could focus on the overlaps and differences in the objects achieved, and the overlaps and differences in tools, rules, communities of practice and divisions of labour associated with these patterns.

A similar analysis could include the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) and explore overlaps and differences between all three objects. Figure 4 below is based on a diagram developed by Olvitt (2010). It provides an example of how analytical categories from CHAT can be populated for use in analyses for assessing the impact of NQF policies. The example of implementing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy is again used.

**Figure 4: Example of third-generation CHAT ‘activity triangle’ showing the networking of differing activity systems for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) (after Engeström 2001, adapted from Olvitt 2010)**



It has been noted how the CHAT *activity triangle* and *interacting activity systems* could be used to understand the NQF as a dynamic system, and to analyse its impact. Because these ideas informed the NQF Impact Study, more detail is given in the following section, regarding the defining principles of the CHAT theory.

### 1.2.3.3 Five definitive CHAT principles

According to Engeström (2001: 136–137) five definitive principles summarise CHAT, as described below. First, the prime unit of analysis is *the collective*. This inter-connectedness does not negate the importance of individual action, or the actions of single organisations.

Second, *activity systems* are *multi-voiced*. That is, they are made up of multiple points of view, traditions and interests. This multi-layered reality is potentially a source of both tension and innovation.

Third, *activity systems* are formed and transformed over *extended periods of time*. Their realities and potential can only be understood in context, and the social and material are integral to each other. Activity systems can be analysed in terms of their subjects, objects, tools, rules, communities of practice and divisions of labour in different moments in time, and at different stages in their development.

Fourth, *contradictions* are integral parts of activity systems. Contradictions are seen as being sources of



learning, change and development and are inevitable in the functioning of any system. Contradictions are important as they present the system with opportunities for creative innovation in ways of thinking and doing.

Fifth, there is a possibility for *expansive learning* or *expansive transformation* in activity systems. As the contradictions in an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants or groups begin to question and deviate from established norms, sometimes moving into ‘collaborative envisioning’ and deliberate efforts towards collective change. Expansive transformation is accomplished when the objects and motives of an activity are re-conceptualised to embrace a wider range of possibilities than was previously the case. This constitutes a theory of change.

The full *expansive transformation* cycle is theorised as being made up of the seven steps shown in Figure 4 below. What comprises expansive learning is elaborated here, as the concepts can potentially explain the impact of the NQF.

#### 1.2.3.4 Theory of change: Expansive learning

When trying to understand *expansive learning*, there are four central questions that need to be addressed (Engeström 2001: 133), namely:

- Who is learning? How are they defined and located?
- Why do they learn? What is driving them to make the effort?
- What is being learned? What are the outcomes of the learning?
- How does learning take place? What are the key actions or processes linked to the learning?

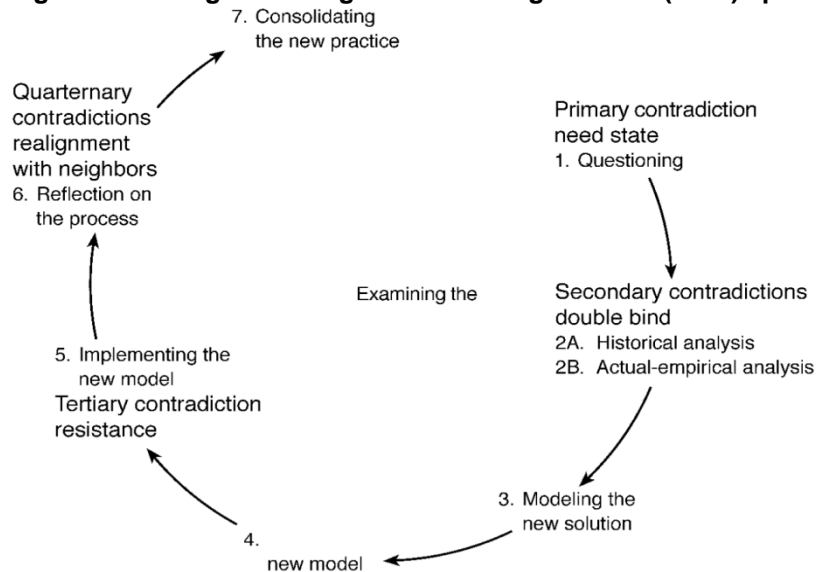
These four questions, when tabulated against the five central CHAT principles, can be used to create a matrix that is useful for analysing learning in a period of change. The matrix is shown in Table 2, as it is useful for analysing learning in the education and training system in South Africa as it changed to implement the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) and again to implement the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). In addition, it is argued that these changes in learning show the impact of the NQF.

**Table 2: Matrix for the analysis of *expansive learning* (Engeström 2001)**

Activity system as unit of analysis	Multi-voicedness	Historicity	Contradictions	Expansive cycles
Who are learning?				
Why do they learn?				
What do they learn?				
How do they learn?				

*Expansive learning* passes through a number of actions at different stages, creating a *cycle of transformation* (Engeström 2001: 152). Engeström’s (2001) *cycle of expansive learning* is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 5: Strategic learning actions in Engeström's (2001) spiral expansive learning**



In the expansive learning cycle, Engeström (2001) uses seven 'epistemic actions' in a spiral that expands outwards. However, multiple kinds of actions may take place at any time (Foot 2001). The seven actions are explained briefly here (Engeström 2001).

First, some aspects of the accepted practice and existing wisdom are questioned or criticised (*ibid.*).

Second, the situation is analysed by the questioners/ critics as they seek to understand the contradictions or gaps in existing practice. This analysis tends to take two forms. It may try to explain the situation by tracing its origin and evolution (historical analysis), or by constructing a picture of its 'systemic relations' (empirical analysis).

Third, attempts may be made to model new relationships in some publicly observable form.

Fourth, the new model may be critiqued towards understanding its dynamics, potential and limitations.

Fifth, the new model may be implemented in various ways with conceptual extensions.

Sixth, there is reflection on implementation of the new model and evaluation of its success.

Seventh, the new way of doing is consolidated into a new, stable (accepted) form of practice.

These ideas are applied in Chapter 7. It is worth expanding here on the idea of 'rules' for later use in the analysis in Chapter 7.

### **1.2.3.5 Expanded understanding of rules**

Bernstein's (1996) idea of a *pedagogic device* can be used to expand the category of *rules* in Engeström's (1987, 2001) theory regarding activity systems.

A central idea underlying Bernstein's *pedagogic device* is that communications relating to teaching and learning are often viewed as being neutral, or as being mere "carriers" or "relays" for "ideological messages" and "external power relations" (Bernstein 1996: 39). Bernstein opposes these commonly held views by distinguishing the carriers of communications, and the communications themselves.

According to Bernstein (1996), three interlinked types of rules operate in relation to each other in the pedagogic device or 'carriers' of messages relating to teaching and learning. First, there are '*distributive rules*', which "regulate the relationships between power, social, groups, forms of

consciousness and practice” (Bernstein *ibid.*: 48). Second, there are ‘*evaluative rules*’, which involve assessing the criteria transmitted in teaching and learning contexts (Bernstein *ibid.*). Third, there are *recontextualising rules* (Bernstein *ibid.*). Recontextualising rules are the principles that come into play when particular discourses (which could include policies) are re-ordered in the process of being taken from one context and applied in another context. Recontextualising rules operate when an activity is taken from its site of origin to its site of application, or when an activity moves from one site of application to another.

Analysing the distributive, evaluative and recontextualising rules at play when NQF policies are implemented across the three NQF Sub-Framework contexts has the potential to build understanding around power relations in these contexts, and the effects these relations have on trends associated with these contexts.

These theoretical concepts are used extensively in Chapter 7, in the meta-analysis of the impact of the NQF.

Section 1.1 addressed the nature of the South African NQF, posing the question: What is the South African NQF? It described the structures, tools and services making up the NQF in the country. In Section 1.2 three metaphors were presented towards understanding the South African NQF, and understanding the reasons for selecting the approach to assess its impact. In Section 1.3 a brief history of the South African NQF is presented, as this history affects its impact.

### **1.3 The South African NQF over time**

This brief history of the South African NQF is presented in three sub-sections – covering the early years, the period of review and developments since the promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) in 2009.

#### **1.3.1 The early years of the NQF in South Africa**

At the onset of democracy in South Africa the NQF was chosen as the vehicle to integrate the then-separate race-based education departments and other disparate parts of the education and training system, create equal opportunities for all people living in the country, and enhance quality and transparency. The SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995) ushered in a centralised outcomes-based system as a driver for integration, which would later become a contested policy issue.

One line of criticism focused on the tendency of ‘unit standards’<sup>10</sup> to fracture knowledge by dislocating it from its disciplinary bases, and from the communities of practice in which it had been generated (Allais 2007, 2009, 2014). While these critiques do not take into account how and where unit standards were used, and related successes, these views were and continue to be held by a small number of individuals<sup>11</sup>. This group needs to take cognisance of the fact that from the start, unit standards were developed and taken up by providers and learners in the occupational sector. Whole qualifications continued to be offered in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications, and the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework contexts. The differentiated approaches to the development, provision and quality assurance of qualifications in the three Sub-Framework contexts have been embraced and celebrated since the promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) in 2009.

<sup>10</sup> Unit standards were introduced under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) and were taken up in the occupational sector. The extent to which unit standards were developed, offered by education and training providers, and taken up by learners is visible when considering datasets in the National Learners’ Records Database (NLRD). While more unit standards were developed than taken up by providers and learners, great and increasing numbers of learners achieved unit standards over time. In the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications, and Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework contexts, whole qualifications continued to be offered.

<sup>11</sup> This decontextualisation was intended to assist in RPL processes, however, the pressures regarding transformation of the education and training system outstripped RPL-related pressures at the time. These pressures were to resurface as the transformed education and training system started to bed down after 2007.

A more widespread critique in the early years focused on the inadequacy of the ‘one size fits all’ approach and discontent with the alleged complexity and excess of NQF terminology which, in its efforts to enhance systemic transparency, was seen to make the system inaccessible. Stakeholders in the General and Further Education and Training, and the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework contexts in particular often viewed themselves as operating outside the NQF.

A national review (Chisholm 2003) of the first post-*apartheid* school curricula – associated with the transforming education and training system and the NQF in the late 1990s – led to the identification of weaknesses in these curricula. The main limitations identified included *inter alia* focusing too much on learning outcomes at the expense of detailed curriculum content, and inadequate sequencing and pacing of curricular content. This review led to the development of the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) in 2002-2005, the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) with Learning Programme Guidelines (LPGs) and Subject Assessment Guidelines (SAGs) in 2006-2009, and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) in 2010, as these weaknesses were addressed.

### **1.3.2 The NQF review period**

Between 2002 and 2007 the NQF was reviewed. Contestations at various times in the 2002-2007 NQF review period between the then-national Department of Education (DoE) and the Department of Labour (DoL), each of which held differing responsibilities for the education and training system in the country at the time, were resolved by 2007.

After extended dialogue, the jointly-created document *Enhancing the efficacy and efficiency of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in South Africa, a Joint Policy Statement by the Ministers of Education and Labour (DoE-DoL 2007)* was published. This policy statement enabled the development and promulgation of the National Qualifications Framework Act (Act 67 of 2008), which replaced the SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995).

A number of changes followed the issuing of the *Joint Policy Statement (DoE-DoL 2007)* and the passing of the NQF Act.

### **1.3.3 Post-2009 NQF developments**

One of the significant changes in the move from the SAQA Act to the NQF Act was the shift from a centralised approach to standards setting and quality assurance, to a more devolved and differentiated approach for the General and Further Education and Training (GENFET), Higher Education and Training (HET) and Trades and Occupations (TO) sectors. The NQF Act (RSA 2008c) enabled amendments of the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (RSA 2001a, 2008a), the Higher Education Act (RSA 1997, 2008b), and the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998e, 2008d), and created space for the Quality Councils to carry out their functions in ways most appropriate for their respective sectors.

#### **1.3.3.1 Three Quality Councils**

Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), the already existing Quality Councils for General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi) and Higher Education (the Council on Higher Education [CHE]) continued their quality assurance work, but with enhanced standards development and quality assurance functions. A third Quality Council, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), was established in 2010 to develop, implement and manage the standards setting and quality assurance of qualifications in the Trades and Occupations sector.

The three Quality Councils develop, implement and manage the three NQF Sub-Frameworks: the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF), the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) and the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF). SAQA as the apex organisation has oversight responsibilities in relation to standards

development and quality assurance.

### **1.3.3.2 South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)**

The objects of SAQA under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c: 8) are to (a) advance the objectives of the NQF; (b) oversee the further development and implementation of the NQF, and (c) coordinate the NQF Sub-Frameworks. From the promulgation of the NQF Act, SAQA sought to foster and enhance communication, collaboration and coordination not only between the three Quality Councils, but between NQF organisations in South Africa in general<sup>12</sup>.

SAQA's coordinating role through the development and implementation of the NQF Level Descriptors; policy for registering qualifications on the NQF; policies for assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT); and the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), has sought to enhance the *overarching nationally desired character* of education and training, such as the international comparability of the form of the system and its quality, systemic integration and articulation, enhanced accessibility for all learners, and overall fairness and transparency.

### **1.3.3.3 Moves towards structural integration**

As part of the moves towards integrated systems for education and training in the country, the then-Department of Education (DoE) split into the Departments of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Basic Education (DBE) in 2009. Training was repositioned within the newly constituted DHET where previously it had straddled the National DoE and the Department of Labour (DoL). From 2010 all post-school education and training were positioned under authority of the Minister of Higher Education and Training (MHET)(see further detail in Section 4.1.2.1).

Between 2001 and the present components of the education and training system have been reviewed and restructured at different times. Analyses by each of the Quality Councils of these developments and changes in the overarching NQF policies, and their own contributions and some of the related effects, are presented in Chapter 6.

Importantly, the NQF objectives of systemic integration, quality, access and redress, learner mobility in the system and lifelong learning for personal and socio-economic development have remained. The *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011) for the period immediately following the promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), is detailed in Section 1.1.2.5-1.1.2.7.

### **1.3.3.4 Research questions for assessing the impact of the South African NQF**

The central question addressed in the NQF Impact Study, namely "What impact has the NQF had?" has been noted. The sub-questions addressed in the present study were:

- (1) What is the impact of the NQF on the integration of the education and training system?
- (2) What progress has been achieved to date in enhancing redress and access to and success in learning?
- (3) What initiatives are under way to enhance inclusivity?
- (4) How has systemic transparency been enhanced and what are the challenges in this regard?
- (5) What is being done to enhance quality in the system and how effective has it been?
- (6) Has learner progression through the system improved over time?
- (7) What have been the gains in the last 20 years in fulfilling NQF objectives?
- (8) Where are the current challenges and areas for improvement?

How these questions were addressed in the study, and why the methodology was chosen, is explained

<sup>12</sup> SAQA has also collaborated with over 20 countries internationally, for NQF development in those countries as well as in South Africa.

in the next section.

## **1.4 The methodology adopted for the NQF Impact Study**

This section provides a summary of the methodology followed in the study, lessons taken into account from impact study work in South Africa and internationally, the reasons for adopting the methodology selected for the current research and highlights regarding this methodology.

### **1.4.1 Summary of the methodology followed in the study**

In assessing the impact of a complex object like the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF), with all its sectors, structures, organisations and role-players – it is sometimes not possible to draw straightforward lines of cause and effect.

While in some cases the direct impact of the NQF can be shown – as is noted throughout this report – in other instances an analysis was done of policy baskets at selected moments in time and associated readily available data with potential to show the impact of the NQF.

Data were obtained mainly from the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), the Higher Education Quality Management Information System (HEQMIS), and publications issued by the Departments of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Basic Education (DBE), SAQA and the Quality Councils. Documentary analysis accompanied analysis of the quantitative data.

Inputs were obtained from 10 senior staff members from SAQA and the Quality Councils. Feedback was sought on all analyses done as part of the study. The substantial analyses of developments within the three Sub-Framework contexts were provided by the three Quality Councils in collaboration with SAQA.

Theoretical concepts from Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987, 2001) and the concepts of 'recontextualisation' (Bernstein 1996) and 'relational agency' (Edwards 2014) were used to shape the meta-analysis in Chapter 7. These concepts were used in an attempt to develop useful categories for systematic analysis.

Impact studies usually involve empirical investigation against carefully constructed indicators designed to show change in relation to a particular phenomenon. The broad indicators of 'moves towards systemic integration' and 'beneficiary gain' were determined at the start of the study. An approach involving the development of detailed indicators and measurement against these indicators was however deliberately avoided for two reasons.

First, the number of policies, sectors, structures, role-players and initiatives potentially influencing trends regarding redress, access and success, integration and quality has already been noted. At different times different stakeholders have worked together. It is not possible to draw links between a single phenomenon and the trends associated with desired NQF objectives. It is more realistic to consider the basket of policies, structures, role-players and relationships in certain periods, and juxtapose these with trends in those periods – and then to compare this scenario with the corresponding scenarios at different times. Forcing nuanced developments and trends into more specific indicators would have courted the risk of reducing complex phenomena in a technicist way.

Second, more detailed indicators would need to be considered within the individual contexts of each of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks. Developing such detailed indicators was not possible for the study, given the state of development of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks at the commencement of the study<sup>13</sup>. As part of the present report – in Chapter 6 – the three Quality Councils have pointed to areas

<sup>13</sup> The NQF Sub-Frameworks were determined in 2013 (GFETQSF and HEQSF) and 2014 (OQSF), while the NQF Impact Study commenced in 2012.

in which they intend to measure progress in future.

#### **1.4.2 Lessons from NQF impact study work in South Africa to date**

In South Africa work was done towards evaluating the NQF in the years 2002-2005 (SAQA 2003, 2005), 2009-2010 (Taylor 2010), and from 2012 onwards. This work and the lessons learned through it are sketched briefly below.

##### **1.4.2.1 First South African NQF impact study work 2002-2005**

There were two cycles in the first large-scale *NQF Impact Study* (SAQA 2003, 2005). The first (SAQA 2003) aimed to establish and pilot the research design and the draft indicators against which to measure the impact of the South African NQF. The second (SAQA 2005) aimed to sketch a baseline against which developments could be assessed in future evaluation cycles. The intention was that the study would involve longitudinal research and that Cycle 3 and subsequent cycles would follow every two to four years, building on the initial work.

###### *1.4.2.1.1 NQF Impact Study Cycle 1, 2003*

Cycle 1 of the NQF Impact Study took place roughly five years after implementation of the NQF under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) commenced. Twenty-three draft impact indicators were developed through an intensive process of review, analysis and consultation. Three research questions were identified, as follows:

- To what extent has practice changed as a result of the implementation of the NQF?
- To what extent have mindsets changed as a result of the introduction of the NQF?
- To what extent has the NQF enabled the development of education and training relevant to a changing world?

The study led to a revised and reduced schedule of 17 Impact Indicators, involving:

- the numbers of qualifications on the NQF;
- the effectiveness of qualifications design;
- the portability of qualifications;
- the relevance of qualifications;
- the uptake and achievement of qualifications;
- following an integrative approach;
- equity of access;
- redress practices;
- the nature of learning programmes;
- the quality of learning and teaching;
- assessment practices;
- career and learning pathing;
- the numbers of registered assessors and moderators;
- the numbers of accredited providers;
- quality assurance practices;
- organisational, economic and societal benefits; and
- the contribution of the NQF to other national strategies.

Given that there were many draft indicators, they were grouped into four sets:

- Set 1: The extent to which qualifications addressed the education and training needs of learners and South African society;
- Set 2: The extent to which the delivery of learning programmes addressed the education and training needs of learners and South African society;

- Set 3: The extent to which quality assurance arrangements enhanced the effectiveness of education and training; and
- Set 4: The extent to which the NQF has had a wider social, economic and political impact in building a lifelong learning culture.

Findings relevant to the present study are noted in clusters for convenience here.

#### *1.4.2.1.1.1 NQF Impact Study Cycle 1 findings*

First, the portability of qualifications emerged as a significant issue to be addressed. Providers thought that the qualifications themselves were conducive to portability. Employers were however concerned about the multiplicity of qualifications and the complexity of the system. The biggest barriers to portability identified were the continuing divide between education and training and the continued existence of pre-NQF structures. Both providers and employers were positive about the relevance of qualifications. Most indicated strong support for outcomes-based approaches. While there were some instances of unwilling compliance in this regard, other responses indicated that outcome-based approaches had enhanced teaching and learning.

Second, regarding redress, it was acknowledged that qualifications themselves could do little about redress. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was seen as being the main intervention to address redress. It was noted that the numbers of learner achievements via RPL were small but growing and that, despite some examples of good practice, progress was seen as being too slow. There was however considerable evidence that people were thinking and talking about and acting on the idea of lifelong learning.

Third, it was noted that only a small amount of data were available on learner achievements.

General observations included that support for the NQF was strong among respondents who were providers or employers; the learners' views of experiences were not known, although it was established that learnerships were seen in a positive light. Many respondents made little or no distinction between the NQF and SAQA. Clear warning signs were identified regarding public frustration around blockages in the system and the pressures of ongoing systemic change.

In its conclusions, the report noted that impact indicators should continue to form the nucleus of the research design of future NQF impact studies, that the 17 indicators developed had proved useful but their clustering and links to particular theme sets and the NQF objectives needed to be strengthened. Taking into account the NQF context, a broader range of stakeholder views as well as representative sampling were identified as being important for future studies. The importance of including analyses based on NLRD data was also noted.

These lessons were taken into account in the present study (See Section 1.4.2.3).

#### *1.4.2.1.2 NQF Impact Study Cycle 2, 2005*

While the *NQF Impact Study Cycle 1* (SAQA 2003) aimed to establish the criteria against which to establish the impact of the NQF, the *NQF Impact Study Cycle 2* (SAQA 2005) aimed to establish a baseline against which to measure progress.

Data collection responsibilities relating to the baseline were divided between the SAQA project team and an external contractor. Based on the 17 indicators established in Cycle 1, survey questionnaires were delivered to purposive samples by SAQA and the contractor, interviews and focus group meetings were held with 122 stakeholders across the nine provinces of the country, a quantitative analysis of qualifications and unit standards then registered on the NQF was conducted by SAQA using data in the NLRD, and a qualitative analysis of qualifications in three selected sectors was done by the external contractor.



The data collected were collated in relation to the indicators, and an evaluation was then made of the level of impact achieved with respect to each indicator.

Attempts were made to contextualise NQF implementation by capturing then-current debates. Key issues emerging from the debates were *systemic integration, leadership and management* (SAQA 2005). A typology of NQFs was included to shed light on NQF developments in South Africa. Interpretation of the data and analyses were located within these narratives (SAQA *ibid.*).

#### **1.4.2.1.2.1 NQF Impact Study Cycle 2 findings**

The NQF was found to have had a high positive impact on the nature of learning programmes; organisational, economic and societal benefits; and contributions made to other national strategies (SAQA 2005). Key impacts identified included the positive impact of the outcomes-based approach on learner motivation, and increased *application* of knowledge and skills than previously.

The NQF was found to have had a moderately positive impact on the numbers of qualifications developed, the relevance of qualifications, equity of access, the quality of teaching and learning, assessment practices and career and learning pathways. It was found to have had a mixed impact on redress, the numbers of education and training providers and assessors, the portability of qualifications and systemic integration.

Since there were no instances where the evidence pointed to marked negative changes, no indicators were classified as being regressive in terms of the desired goals (SAQA 2005). It was emphasised that where negative responses were found, these responses were dispersed across the indicators rather than being associated with a particular indicator.

General conclusions stressed the urgent need to develop 'communities of trust', and the need to understand institutional practices and learners' experiences. Four areas needing development were noted, namely the simplification of assessment, the clarification and simplification of quality assurance in the system, developing communities of trust and clarification of the integrative intentions of the NQF.

These NQF Impact Study Cycle 2 lessons – and those from Cycle 1 – were taken into account in the present study.

#### **1.4.2.2 Work done in preparation for the present NQF Impact Study, 2009-2010**

In the context of the NQF review, the subsequent development of the *Joint Policy Statement* (DoE-DoL 2007) and the promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) in 2009, subsequent cycles of the South African NQF Impact Study did not take place as originally envisioned. In 2009 SAQA appointed an external researcher to do preparatory work towards further NQF impact study work, the first to be conducted in the context of the NQF Act.

This research, reported in 2010, involved discussions with SAQA and the Quality Councils, focused on the questions below. At the time, Umalusi and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) were adapting to mandates newly aligned to the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) still had to be established.

- How could aspects of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) under which [SAQA, Umalusi, CHE, QCTO] currently operates be described?
- What are [SAQA's, Umalusi's, CHE's, QCTO's] perceptions of its roles and responsibilities under the new NQF Act?
- What are current standard setting and quality assurance procedures in operation at [Umalusi, CHE, QCTO], and what are the key issues in these respects?
- What are possible appropriate indicators for assessing the work of [SAQA, Umalusi, CHE, QCTO]

under the new NQF Act?

- What are possible data sources for gathering information on the indicators, and modalities for the collection of data?

Responses to these questions were captured in a draft report (Taylor 2010). At the time, it became very clear that the different priorities and voices of these NQF organisations called for a theoretical framework that would allow the capturing of the differentiated contexts and foci, progress and impact in relation to these contexts and priorities, as well as progress regarding the integrating work needed.

With the devolved and differentiated education and training model enabled by the NQF Act, use of the same general indicators simultaneously by all of the NQF organisations was not possible.

An Impact Study Reference Group comprising external impact evaluation experts as well as SAQA researchers was set up in 2011 to assist with the development of the theoretical frameworks used in the present study.

Use of Engeström's (1987, 2001) CHAT activity theory – elaborated in Section 1.2 above – for the 2012 NQF Impact Study was agreed by SAQA and Quality Council researchers.

#### ***1.4.2.3 Lessons from early South African NQF impact study work for the study***

Lessons from the early NQF impact study work in the country relate to the content and findings of the early studies and to their methodological approaches.

##### *1.4.2.3.1 Lessons from the content and findings of the studies*

Moves to address some of the findings of Cycles 1 and 2 of the NQF Impact Study (SAQA 2003, 2005) – especially those relating to developmental needs in the education and training system – commenced during and subsequent to the NQF review.

Attempts were made to address the multiplicity of qualifications, systemic complexity, the divide between education and training, simplification of assessment and quality assurance, developing communities of trust and clarification of the integrative intentions of the NQF under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). The NQF structures, tools and services described in Section 1.1 attest to these interventions.

Other concerns identified in the early studies remain despite the NQF developments of the past five years such as the portability of qualifications. There has however been a considerable shift in the way in which the links between qualifications are conceived. In addition, considerable work has been done since 2009 regarding aligning curricula towards enhancing the articulation between qualifications (see for example Lotz-Sisitka and Ramsarup 2011, 2012; Nel, in SAQA 2013b).

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) remains a key intervention for redress. While South Africa has yet to establish a fully-fledged national RPL system, great strides have been made in that regard since 2010 (see Section 3.8 of the report).

While the NQF Impact Study Cycle 1 report (SAQA 2003) noted that only a small amount of data was available on learner achievements, considerable data were available for the present study. Some gaps remain in the national datasets – these gaps are described in Section 3.1 of the report – but the gaps are relatively small.

Importantly, information in the Cycle 1 and 2 reports (SAQA 2003, 2005) can be used as a kind of baseline from which to assess progress.

##### *1.4.2.3.2 Lessons regarding methodology*

In the conclusions to the NQF Impact Study Cycle 1 report (SAQA 2003), it was recommended that the

impact indicators be used in future NQF impact studies, and that the links to particular theme sets and the NQF objectives be strengthened. The importance of taking into account the NQF context and analyses based on NLRD data were noted (SAQA *ibid.*). Without these contextual links, there is a danger of adopting an apolitical ‘technicist’ approach.

SAQA’s subsequent NQF Impact Study Reference Group and Research Committee discussions and preparatory research (Taylor 2010) made clear that the different priorities and voices of NQF organisations under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) called for a theoretical framework that could be used to systematically capture progress and impact in the different NQF Sub-Framework contexts. With the devolved and differentiated coordinated Sub-Framework model, it was not feasible to use the same indicators across the different contexts.

The lessons from the first set of South African NQF impact study reports (SAQA 2003, 2005) and preparatory work for the present study (Taylor 2010) were not just technical. The early research was conducted when the NQF review was in its early stages. While the Cycle 1 and 2 NQF Impact Studies were located in the centralised NQF system, the present study needed to capture the differentiated voices of the three Quality Councils as well SAQA’s integrating voice.

For these reasons, a decision was taken to use only two broad impact indicators in the present study, namely those of ‘the extent of systemic integration’ and ‘beneficiary gain’. Quality Councils were able to interpret these two indicators and make their inputs accordingly. SAQA and Quality Council researchers agreed to the use of Engeström’s (1987, 2001) Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) for the analysis of systemic progression and impact.

The early lessons around taking the NQF’s context of implementation, stakeholder voices and analyses based on NLRD data into account were integral to the study. In the meta-analysis (Chapter 7), trends relating to redress and learner access, success and progression (Chapter 3), and systemic integration and transparency (Chapters 4 and 5) were considered in relation to the national context (Chapter 2) and the NQF Sub-Framework contexts (Chapter 6). NLRD datasets informed all of the trends analysed and were the most comprehensive of the datasets used.

It was also important when conceptualising the present study to consider lessons from NQF Impact Studies conducted in countries outside South Africa.

### **1.4.3 Lessons from NQF impact studies conducted internationally**

Few NQF Impact Studies have been conducted in countries other than South Africa. Studies were located in Scotland, Ireland and Australia. Key characteristics of, and lessons from, these studies are highlighted below.

#### **1.4.3.1 Impact evaluation of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)**

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) aims to provide a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities. It intends to:

- make the relationships between qualifications clearer;
- clarify entry and exit points, and routes for progression;
- maximise the opportunities for credit transfer; and
- assist learners to plan their progress and learning (Scottish Executive 2005).

To put these intentions into practice, the SCQF was designed as a comprehensive framework which includes Higher Education, academic and vocational qualifications and informal learning. The SCQF is distinguished by the leading role the university sector has played in its development (Scottish Executive 2005), a feature that had to be evaluated.

The aim of the Scottish impact study was to understand the following areas of enquiry :

- the knowledge, understanding and expectations of the SCQF;
- the impact of the Framework on policies and practices;
- the operation of the Framework; and
- factors which had influenced institutional and organisational responses.

It was acknowledged that although SCQF implementation was under way, it was still in a developmental phase (Scottish Executive 2005: 21). The research focused on the initial impact of the SCQF on implementation processes and plans. The approach was qualitative. Sixty-nine interviews were conducted with stakeholders who had knowledge and understanding of developmental work undertaken, staff at three universities and three Further Education (FE) Colleges that had implemented the new developments and stakeholder groups of system users, including groups from the FE, Higher Education, Community-Based Learning, Vocational Education and Training, Advice Agency, the organised employer and trade union sectors, and other selected employers and professional bodies (Scottish Executive 2005).

It was found that knowledge and understanding of the Framework was high within the Further and Higher Education sectors and among stakeholders who had begun to implement the new system, but limited among general staff, employers and others (Scottish Executive *ibid.*). Perceptions of the impact of the SCQF were that it had potential to enhance the recognition of prior learning, credit transfer and progression, but that progress in these areas had been slow (Scottish Executive *ibid.*).

Two possibilities for the way forward were recommended. One involved the SCQF being an 'enabling' or 'communications' framework, an instrument of change rather than an agent of change. The other was a more extensive remit in which the Framework was itself an agent of change, proactively encouraging openness and flexibility (Scottish Executive 2005: 73).

It is noted that the Scottish study was perceptions-based. While it did not draw extensively on other kinds of data, its strength lay in the high number of interviews conducted, and in the variety of stakeholders included. The study interrogated the purposes of the SCQF.

#### **1.4.3.2 Impact evaluation of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) of Ireland**

The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) was introduced in October 2003. Five years on, the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) considered it timely to take stock of the extent to which the NFQ and related policies on access, transfer and progression had been implemented and had impacted on the education and training system (NQAI 2009). The NQAI commissioned an international study team to undertake this research on its behalf.

The overarching objective of the NFQ is to support lifelong learning and a cultural shift towards recognising the needs of learners of all ages (NQAI 2009). Its aims are to promote flexibility and integration in respect of qualifications, develop new pathways, establish learning outcomes as the common reference points for qualifications and respond to the qualification needs of individuals, society and the economy (NQAI *ibid.*). The NFQ is an integrated and inclusive framework.

The aims of the impact study were to:

- assess the extent to which the NFQ is being implemented;
- support deeper implementation of the NFQ and policies on access, transfer and progression;
- identify progress in implementation;
- identify gaps and drivers/obstacles in respect of implementation; and
- assess the initial impact of the NFQ (NQAI 2009: 2).

The study was based on inputs from a wide variety of sources including the following:

- A background paper prepared by the NQAI on the development, implementation and impact of the NFQ.
- Reports from key stakeholder bodies responsible for implementing the NFQ and engagement with stakeholders.
- Two case studies, one in the area of nursing and the other in the area of guidance/counselling, selected because these areas involve a wide range of sectors including schools, further and higher education and training and adult guidance.
- Submissions from the public.
- A public consultation process in which agencies and individuals contributed submissions and took part in a consultative forum.

The review period for the impact study was October 2003 to September 2008. The brief of the study team was to review all the inputs and to prepare a synthesis report which included recommendations. It could also address any future review of the Framework or policies on access, transfer and progression.

The study found that the NFQ had established itself with a high level of prominence and visibility on the landscape of Irish education and training. This achievement was seen as being significant as it involved multiple players and stakeholders, and the definition of a common currency with which to address provision of education and training in the country (NQAI 2009: 20).

The NFQ was found to have made an impact for learners, by promoting access and pathways between qualifications, and a language to use when making choices in education and training. It was found to have encouraged new approaches to learning, teaching and assessment, had stimulated the development of provision in new areas to open new opportunities for transfer and progression, and to encourage new career routes – although all of these developments were at early stages (NQAI 2009: iv).

The following areas among others were identified for development: the wider use of learning outcomes; the further development of awards and standards at NFQ Levels 1-6; the building of systemic datasets; greater consistency in the policies and use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and more communication regarding policies and in the development of credit (NQAI 2009: 32).

In reflecting on the themes which emerged in Ireland, the study team found common features in the experiences of countries such as Scotland and New Zealand in developing and implementing a National Qualifications Framework. These features included:

- the need for time in which to develop familiarity and understanding, promote cultural change and establish the mutual trust essential for an effective NFQ;
- the importance of stakeholder involvement and partnership, and acceptance that this will require pragmatic compromises at least in the short term;
- an iterative process of development, in which the existing education and training system and the NFQ are progressively aligned with each other;
- the need for a NFQ to be 'loose' enough to accommodate different types of learning, and to accommodate differences across sectors of education and training (which may be regulated by 'tighter' sub-frameworks);
- the need for a balance between implementation within sectors and the development of coherent system-wide arrangements, and for the emphasis to shift between these two over time;
- recognition that a qualifications framework may be an enabler of change more than a driver of change, and that its effectiveness will depend on its alignment with national policy, institutional priorities and other contextual pressures (NQAI 2009: 50).

The research report acknowledged *inter alia* that existing gaps in data, both qualitative and quantitative, on the availability and use of pathways and of their outcomes for learners, and on the

implementation of the NFQ by institutions and providers, should be addressed. In particular, to establish the value of the Framework from a learner perspective, the research report recommended that the Irish Qualifications Authority embark on a longitudinal study of a cohort of learners as they navigate their way through the NFQ. The Irish Qualifications Authority, awarding bodies, universities, the Higher Education Authority and Department of Education and Science should work together to address these gaps (NQAI 2009: 55).

The methods and findings of the Irish NFQ Impact Study (NQAI 2009) are detailed here as they had relevance for the methodology adopted for the NQF Impact Study. For example, the study made use of inputs regarding sectoral developments and impact, and reports from NQF partners (see the Quality Council inputs in Chapter 6). On the other hand, while there are parallels between the methodologies used in the Irish and South African studies, the South African study was far smaller, was conducted over a shorter period of time, and its sources of data were not as wide-ranging. The study had none of the case studies, public submissions and public consultation processes of its Irish counterpart.

#### ***1.4.3.3 Impact evaluation of the proposed strengthened Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)***

In 2009 the Australian Qualifications Framework Council (AQFC) released a series of consultation papers outlining how the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) could be strengthened. In 2010 it circulated draft policies to effect these changes. These policies included:

- AQF levels criteria and qualification type descriptors and specifications;
- generic skills policy;
- qualifications issuance policy;
- qualifications pathways and linkages policy;
- qualifications register policy; and
- addition/ removal of AQF qualification types policy (AQFC 2010: 9).

In 2010 an evaluation was needed of how the strengthened AQF was likely to impact on and be affected by education and labour market structures and processes. The AQF was already established at the time – analysing the likely impact of proposed changes was the challenge. This research was guided by the following questions:

- Taken as a whole, would the revised AQF meet established educational and workforce development policy priorities and priorities likely to emerge in the future?
- What would be the ramifications of putting the proposed changes into practice?
- Under what conditions would the AQF work well? If these conditions were not met, how was it likely to impact on educational and labour market standards and operations?

A theoretical approach based on the concepts of ‘similarity and difference’ (Young 2005) was used to project the likely impact of the proposed changes, in four domains – secondary schools, Vocational Education and Training (VET), Higher Education and industry. For each domain, the key issues and likely impacts of changes were identified and documented, and the roles of agents and possible actions they could take were analysed. ‘Direct actions’ and ‘facilitated activities’ were then identified as ways to address the impact of the changes.

This analysis was used to identify key principles for an evaluation of the AQF, key roles for the AQF, research questions for evaluating the AQF, and analytical foci and data needed. The principles, roles, research questions and data are sketched here, as they are relevant for South Africa.

The key objectives identified for an evaluation of the AQF were to understand how, if at all, the strengthened AQF had:

- improved the comparability of, and links between, qualifications;
- worked as a reference point for improving quality control in the issuing of qualifications;

- achieved coherent links between the general and vocational streams of practice; and
- generated information for key decision makers concerning the operation of the AQF (AQFC 2010: 49).

The fundamental roles identified for the AQF were *promoting credentials consistency*, and providing a framework for *managing differences* arising from qualifications generated by three distinct strands of Australia's education system (AQFC 2010).

Summative evaluation questions suggested were:

- Have the objectives of the AQF been achieved?
- How, if at all, did the AQF assist implementation of other educational and workforce development priorities?

Formative evaluation questions recommended were:

- Are the objectives of the AQF being fulfilled?
- How, if at all, is the AQF helping with the implementation of other education and workforce development priorities? (AQFC 2010: 50)

It was recommended that analyses of the nature of connections within the education system on the one hand, and how the education system connected with the labour market on the other, should be reported separately. Further, the AQF was encouraged to evaluate both efficiency and equity outcomes.

The data identified as being necessary for making informed judgements on labour market participation and transition rates included:

- data on improved consistency;
- data on the nature of, and changes in, pathways;
- case studies of strategically selected occupational streams; and
- longitudinal surveys of learners, workers, employers and education/ training providers (AQFC 2010: 51-53).

Some of the principles, foci, research questions and data in the South African study mirror those recommended above. The main lessons from the international studies are summarised in the next section.

#### ***1.4.3.4 Summary of lessons from the international impact studies***

There are specific lessons for the study from each of the international studies considered, and general lessons relating to (1) critique of the goals of the NQF as well as *how* these goals are achieved, (2) research methods, sampling and triangulation, (3) useful indicator characteristics, and (4) the timing of components of impact studies. Each of these lessons is noted in the sections that follow.

##### ***1.4.3.4.1 Lessons from the Scottish study***

The Scottish study was perceptions-based and involved a high number of interviews and a wide variety of stakeholders. The size of the research team and length of time allocated for the research made this work possible.

Although this approach did not inform the methodology adopted in the South African study, it has potential for future use.

#### *1.4.3.4.2 Lessons from the Irish study*

The Irish study made use of a comprehensive range of research tools, including background research into sectoral developments and impact, reports from key NQF implementers and NQF implementer engagement with sectoral stakeholders, in-depth case studies, public submissions and consultative forums. Again, large research teams and extended time for the impact study made this wide-ranging work possible.

Some of these tools – most obtaining considered and detailed inputs from key NQF implementing partners – were used in the NQF Impact Study.

#### *1.4.3.4.3 Lessons from the Australian study*

The phrasing of the Australian impact study objectives, the formatting of formative and summative research questions, and the sources of data identified were useful for the present study and to a certain extent, influenced the framing of the research questions.

#### *1.4.3.4.4 Lessons regarding critiquing the goals of an NQF*

The goals of an NQF can be taken as given, and can remain unquestioned. On the other hand, as shown in the Scottish study (SCQA 2005), the Framework aims themselves can be subjected to critical scrutiny.

The Scottish study was more about clarifying, questioning and modifying the ends, than about analysing the extent to which and ways in which the SCQA goals had been achieved. Such approaches are useful when the more immediate imperative of achieving desired goals has been addressed.

#### *1.4.3.4.5 Lessons regarding sampling and triangulation*

The purposive sampling used in differing ways in the Scottish (SCQA 2005), Irish (NQAI 2009) and International Labour Organisation (ILO 2011) studies is useful as it has the potential to generate the range of views needed.

Purposive sampling, if based on selections made on the basis of broad and deep consideration of the whole system, and if incorporating explanations of the reasons and contexts for the selections – can provide credible and multi-dimensional views. If this approach is adopted, it is important to sketch the *overall contexts* within which samples are located, in order to maximise the meaning and value of insights yielded. Further, samples need to be of a magnitude suitable for enabling broad and deep understanding – high numbers of respondents or subjects potentially increase the generalisability of findings, lower numbers potentially facilitate depth of understanding. It would be important to have as many respondents as possible in each instance, without sacrificing depth.

Further, the collection of evidence and triangulation of data are essential for the credibility of information obtained. The use of reviews, case studies and public submissions in the Irish study (NQAI 2009) and the scoping, case studies and interviews in the Scottish study (SCQA 2005) provide examples of how different types of data can be used for triangulation.

The NQF Impact Study sought to juxtapose data from SAQA and Quality Council policy development and implementation over time, and data with respect to learner achievements and trends relating to redress, access and success, and progression, in an attempt to triangulate information.

#### *1.4.3.4.6 Lessons regarding useful indicator characteristics*

While it has been argued elsewhere (for example, Allais 2009: 11) that analysis of NQFs is complex and “seldom enjoys the existence of a clear baseline with regard to well-developed indicators”, and paradoxically that “indicators are not necessarily the best option for the [South African] NQF impact



study” (Keevy *et al.* 2011: 23), it is asserted here that indicators as *measures* are crucial to any assessment of the impact of the NQF in the country. What is important is the *type* of indicator employed, and its validity, reliability, measurability, interpretability and feasibility.

It is argued that *fully articulating and illustrating* the measure in operation will enhance its accessibility. Mention is made of *impact indicators* in the South African (SAQA 2003, 2005), Irish (NQAI 2009) and ILO work. There are other kinds of indicators such as *contextual indicators* (indicators such as social class patterns, national and international patterns); *input indicators* (such as the deployment of human, infrastructural or financial resources); *process indicators* (such as the characteristics of organisational or learning environments); and *output indicators* (such as learner results and throughput).

In the present study *coherence indicators* and *beneficiary indicators* were used. The need for ‘stretch indicators’ voiced by SAQA’s Impact Study Reference Group is acknowledged. Stretch indicators are those which enable evaluation of phenomena over time.

#### *1.4.3.4.7 Lessons regarding the timing of components of impact studies*

The *timing* of the measurement of any given factor is clearly important. Taylor (2010) suggests that in the first two years of implementation, measurement of the *architecture* of an NQF is possible. In fairness two to five years are needed before assessing the effectiveness of *implementation* can be attempted, and five to ten years before *impact* can be assessed.

This argument is supported by the foci of the Scottish (SCQA 2005), Irish (NQAI 2009) and Australian (2010) studies in relation to the frameworks that are the objects of study. The timing of the South African impact study, given promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) in 2009, suggests that a focus on the effectiveness of NQF implementation would be appropriate.

### **1.4.4 Methodological highlights regarding the study**

The methodology adopted for the study is summarised in Section 1.4. Key aspects of this methodology are highlighted below and linked to the lessons from the national and international impact studies, and the metaphors discussed in Section 1.2.

#### **1.4.4.1 General methodological approach**

It has been noted that the South African NQF is a complex object, with a range of sectors, structures, role-players, rules and goals. It is not possible to draw straightforward lines of cause and effect regarding the NQF. The approach adopted for the study was therefore to juxtapose related policy and implementation initiatives at selected moments in time on the one hand, with associated readily available data that had the potential to show the impact of the NQF on the other. Arguments are made regarding impact and the remaining developmental challenges.

This contextually engaged approach was developed after taking into account lessons from the decontextualised method followed in the early South African NQF impact studies (SAQA 2003, 2005), in which a set of general indicators were used across the different NQF contexts. The study included SAQA narratives (Chapters 1, 4, 5), Quality Council inputs (Chapter 6) and data from national databases, including those managed by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), the Departments of Higher Education and Training and Basic Education and SAQA. Further stakeholder engagement such as that incorporated in the Scottish impact study (SCQA 2005) has been noted as being important for future South African NQF impact study work (Section 1.4.3.1 and 1.4.3.4.1).

Metaphors and theoretical concepts were used to shape the meta-analysis in Chapter 7. These concepts were used in an attempt to develop useful categories for systematic analysis.

It was noted that impact studies usually involve investigation in relation to indicators designed to show change in relation to a particular phenomenon. The broad indicators of ‘moves towards systemic integration’ and ‘beneficiary gain’ were selected for the present study. It was expected that the three Quality councils would interpret systemic integration and beneficiary gain differently.

Following the example of the Irish impact study (NQAI 2009), attempts were made to gather data using a variety of research tools, and to triangulate data albeit on a smaller scale, given that the South African research team and study time-span were smaller than those of their Irish counterparts.

#### ***1.4.4.2 Sources of data and triangulation***

Data and information for the present study were obtained from the National Learners’ Records Database (NLRD), the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), the Higher Education Quality Management Information System (HEQMIS), publications issued by the Departments of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Basic Education (DBE) across a number of years, SAQA’s line function datasets and inputs from the Quality Councils. Documentary analysis accompanied analysis of the quantitative data.

Inputs were obtained from 10 senior staff members from SAQA and the Quality Councils. Feedback was sought from these contributors on all analyses done as part of the study. The substantial analyses of developments within the three Sub-Framework contexts were provided by the three Quality Councils in collaboration with SAQA.

Importantly, while some analyses were conducted especially for the study, especially using datasets held by SAQA, much use was made of already-existing datasets and first-level analyses. This route was adopted because an overarching picture of NQF data was not generally available at the start of the study. The picture developed as part of the study can potentially be used to develop additional Sub-Framework analyses for future NQF impact studies in the country.

#### ***1.4.4.3 Triangulation***

Triangulation was firstly sought through collaboration between SAQA and the main NQF partners, including the Quality Councils and the Departments of Higher Education and Training and Basic Education. Efforts were made to develop and encourage ‘relational agency’ (Edwards 2014), where the intention was to try to understand the histories, practices and motives of the NQF partners, and to build common understanding in this way.

Secondly, triangulation was sought by juxtaposing the descriptions of policies, events, initiatives, developments and perceptions of SAQA in Chapters 1, 4, 5 and elsewhere, with those of the Quality Councils in Chapter 6. The data on learner achievements presented in Chapter 3 were obtained from a variety of sources. Efforts have been made throughout the present report to provide the reader with evidence and reasoning trails.

#### ***1.4.4.4 Metaphors and theoretical concepts used for analysis***

While a range of concepts is presented in Section 1.2 towards understanding the South African NQF, three sets of concepts were selected to enhance the extent to which the analysis was systematic for the study.

First, concepts from Engeström’s (1987, 2001) Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) were used to enable some comparison of the diverse NQF organisations and initiatives. Juxtaposing elements at the level of NQF, SAQA, Quality Council and departmental goals, tools, rules and communities of practice made some comparison possible.

Second, the concept of ‘recontextualisation’ (Bernstein 1996) was used to describe what happens

when an NQF policy is interpreted and implemented differently in different contexts. When a Quality Council develops Sub-Framework-specific policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in line with national RPL policy, for example, it is said to be ‘recontextualising’ the national policy.

Third, the idea of ‘relational agency’ (Edwards 2014) was used to refer to actions taken deliberately to relate parts of the system to enhance systemic integration.

All these concepts are used in the meta-analysis in Chapter 7.

#### **1.4.4.5 Clarification of indicators used**

The indicators of *systemic coherence or integration* and *beneficiary gain* were used in the study. The need for ‘stretch indicators’ was acknowledged in the selection of these indicators. Both have potential to enable evaluation of related phenomena over time.

Systemic coherence is understood as referring to the extent to which there is a single integrated – albeit devolved and differentiated – system for education and training, available to all in the country.

Beneficiary gain refers to the extent to which education, training and development opportunities are accessible to all, and are associated with redress, success and progression. Beneficiary gain also refers to the extent to which there is access to the knowledge bases underlying education and training as well as physical access to courses, and the quality of education and training offerings and learning achievements.

#### **1.4.4.6 The timing of the study**

Taylor’s (2010) suggestion that measurement of the *architecture* of an NQF is possible in the first two years of implementation, while two to five years are needed before the assessment of the effectiveness of *implementation* can be attempted, and five to ten years before *impact* can be assessed, has been noted (see Section 1.4.2).

South Africa was 18 years into the implementation of its NQF, but had only had five years of the NQF in its present form under the NQF Act (2008c) at the time of the study. Emphasis in the study was primarily on the effectiveness of implementation – the implementation of NQF policy is discussed in Chapters 1, 4, 5 and 6. However, the overarching analysis in Chapter 7, trends regarding learner access, redress, success and progression in Chapter 3, and the analyses of progress regarding systemic integration and transparency drew on information from 1995 to the present and touch on impact.

While progress in relation to NQF objectives was examined in the study, it is also important to note present broader national skills and socio-economic realities, such as percentages of adults with no matriculation qualifications, percentages of people employed or unemployed, percentages of people below the poverty threshold, and percentages of people living in formal dwellings with access to piped water, flush toilets, and/ or the internet. Realities described in the report will serve as a base from which to assess progress in future. Direct causal effects cannot be drawn between educational progress and socio-economic development, but the status of the two areas can be juxtaposed at different moments in time, and patterns sought after extended time.

#### **1.4.4.7 Methodological process followed**

Setting out to assess the impact of the NQF in South Africa in 2014 involved several steps. The lessons from international studies and early attempts in the country to evaluate the effectiveness of NQFs were taken into account. Theoretical frameworks for comparing diverse objects, within and across contexts and within and across time periods, were developed. Care had to be taken when developing and using these theoretical tools, to enable the different voices of NQF role-players to be heard and showing progress in relation to systemic integration.

Framing the research questions for the study was a *collaborative* effort, involving discussion between SAQA and the Quality Councils, and related joint work.

Data were gathered through analysis of the relevant existing datasets, first-level analyses, policy and other documents and publications and follow-up interviews wherever clarity was sought.

Texts in this report were developed collaboratively and iteratively. Sections were drafted by SAQA or the Quality Councils and critiqued by these organisations and by external reviewers. Inputs from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) were integrated.

#### **1.4.4.8 Presentation of data**

Chapters 1 and 2 set the stage for the NQF Impact Study, attempting to provide the necessary background and clarification of concepts. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 present the data and first-level analyses on which the meta-analysis (Chapter 7) was based. The analysis in Chapter 7 would not have been possible without the wealth of data in these chapters, and the contextualisation provided by the Quality Council voices in Chapter 6.

The report attempts to clarify how the South African NQF and its contexts are understood by its key implementing organisations. It tries to capture achievements thus far, and identify gaps to be addressed. Efforts are made to ensure that it is a developmental tool. Future NQF impact studies could build on what is presented here.

## **1.5 Navigating the NQF Impact Study Report 2014**

Chapter 1 attempted to interrogate the nature of the South African NQF, sketching a number of metaphors to aid in this task. It elaborated on the NQF structures, agents, tools and services in the country. It provided a brief history of NQF development in the country – this history is elaborated from the point of view of each Quality Council in Chapter 6. The chapter also described in detail the methodology adopted for the study.

Like Chapter 1, Chapter 2 sketches the background to, and context of, the study and provides tools towards building common understanding and acknowledging the differentiated motives of the various NQF partners. Chapter 2 also sketches the national policy and socio-economic contexts in which the NQF is being implemented.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 present the readily available data and first-level analyses on which the deeper analysis in Chapter 7 is based. Chapter 3 addresses Research Questions 2, 3 and 6 (see Section 1.3). It presents data and analyses related to the NQF objectives of redress, access and success in the different education and training sectors, and to initiatives to get people into the system.

Chapter 4 addresses Research Question 1. It presents an analysis of data that reflect the extent of systemic integration linked to the NQF.

Chapter 5 addresses Research Question 4, analysing the NQF's transparency initiatives, and the extent to which systemic transparency has been achieved.

Chapter 6 addresses Research Question 5. In this chapter each of the three Quality Councils presents an analysis of its approach to quality assurance, how these approaches have been developed over time, and some of the effects and implications of the approaches taken.

Chapter 7 addresses Research Questions 7 and 8. It draws on threads from the whole report, and especially on the data and first-level analyses in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, using the tools provided in Chapter 1, to show that while the identified challenges remain, South Africa is slowly but increasingly

moving in the directions desired. The role of the NQF in promoting this movement is explored.

Chapter 8, the concluding chapter, draws on the whole report to provide pointers for the way forward. It reiterates how the Impact Study has been, and must continue to be, developmental – in that it needs to contribute to NQF development.

## 2. NQF: Context of implementation

Chapter 1 set out to explain what the South African NQF is, how it developed over time, and how its effectiveness was studied for the present report and in earlier research. In Chapter 1, the importance of the context in which the NQF was and continues to be implemented, was noted.

In Chapter 2, the picture regarding the political, policy and socio-economic contexts in which the South African NQF is located is deepened. An attempt is made to contrast present contextual (socio-material) realities with corresponding situations when the implementation of the NQF in the country started. The chapter goes on to outline the broader NQF policy context – the range of policies that includes the National Qualifications Framework Act (RSA 2008c).

Chapter 2 is a stand-alone chapter as it is built on data sourced as part of the fleshing-out process to identify elements that could be compared at a later stage to assess the effectiveness and impact of the NQF.

### 2.1 Socio-economic context

The NQF in South Africa is not separate from its context of implementation. Socio-economic context has been shown to be the strongest predictor of learner success. At the same time, socio-economic context does not necessarily determine levels of achievement when policies and their implementation are appropriate (Bolton 2005; Morais *et al.* 1992): socio-economic context needs to be taken into account when the policy is implemented (*ibid.*).

Five tables follow, to show the socio-economic context in which the NQF is located. Table 3 shows the numbers and distribution of people over the age of 20 years with particular levels of education.

The percentages of people in 2011 with no schooling, with some primary, or having completed all of primary school, are roughly half of what they were in 1996 respectively – the year in which the NQF was established. While similar percentages of people had some secondary school education, the percentages of people who had completed secondary school or had some higher education, increased about 1.5 times.

These tables are not directly linked to NQF development, but they are associated with it.

It is reiterated that schooling lays the foundation for learner progression in the system for education, training, development and work, and is integral to it.

**Table 3: Number and percentage distribution of persons aged 20 years and older by level of education: 1996, 2001, 2011**

Years	No schooling		Some Primary		Completed Primary		Some Secondary		Completed Secondary		Higher	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>2011</b>	2665875	8.60	3790134	4.60	1413894	4.60	10733436	33.90	8919609	28.90	3392757	11.80
<b>2001</b>	4567497	17.9	4083742	6.4	1623467	6.4	7846125	30.8	5200602	20.4	2151336	8.4
<b>1996</b>	4055646	19.1	3522956	7.4	1571774	7.4	7130121	33.6	3458434	16.3	1512497	7.1

(Source: Stats SA Census 2001, 2011; Household Survey 1996)

Tables 4-7 are included to show the socio-economic contexts of learners in South Africa.

The 2011 Census data show that over three-quarters of respondents lived in formal dwellings (Table 4); almost two-thirds had flush toilets (Table 5); 85% used electricity for lighting (Table 6); and, while only 20% had computers at home, high numbers had cell phones and televisions (Table 7).

In the 2011 Census, 8% of people in South Africa used English as their home language.

**Table 4: Number and percentage distribution of households by type of main dwelling: 1996, 2001, 2007, 2011**

Years	1996		2001		2007		2011	
Type of dwelling	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Formal dwelling	5834819	65.1	7680421	68.7	8838890	70.6	11219247	77.6
Traditional dwelling	1644388	18.3	1654787	14.8	1459377	11.7	1139916	7.9
Informal dwelling	1453015	16.2	1836231	16.4	1804430	14.4	1962732	13.6
Other	35290	0.4	34266	0.3	397913	3.3	128266	0.9

(Source: Stats SA Census 2001, 2011; Household Survey 1996, 2007)

**Table 5: Number and percentage distribution of household type by toilet facility: 2001, 2007, 2011**

Years	Flush toilet		Chemical toilet		Pit toilet		Bucket toilet		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2011	7762884	64.4	305853	2.5	3489573	28.9	238893	2.0	256818	2.1
2007	7221328	65.9	43888	0.4	3410829	31.2	273255	2.5	0	0.0
2001	5812998	60.0	218387	1.9	3193433	33.0	457376	4.7	0	0.0

(Source: Stats SA Census 2001, 2011; Household Survey 2007)

**Table 6: Number and percentage distribution of household type by energy for lighting: 1996, 2001, 2007, 2011**

Years	Gas		Electricity		Candles		Paraffin		Solar		other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2011	34347	0.2	12242400	85.0	1649082	11.4	426204	3.0	51507	0.4	0	0
2007	20761	0.2	10010275	80.1	1713612	13.7	658583	5.3	30402	0.2	66979	0.5
2001	27065	0.2	7815270	69.7	2545532	22.7	759817	6.8	24175	0.2	33845	0.3
1996	35512	0.4	5220825	58.2	2583031	28.7	1144014	12.7	0	0	800	0.0

(Source: Stats SA Census 2001, 2011; Household Survey 1996, 2007)

**Table 7: Percentage distribution of household goods: 2001, 2007, 2007**

	Cell phone		Radio		Computer		Landline/telephone		Television		Refrigerator	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
2011	12850875	88.9	9749898	67.5	3092541	21.4	2088147	14.5	10761948	74.5	9886239	68.4
2007	9090232	72.2	9568076	76.5	1950164	15.6	2318460	18.5	8191116	65.5	7986011	63.9
2001	14439749	31.9	33440829	72.1	3762284	8.5	11190758	23.9	25485532	52.6	24208793	49.9

(Source: Stats SA Census 2001, 2011; Household Survey 2007)

## 2.2 NQF policy environment

Education and training in South Africa is governed by a comprehensive set of policies, at the centre of which is the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) and related legislation for the General and Further Education and Training (GENFET), Higher Education and Occupational Qualifications Sub-Frameworks (2008a, b, d).

These policies rest alongside and are nested within other national policies, including the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) (RSA 2011b), New Growth Path (NGP) (RSA 2011c) and the Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRD-SA) (RSA 2009a).

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013) is a key document. It sets out the vision for Post-School Education and Training (PSET), and the principles to convert this vision into reality. It is in line with the NDP, the NGP and the HRD-SA.

The implications of each of these policies for the education and training system are highlighted in the

sections that follow.

### **2.2.1 National Development Plan 2030 (NDP), 2011**

The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP (RSA 2011b) aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. The involvement of people in the country, an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society, are key elements for realising the goals of the plan.

The NDP (RSA 2011b) envisions a South Africa where opportunity is determined not by birth but by ability, education and hard work. The role of a strong economy in this visualised reality is acknowledged. The NDP makes clear that the issue of redress is integral to national development. Redress is also subsumed in national development pressures.

The NDP sets out six interlinked priorities:

- uniting all South Africans around a common programme to achieve prosperity and equity;
- promoting active citizenry to strengthen development, democracy and accountability;
- bringing about faster economic growth, higher investment and greater labour absorption;
- focusing on key capabilities of people and the state;
- building a capable and developmental state; and
- encouraging strong leadership throughout society to work together to solve problems.

While the achievement of the objectives of the NDP requires progress on many fronts, there are three priorities:

- raising employment through faster economic growth;
- improving the quality of education, skills development and innovation; and
- building the capability of the state to play a developmental, transformative role.

The NDP includes a number of proposals to reduce the effects of extreme poverty experienced by around half of the population in the country, including policies towards expanding employment opportunities and strengthening national health, welfare and transport services.

Improving the quality of education in underperforming schools and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges is also identified as a priority (RSA 2011b). Education and training are of central importance for achieving the goals identified in the NDP.

The NDP, in its focus on economic growth, the centrality of education and training and the capabilities of the citizenry and the state, provides support for the implementation of the NQF.

### **2.2.2 New Growth Path (NGP), 2011**

The New Growth Path (RSA 2011c) aims to create decent work, reducing inequality and defeating poverty. It requires restructuring of the South African economy to improve its performance in terms of labour absorption as well as in the composition and rate of growth.

The New Growth Path (NGP) sets a target of five million new jobs to be created by 2020. It sets out the key jobs drivers and the priority sectors to focus on. It is based on strong and sustained inclusive economic growth and the rebuilding of the productive sectors of the economy. Infrastructure development in particular is a foundation for more jobs and addressing rural underdevelopment.

The NGP acknowledges that the share of wages in the national income dropped from 50% in 1994 to just over 45% in 2009, while the share of profits climbed from 40% to 45%. In other words, the economy has not created sufficient employment opportunities over the past two decades. The NGP recognises that creating more and better jobs lies at the heart of the strategy to fight poverty, reduce



inequality and address rural underdevelopment.

Over the short to medium term, the New Growth Path aims to support labour-absorbing activities, especially in the agricultural value chain, light manufacturing and services, to generate large-scale employment. It notes that government can provide effective inducements to private investment in targeted sectors, principally by prioritising labour-absorbing activities for the provision of appropriate and cost-effective infrastructure, regulatory interventions that effectively address market and state failures, measures to improve skills systems and, in some cases, subsidies to promote production and innovation.

In the longer run, the NGP aims to support knowledge and capital-intensive sectors in order for the economy to remain competitive.

Improvements in education and skill levels are a fundamental prerequisite to achieving many of the goals in the NGP. The NGP acknowledges the importance of developing knowledge and skills at all levels, and in all sectors, in the system.

### **2.2.3 Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRD-SA), 2010-2030**

The 2010-2030 Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRD-SA) (RSA 2009a) details a number of strategic objectives, indicators and indicative actions, including assigning targets for 2010-2030. It aims to optimise the efficacy of human resources with respect to the developmental agenda in South Africa<sup>14</sup>.

The HRD-SA (RSA 2009a) is based explicitly on current and emerging education and training-related strategic plans, all of which fall within the NQF<sup>15</sup>. It identifies the following strategic priorities for the period up to the year 2030:

- ensuring universal access to quality early childhood development;
- eradicating adult illiteracy;
- ensuring that learners remain in education and training until the age of 18 years;
- ensuring that unemployed and employed adults have access to education and training opportunities so that most people have qualifications at NQF Level 4 or higher;
- ensuring progressive improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of all education and training sectors;
- ensuring that new entrants into the labour market have access to employment-focused education and training opportunities;
- ensuring that investment in education and training is above the global average;
- ensuring that education and training outcomes are equitable in terms of race, gender, disability and geographic location;
- ensuring that inequality in education and training outcomes is significantly less than the prevailing income inequality at that time;
- ensuring that the balance of immigration and emigration reflects a net positive inflow of people with the priority skills required for economic growth and development; and
- ensuring that South Africa is ranked in the top 10% of comparable countries in terms of its

<sup>14</sup> The interventions and activities outlined are aligned with the HRD implications in the Government Programme of Action, the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) (RSA 2005a), the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (RSA 2005b), the National Industrial Policy Framework (NIPF) (dti [n.d.]), the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP) (dti 2014), the Emerging Anti-Poverty Strategy (EAPS), and the Technology and Innovation Strategy (TIS) (DST 2011), among others.

<sup>15</sup> These strategic frameworks include the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) III (DHET 2010), the Basic Education Strategic Plans (for ECD, schooling, ABET), the technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Strategic Framework and the Higher Education (HE) Strategic Framework.

economic competitiveness, Human Development Index and Technology and Innovation Index.

## **2.2.4 White Paper: Post-School Education and Training (WP: PSET), 2013**

The post-school system is understood as comprising all education and training provision for those who have completed school, those who did not complete their schooling and those who never attended school.

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (WP: PSET) developed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training (MHET 2013) sets out a vision for the type of post-school education and training (PSET) system, to be achieved in South Africa by 2030. The developmental process for the White Paper was strengthened by taking into account over 200 responses to its Green Paper counterpart (MHET 2012) from stakeholders across the board. Highlights are presented below.

### **2.2.4.1 PSET institutions**

There are stipulations for both public and private PSET institutions.

#### *2.2.4.1.1 Public PSET institutions*

A number of state-owned post-school institutions exist under the authority of the DHET, including 25 public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); 50 public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, numerous public adult learning centres and private colleges, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the National Skills Fund (NSF), and the regulatory bodies responsible for the development and quality assurance of qualifications, and the coordination of the NQF Sub-Frameworks – the Quality Councils and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) respectively.

A number of education institutions also exist under the authority of other national government departments, mainly (but not exclusively) to train public service workers. Some institutions are operated by provincial governments and municipalities for the training of their own personnel. The DHET, through the Quality Councils, is responsible for assuring the quality of education and training provision in these entities.

The White Paper (MHET 2013) sets out strategies to improve capacity in these institutions.

The South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (SAIVCET) will be established in order to provide the necessary support for the development of the college sector.

#### *2.2.4.1.2 Private PSET institutions*

While the public sector is seen as being the core of the education and training system, the role of private institutions in PSET is recognised and appreciated. The White Paper (MHET 2013) emphasises the need to strengthen datasets on private PSET.

#### *2.2.4.1.3 The NQF, SAQA and the Quality Councils*

The White Paper makes clear that the NQF in its present form, and the existing structures and remits of the main NQF partners, should remain. SAQA must play a leadership role in guiding the further development of systemic articulation. The Quality Councils have greater flexibility regarding the qualifications previously in their ambits: Umalusi for example, could quality assure certain Level 5 qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF).

### **2.2.4.2 Objectives of the White Paper: PSET**

The White Paper for PSET (MHET 2013) sets targets for successful learner/ student achievement

numbers in the TVET College, Higher Education and artisan sectors to be achieved by 2030.

Objectives in the White Paper (MHET *ibid.*) are aligned with NQF objectives. They include the achievement of a single coordinated post-school system that can assist in building a fair, equitable, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa; expanding access, improving quality and increasing the diversity of provision, strengthening relationships between education and training institutions and workplaces<sup>16</sup>, and meeting the needs of individual citizens, employers in both public and private sectors, and broader societal and developmental objectives.

#### **2.2.4.3 Prioritising TVET Colleges**

The White Paper (MHET 2013) prioritises strengthening and expanding public TVET Colleges. It emphasises the need for leadership in this regard from both the MHET and the Minister of Basic Education (MBE), as both have responsibilities regarding vocational programmes. It also notes the importance of the involvement in this process of the colleges themselves, employers and labour organisations.

#### **2.2.4.4 Developing Community Colleges**

Community Colleges – a new type of institution – are proposed. Community Colleges are to cater for youth and adults who have not completed their schooling or who never attended school and thus cannot access TVET Colleges or universities. Community Colleges will be public entities but will be able to enter into partnerships with private or community-owned institutions, such as church-based organisations.

#### **2.2.4.5 Developing new programmes; consolidating existing programmes**

In the strengthened PSET system existing programmes, such as the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV), N programmes, General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) and Senior Certificate (SC), are to be consolidated or reviewed and strengthened.

New qualifications, such as the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) and occupational programmes funded by SETAs or the NSF – are proposed.

Community Colleges are encouraged to focus on strengthening popular education, community education and worker education, drawing on community responsiveness.

#### **2.2.4.6 Higher Education**

The importance of articulation between qualifications offered at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and those offered at other PSET institutions is emphasised, as is quality and ‘purposeful differentiation’ (MHET 2013).

The current foci on redress, student access, success, and progression, and stimulating postgraduate study, need to remain and to improve.

#### **2.2.4.7 Addressing disability in PSET**

The MHET will develop a strategic policy framework to guide the improvement of access to and success in post-school education and training for people with disabilities. This strategy will include providing the necessary resources to enable institutions to transform in this area, and to develop the necessary capacity for the required research and information management.

<sup>16</sup> The role of SETAs needs to be simplified so that SETAs focus on developing skills pipelines, developing the skills of those in enterprises, and ensuring that providers have the capacity to deliver training.

#### **2.2.4.8 Distance learning in PSET**

The expansion of distance learning is encouraged. Higher Education Institutions are especially encouraged to expand distance higher education for vocationally-oriented diploma programmes.

The MHET will investigate the possibility of providing distance education programmes at the TVET and Community College levels, including dedicated staff and equipment. The theoretical component of apprenticeships might be offered through distance education for example.

#### **2.2.4.9 Free PSET for those who need it**

The MHET is committed to free education for those who cannot afford to pay. It has committed to the progressive introduction of free education for the poor in South African universities as resources become available. It acknowledges the central role of the National Skills Fund (NSF) in this regard.

#### **2.2.4.10 White Paper: PSET and the NQF**

Particularly noteworthy for the study, is that all PSET entities must comply with SAQA and Quality Council requirements (MHET 2013).

It is clear from the White Paper: PSET that the potential of the NQF to achieve national education and training priorities, and the roles of SAQA and the Quality Councils in this work, are underscored.

Chapter 2 sketched the socio-economic and policy contexts of the NQF. In Chapter 3, data is presented for each education and training context, in an attempt to show the trends in redress, learner access, success and progression associated with these contexts and needs.

## 3. Trends in redress and learner access, success and progression

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In Chapter 1, the tools and services of the NQF are described. These tools and services are implemented in the political, socio-economic and policy contexts sketched in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3 shifts to focus on learner gains in relation to the implementation of the NQF in the contexts described. In Chapter 3, trends in redress, and learner access, success and progression are shown. Chapter 3 addresses Research Questions 2, 3 and 6, namely: What progress has been achieved to date, in enhancing access to, and success in, learning and redress? What initiatives are under way to enhance inclusivity and what progress has been achieved in this regard? Has learner progression through the system improved over time?

Importantly, direct lines of cause and effect cannot be drawn between the NQF, the contexts and the trends. The data however manifest trends in relation to the NQF objectives, which are linked to the activity system of the NQF through Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987, 2001). The links between these trends and the system are analysed in Chapter 7.

Readily available datasets were used for these *post hoc* analyses. The main sources of data were the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), the Higher Education Quality Council Information System (HEQCIS), and the Education Management Information System (EMIS). Where already-existing analyses are drawn upon, the publications are cited.

Chapter 3 introduces the databases of the NQF, as the development of these databases was part of NQF development. Trends in redress and learner access, success and progression are then presented for the Basic Education, College, Higher Education, and Trades and Occupations sectors, and for initiatives towards getting people into the system. Attempts are made to link trends and possible contextual events wherever possible.

### 3.1 National Learners' Records Database (NLRD): overview

The NLRD was introduced in Section 1.1.2 of the report. What it contains and enables, and areas for development, are elaborated here. Its contribution to systemic integration is discussed in Chapter 4, and contribution to transparency in Chapter 5.

#### 3.1.1 NLRD Data

The establishment of the NLRD was an ambitious undertaking and its existence today is an achievement in its own right. It is the largest database of its kind in the country. Within its development there have been and continues to be a number of achievements and challenges, the main aspects of which are discussed here.

The relationship between data in the NLRD on the one hand, and redress, learner access, success and progression on the other hand, is an important one. NLRD data – especially since it has the potential to span the whole education and training system – enables analyses of these trends. The fact that the data are housed within a single vehicle makes these analyses easier to conduct.

First developed between 1997 and 1999 under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), the NLRD was initially populated with information on unit standards-based qualifications (SAQA 2004b)<sup>1</sup>. Qualifications were grouped into the 12 NQF organising fields, as follows:

- 01: Agriculture and Nature Conservation
- 02: Culture and Arts
- 03: Business, Commerce and Management Studies
- 04: Communication Studies and Language
- 05: Education, Training and Development
- 06: Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology
- 07: Human and Social Studies
- 08: Law, Military Science and Security
- 09: Health Science and Social Services
- 10: Physical, Mathematical, Computer and Life Sciences
- 11: Services
- 12: Physical Planning and Construction

The NLRD currently contains information on:

- qualifications and part-qualifications registered on the NQF;
- education and training providers, including providers of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL);
- officially recognised professional bodies and registered professional designations; and
- learner achievements for all studies undertaken in the country except for schooling below Grade 12.

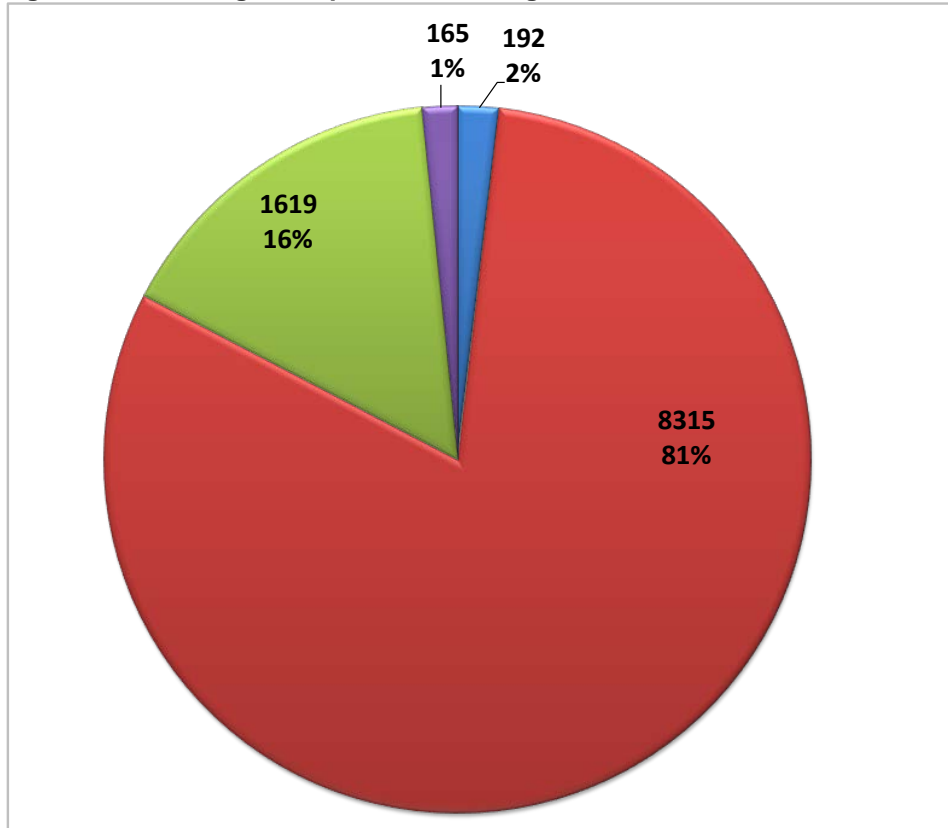
The NLRD also contains information on the three NQF Sub-Frameworks and their related Quality Councils, as well as all other bodies (such as SETAs) that assure quality in the provision of education and training in South Africa. While information on qualifications developed under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) is still available, qualifications developed by the three Quality Councils in the context of the NQF Act (RSA 2008) have been categorised under the respective Sub-Frameworks since the promulgation of the NQF Act in 2009.

Figure 6 shows qualifications registered on the NQF and represented in the NLRD. Of the total number of qualifications, 81% are in the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF); 16% are in the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF), and 2% are in the General and Further Education and Training Sub-Framework (GFETQSF).

The small number of qualifications in the GFETQSF reflects the desire of Umalusi (the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training) to have a small number of well quality-assured offerings (see Section 6.1). The Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) are also attempting to register the minimum numbers of qualifications.

<sup>1</sup> Development of qualifications based on unit standards has ceased since 2009; already-developed unit standard-based qualifications are still on the NLRD as 'legacy' qualifications.

**Figure 6: Percentages of qualifications registered on the NQF Sub-Frameworks**



(Source: NLRD)

**Legend:**

- General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF)
- Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF)
- Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF)
- Not Applicable (SFNA)

### 3.1.2 Development of the NLRD and the NQF

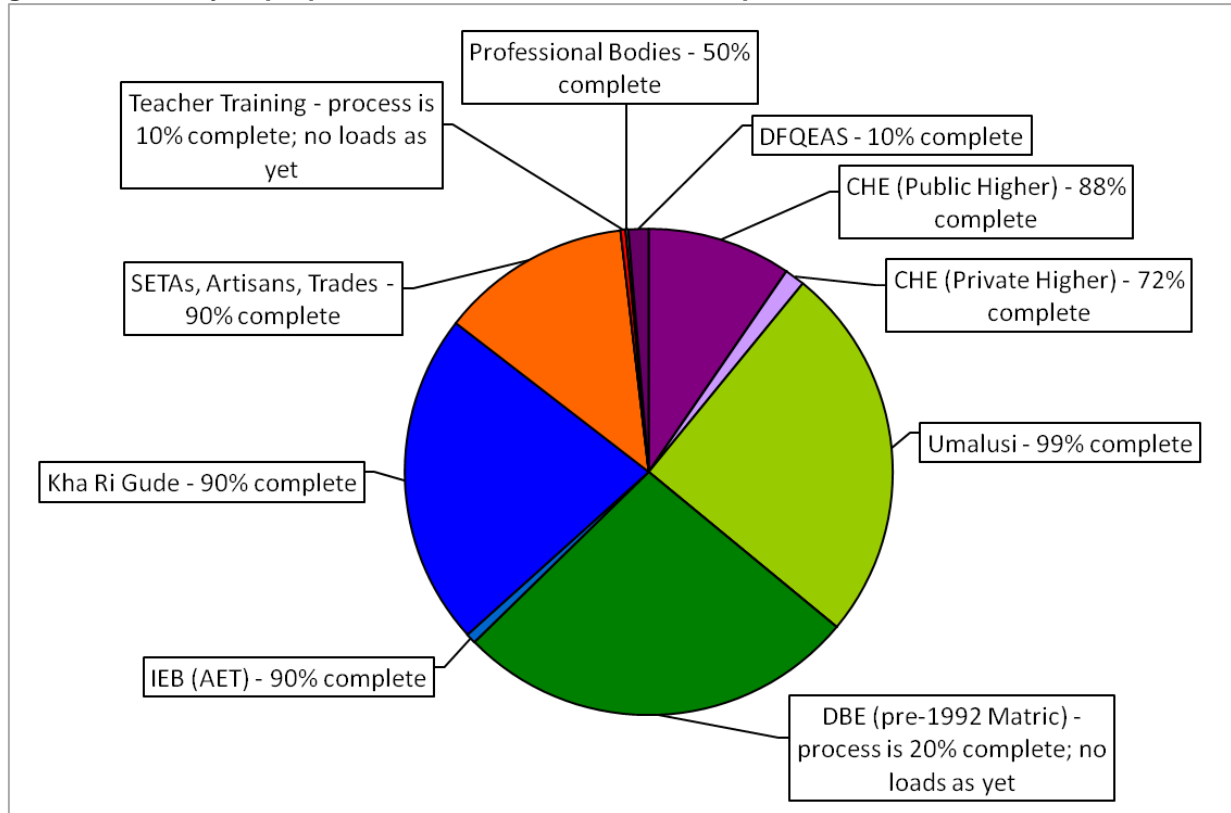
The more complete the NLRD, the more accurate will be analyses based on its data. The question comes to mind as to the extent to which the NLRD is complete or up to date. Shapiro’s (2012 and 2014) summaries of the state of completeness of the NLRD are useful here. It is clear that while some challenges remain, there have been considerable developments in uploading data for all three NQF Sub-Frameworks.

#### 3.1.2.1 The extent of completeness of the NLRD: Shifts over time

If the NLRD was complete – in other words, if all the learner achievements in all education and training sectors had been submitted correctly for uploading – it would contain learner achievements in the proportions shown in Figure 7. These proportions have been calculated based on the numbers of learner records ‘at source’, or, within colleges, universities, SETAs and elsewhere, as at 15 January 2015<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> All of the datasets except for those that are historical are updated annually for each preceding year. This practice means that the current datasets will slowly increase in size relative to the historical ones. Historical datasets comprise Department of Basic Education [DBE] pre-1992 matric data, teacher training data, and the early data for Higher Education and Professional Bodies.

**Figure 7: Summary of proportions of data sub-sets in a complete NLRD**



(Source: NLRD)

**Legend:**

Professional Bodies – refers to the numbers of learner records against professional designations listed on the NLRD

DFQEAS – refers to the numbers of learner records of South Africans holding foreign qualifications

CHE (Public Higher, Private Higher) – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications on the HEQSF

Umalusi – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications on the GFETQSF

DBE – refers to the numbers of learner records against historical qualifications

IEB (AET) – refers to the numbers of learner records in the Adult Education and Training sector, obtained via the Independent Examinations Board

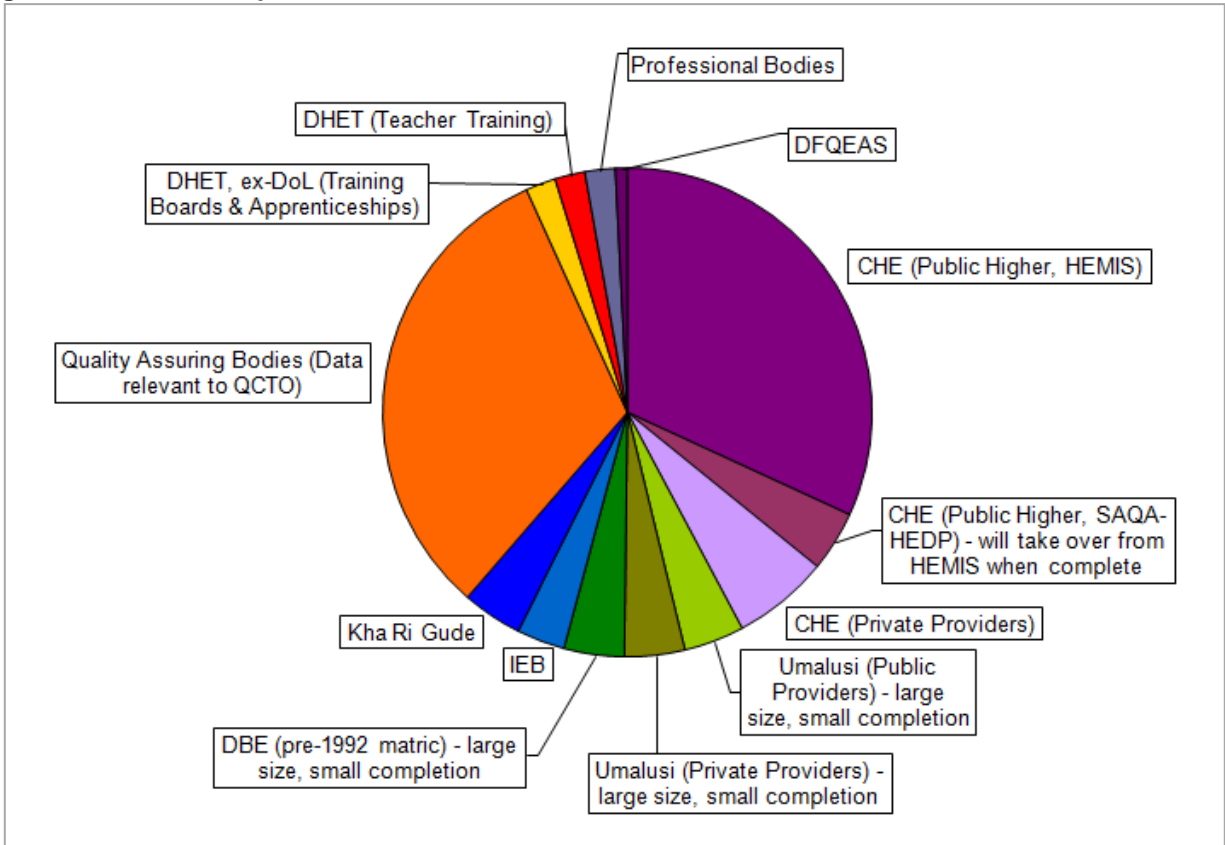
Kha Ri Gude – refers to the numbers of learner records obtained through the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign

SETAs, Artisans, Trades – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications on the OQSF

Comparing the completeness of NLRD datasets across 2012 and 2014 has the potential to show progress in terms of the desired completeness of the NLRD. In other words, comparing the proportions of the data subsets in 2012, 2014 and 2015 – as shown in Figures 8, 9 and 7 respectively – shows how the datasets are moving towards completion as desired.



**Figure 8: State of completion of data sub-sets in the NLRD at the end of 2012**



(Source: NLRD)

**Legend:**

Professional Bodies – refers to the numbers of learner records against professional designations listed on the NLRD

DFQEAS – refers to the numbers of learner records of South Africans holding foreign qualifications

CHE (Public and Private Higher Education) – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications on the HEQSF

Umalusi (Public and private providers) – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications on the GFETQSF

DBE – refers to the numbers of learner records against historical qualifications

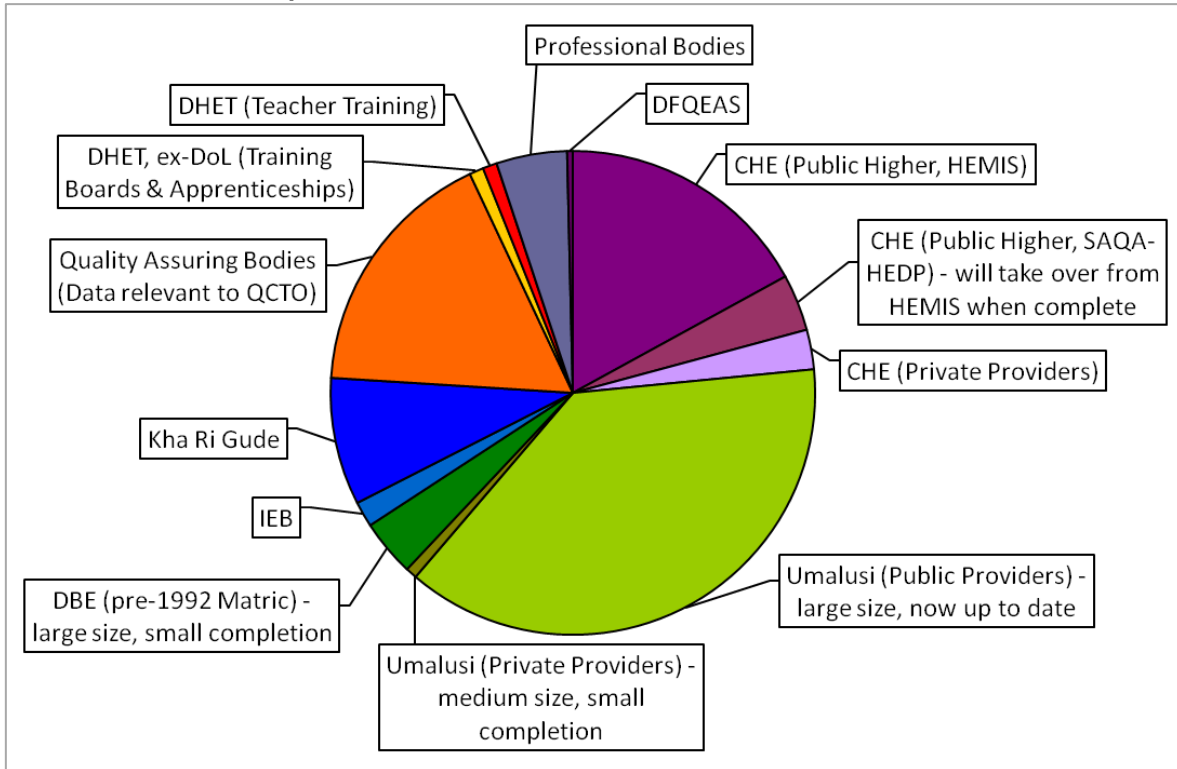
IEB – refers to the numbers of learner records obtained via the Independent Examinations Board

Kha Ri Gude – refers to the numbers of learner records obtained through the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign

Quality assuring bodies – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications on the OQSF

DHET (Training Board, Apprenticeships, Teacher Training) – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications in these sub-sectors/ fields.

**Figure 9: The state of completion of NLRD data at the end of 2014**



(Source: NLRD)

**Legend:**

Professional Bodies – refers to the numbers of learner records against professional designations listed on the NLRD

DFQEAS – refers to the numbers of learner records of South Africans holding foreign qualifications

CHE (Public and Private Higher Education) – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications on the HEQSF

Umalusi (Public and private providers) – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications on the GFETQSF

DBE – refers to the numbers of learner records against historical qualifications

IEB – refers to the numbers of learner records obtained via the Independent Examinations Board

Kha Ri Gude – refers to the numbers of learner records obtained through the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign

Quality assuring bodies – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications on the OQSF

DHEAT (Training Board, Apprenticeships, Teacher Training) – refers to the numbers of learner records against qualifications in these sub-sectors/ fields.

Comparing work being done to address NLRD data gaps at different points in time has potential to show the state of development – and completeness – of the NLRD at those points. Data in Table 8 show work being done to address data gaps in 2012 and 2014. These initiatives relate to the state of the NLRD reflected in Figures 8 and 9 respectively. The data in Table 8 are based on summaries of regular management reports developed in 2012 and 2014 (Shapiro 2012, 2014). The colour codes in the table match those in Figures 7, 8 and 9, to enable comparison.

**Table 8: Summary report of work being done to address NLRD data gaps in 2012 and 2014, per sector**

- Higher Education:
  - Regarding data for public Higher Education, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) mandated the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) of the then-Department of Education (now the Department of Higher Education and Training) from 2001 to load all public Higher Education data onto the NLRD. By 2012 the SAQA Higher Education Data Project (SAQA-HEDP) had commenced so that public Higher Education institutions could ultimately all load data directly into the NLRD – and not via HEMIS. The idea was that data from previous years would be reloaded and historical gaps filled. By 2014 the HEMIS data up to the end of 2012 were uploaded; this two-year lag is standard for this kind of data. The SAQA-HEDP project had been piloted successfully and was active at five Higher Education Institutions.
  - Regarding private Higher Education data, the Higher Education Quality Committee Information System (HEQCIS) was launched in 2008. It ensures that data from Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) are collected and loaded onto the NLRD. The HEQCIS is CHE-funded but is operated at SAQA. This initiative was the first in which South African PHEI data were systematically collected. By 2014 the learner records were substantial although there were still some gaps.
- General and Further Education and Training:
  - Attempts had been made to load Umalusi data onto the NLRD twice before; these attempts were unsuccessful due to differences in the formatting of the data. A new initiative towards this end commenced in July 2012. By 2014 all the Umalusi data for the period 1992-2013 had been loaded. The data for public providers were completely up to date.
  - At the end of 2012 the pre-1992 Matric data of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) existed mostly on paper, although some of it had been scanned, and a small amount existed in a database that was due to be supplied to SAQA. Funding was requested for complete digitisation. By 2014 some of this data had been supplied to SAQA although not in a form that could be loaded onto the NLRD, and was being used by SAQA's Verification Services. There was renewed interest in finding the funding for complete digitisation.
- Adult Education and Training:
  - By 2012 all IEB data were on the NLRD. By 2014 these datasets remained up to date, including the QCTO Foundation Learning Certificate (FLC) uptake data.
  - By 2012 the Kha Ri Gude<sup>3</sup> data were on the NLRD, with the most recent load having been for 2011 data, during 2012. At the end of 2014 data from the inception of the campaign up to the end of 2013 had been uploaded, meaning that the Kha Ri Gude data were completely up to date.
- SETAs, Artisans, Trades:
  - By the end of 2014 – as at the end of 2012 – quality assuring bodies which provided data relevant to the QCTO continued to operate as they had prior to the existence of the QCTO. It was reported that if the QCTO developed an information system that was able to receive data from quality assurance bodies and upload them to the NLRD, the process flow would be adjusted accordingly. In Section 6.4 of the report the QCTO notes that conceptualisation of this system has commenced.
  - By the end of 2014 it was recorded that a great deal of work would be required to upload the data from Training Boards and Apprenticeships, held at the DHET and before that at the Department of Labour (DoL).
- Teacher Training:
  - At the end of 2012 it was reported that the Teacher Training data were held at the Department of Basic Education (DBE), and that uploading the data would require much work. By the end of 2014 there was renewed interest in digitising these records.
- Professional Bodies:
  - At the end of 2012 it was reported that the newly-recognised Professional Bodies had commenced uploading their data concerning holders of Professional Designations<sup>4</sup>. It was expected that this process would be smooth, as one of the criteria for recognition as a Professional Body in the context of the NQF was that it had to have a viable information system capable of submitting data to the NLRD, and that this system was being applied rigorously. Data-loading workshops were under way to assist the then-new process. By the end of 2014 over 70 Professional Bodies had loaded their data. Data-loading workshops continued to be held regularly, as more data loads were expected from over 100 additional Professional Bodies then involved in the recognition process.
- Foreign qualifications:
  - By the end of 2012 some preliminary work had been done on uploading data from SAQA's Directorate for Foreign Qualifications Evaluation and Advisory Services (DFQEAS). By the end of 2014 the records of over 100 people holding foreign qualifications had been placed on SAQA's Verification database and were thus available for SAQA's Verisearch Services (see Chapter 5 for more detail).

(Source: Shapiro 2012, 2014)

Table 8 shows that between 2012 and 2014 there were shifts in the desired directions towards completion of the NLRD. Work is clearly needed to update NLRD datasets, particularly those relating to private Higher Education, pre-1992 Matriculation records, Artisans and Trades, and Teacher Training. On the other hand it is also clear that there has been good progress regarding data for public Higher Education, post-1992 Matriculation records, IEB records, Kha Ri Gude records, SETAs, Professional Bodies and holders of foreign

<sup>3</sup> These data are for the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign: see Section 3.8 for more detail.

<sup>4</sup> SAQA policy for recognising Professional Bodies in the context of the NQF was published in 2012.

qualifications, Apart from the latter, these datasets are either up to date or almost up to date.

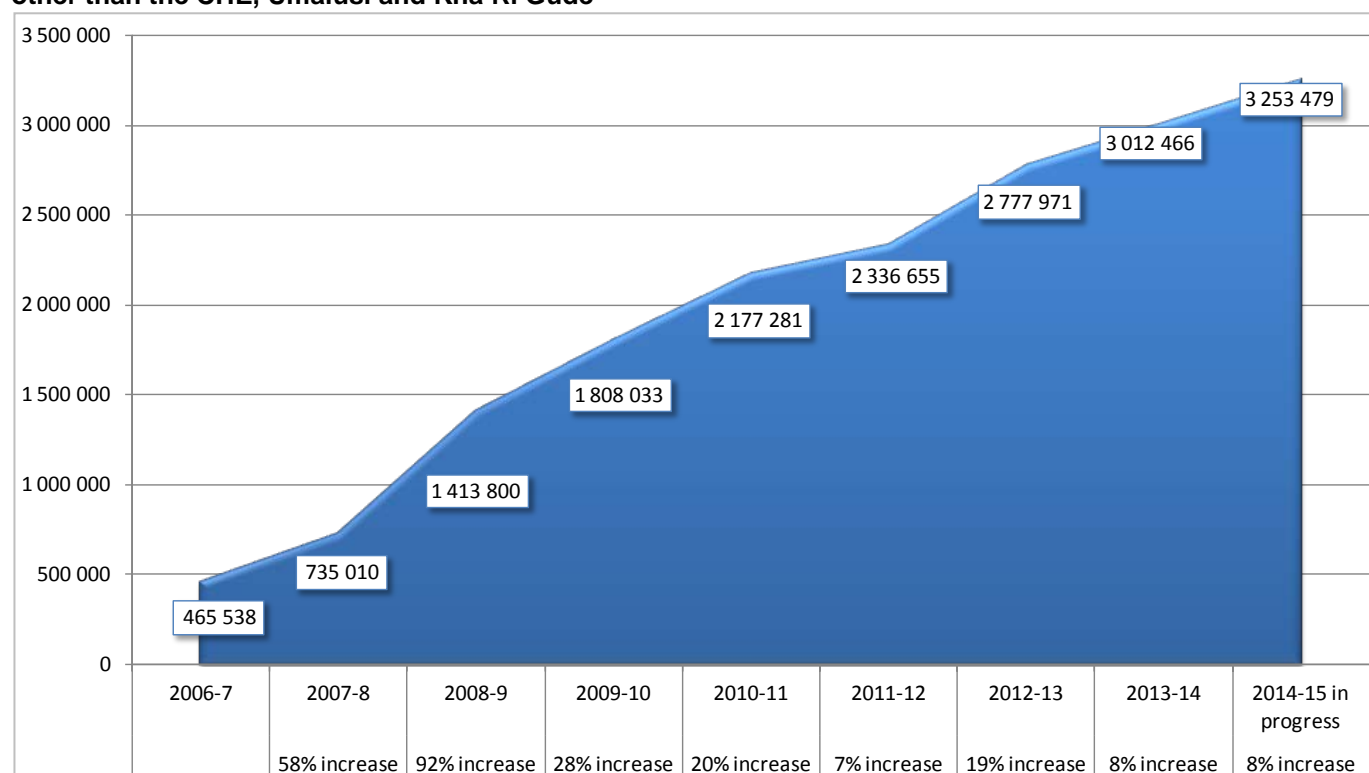
Give the importance of the completeness of NLRD data for analysing progress in the achievement of NQF objectives, summaries of the overall learner records held, and data for each of the Sub-Framework contexts, follow. The important role of NLRD data in enhancing transparency is discussed in Chapter 5.

### 3.1.2.2 Numbers of unique learners in the NLRD

Figure 11 shows the numbers of unique learners in the NLRD, as uploaded by quality assurance bodies – mostly SETAs – that is, by bodies other than the CHE, Umalusi and Kha Ri Gude, from the 2006-2007 financial year to the 2014-2015 financial year as at 15 January 2015. The cumulative total number of learners in the NLRD at the end of each financial year is shown, together with the percentage increases since the preceding year. The increases each year are not only those of the new achievements for that year; they also include data for previous years (as the data are updated).

The pattern evident in Figure 10 indicates the increased willingness and motivation over the years of NQF stakeholders to upload data into the NLRD.

**Figure 10: Cumulative numbers of unique learners in the NLRD, and percentage increases per year, for the period 2006-2007 to 2014-2015, as at 15 January 2015, for data uploaded by data suppliers other than the CHE, Umalusi and Kha Ri Gude**



(Source: NLRD)

### 3.1.2.3 Summary of NLRD data for the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)

Regarding data relating to the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), the NLRD contains information on and from public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Data relating to public HEIs from before 1999 were transferred to the NLRD from the *Register of Graduates* of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The dataset contained almost 700 000 records, some of them dating back to the year 1914. The records for the years up to 1985 were received via voluntary submission of details by graduates and postgraduates in response to questionnaires sent out by the HSRC on the basis of graduation records submitted by each university. For this reason, while containing valuable information, this dataset is not drawn upon in the report.

As noted in Table 8, data relating to public HEIs from 1999 to 2012 were loaded onto the NLRD from the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS)<sup>5</sup>. The updating of HEMIS data has a time lag of approximately two years as the DHET audits the data once HEIs have uploaded the information. In future, public HEIs will load data directly to the NLRD through the already-piloted SAQA Higher Education Data Project (SAQA-HEDP) set up for this purpose.

Data from Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs) are collected and loaded onto the NLRD through the Higher Education Quality Committee Information System (HEQCIS), which was launched in 2008<sup>6</sup>.

Data relating to Teacher Training will ultimately be held at the DHET (this information is currently held within the DBE). At present these records are still paper-based, which means that they cannot yet be loaded onto the NLRD. It is hoped that it will soon be possible to digitise the records and also to load them onto the NLRD.

The main NLRD achievement regarding HEQSF data is the accomplishment of a relatively comprehensive database for public and private HEIs. The main challenges in this regard are ensuring that the approximately 130 private HEIs commence or continue to submit their data for loading onto the HEQCIS at least twice a year and to fill gaps in their data for previous years. Attempts to address these challenges include communicating regularly with all the private HEIs and holding data-loading workshops for those that require them.

#### **3.1.2.4 Summary of NLRD data for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF)**

Greater difficulties have been experienced for more than a decade with data for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF). Until mid-2014, only a relatively small data pool from the Independent Examinations Board (IEB)<sup>7</sup> and the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign<sup>8</sup> had been loaded onto the NLRD. While Umalusi<sup>9</sup> had submitted Matriculation and TVET data relating to 1992 onwards from all of the public providers to SAQA twice prior to 2014, the datasets had not been in a form that could be uploaded. The data for 1992 to 2012 have now been correctly submitted and loaded and are included in the report.

The main challenge with the pre-1992 data<sup>10</sup> is that almost all of this information exists on paper only, and the data that have been captured in digital form are in formats incompatible with the NLRD. All of these

<sup>5</sup> HEMIS is located at and managed by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

<sup>6</sup> HEQCIS is owned by the Council on Higher Education (CHE), and located at and managed by SAQA for the CHE.

<sup>7</sup> The IEB is a private assessment body accredited by Umalusi. The IEB offers external assessment in accordance with national legislation and Umalusi directives for schools registered with it at Grade 9 and Grade 12 levels, at which point successful learners are awarded the National Senior Certificate, and for adult learning, for ABET Level 1 to Level 4 studies. The GFETQSF records loaded directly to SAQA by the IEB relate to AET only; all other GFETQSF data are included in the Umalusi loads.

<sup>8</sup> The Kha Ri Gude initiative is a mass literacy campaign. The records loaded onto the NLRD are for literacy and numeracy below ABET Level 1.

<sup>9</sup> The public matriculation and TVET data from 1992 onwards are located at and managed by Umalusi.

<sup>10</sup> The pre-1992 matriculation and TVET data are located at and managed by the DBE.

data need to be fully digitised and indexed before the dataset can be submitted to the NLRD for uploading. It is hoped that it will be possible to digitise the records fully soon, although it is acknowledged that this would be an extremely expensive undertaking. Some records have been scanned and supplied to SAQA. These are not in a form that could be loaded onto the NLRD, but will be used for verification purposes. There is renewed interest in finding the funding for complete digitisation, and the proposal for this has therefore been updated.

### 3.1.2.5 Summary of NLRD data for the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF)

The data for the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) are comprehensive. Each Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) uploads data at least twice a year<sup>11</sup>. The NLRD-linked Compliance League Table 9 (NLRD2) shows that the majority of the SETAs and the other data suppliers linked to the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) are meeting reporting requirements.

SAQA convenes five meetings per year of the NLRD Partners Forum, for SETAs and other data suppliers<sup>12</sup>. The SETAs continue to load data directly onto the NLRD, as the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) does not yet have a management information system that can receive the SETA data or submit them to the NLRD for uploading.

Table 9 shows the amounts of data uploaded per SETA as at the end of November 2014. A status of 'green' reflects that over 75% of data have been uploaded; yellow, amber, red and purple indicate progressively increasing amounts of work needed. While around ten percent of SETAs have uploaded less than a quarter of their potential data, almost 90% have uploaded over three-quarters of their data.

**Table 9: NLRD data supplier Compliance League Table of 3 October 2014, for the July/ August NLRD Data Loads**

Quality Assurance Body	Green (75% or more data loaded)	Yellow (50%-74% of data loaded)	Amber (25%-49% of data loaded)	Red (Less than 25% of data loaded)	Purple (no plans in place to rectify)	Data Status at previous period end <sup>13</sup>
AGRISSETA	Green					Green
BANKSETA	Green					Green
CATHSSETA	Green					Green
CETA	Green					Green
CHE – public				Red		Green
CHE – private	Green					Green
CHIETA	Green					Green
ETDP SETA	Green					Yellow
EWSETA	Green					Green
FASSET	Green					Green
FOODBEV SETA	Green					Green
FPMSETA	Green					Green
HWSETA	Green					Green
INSETA	Green					Green
LG SETA	Green					Green

<sup>11</sup> There are currently 21 SETAs, one for each of 21 economic sectors.

<sup>12</sup> The NLRD Partners' Forum is attended by representatives of the former ETQAs (SETAs and some Professional Bodies that are responsible for qualifications as well as for professional designations), the three Quality Councils and the DHET, as well as representatives of the services providers that support these information systems.

<sup>13</sup> The previous period was the January/February 2014 data load, for which the League Table was produced in April 2014.

Quality Assurance Body	Green (75% or more data loaded)	Yellow (50%-74% of data loaded)	Amber (25%-49% of data loaded)	Red (Less than 25% of data loaded)	Purple (no plans in place to rectify)	Data Status at previous period end <sup>13</sup>
MERSETA	Green					Green
MICT SETA	Green					Green
MQA	Green					Yellow
PAB				Red		Red
PSETA	Green					Green
SABPP – qualifications	Green					Green
SANC				Red		Red
SASSETA	Green					Green
SERVICES SETA	Green					Red
TETA	Green					Green
Umalusi – schools	Green					Red
Umalusi – colleges	Green					Red
W&RSETA	Green					Green
Total (counts)	25 89.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	3 10.7%	0 0.0%	

(Source: NLRD, November 2014)

### 3.1.2.5.1 Data on Learnerships

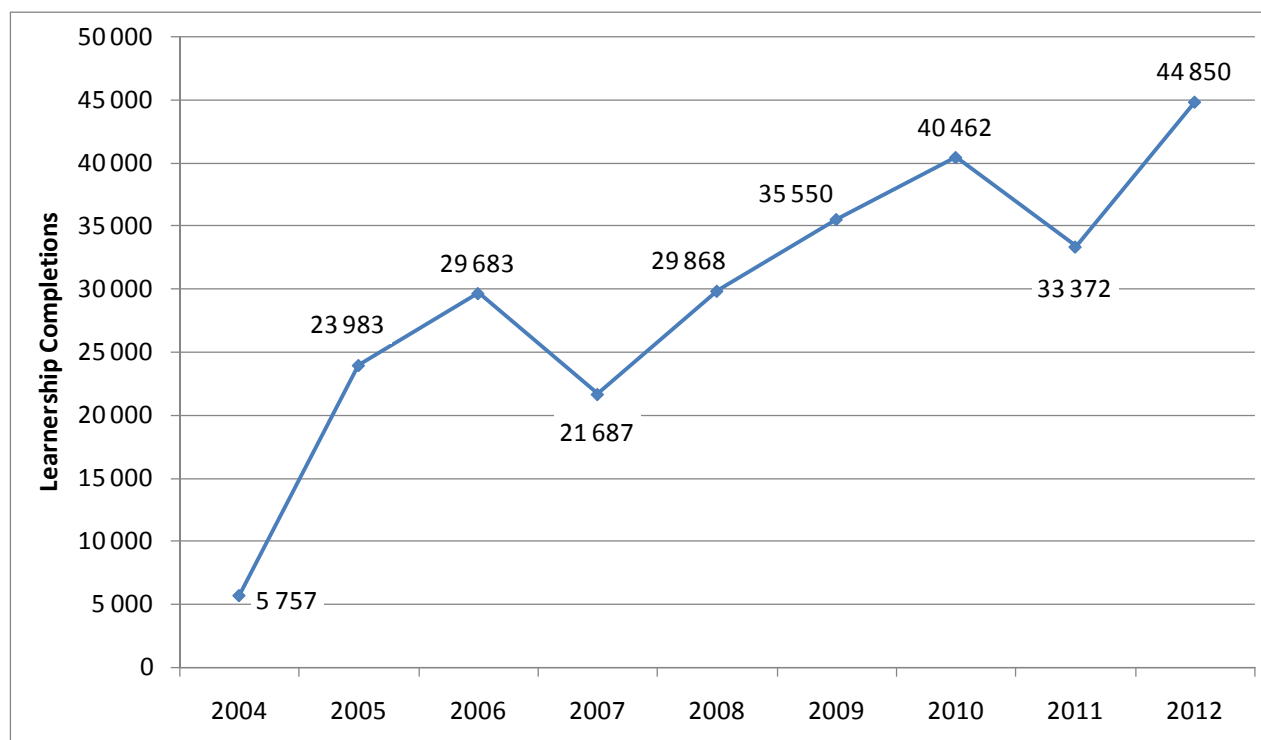
Data on the completion of Learnerships are included in the NLRD<sup>14</sup>. This part of the database is up to date (apart from a slight lag for the 2013 data), as the loading of these data is part of the routine data loads of all SETAs<sup>15</sup>.

Figure 11 shows the total completions of Learnerships per year from 2004 to 2012, recorded in the NLRD. The numbers of Learnerships completed, and the increase in numbers across the years shown, reflect a shift in the direction desired, although there remains a need to increase the numbers of Learnerships completed.

<sup>14</sup> Learnerships in South Africa have been set up in line with the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998). A learnership is defined as “a learning programme registered with the DHET which consists of a structured learning component, a practical work experience component of a specified nature and duration, and which leads to a qualification registered on the NQF which is related to an occupation; a learnership is based on an agreement entered into between the learner, the institution and the employer” (NQFpedia, accessed 15 January 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Learnership-related data have been included in the NLRD since 2004 following a request by the Department of Labour (DoL) for the NLRD to expand its scope and operations to accommodate this aspect.

**Figure 11: Total completions of Learnerships per year from 2004 to 2012, recorded in the NLRD**



(Source: NLRD)

### 3.1.2.5.2 Data on Apprenticeships

As noted in Table 9, ‘legacy’ data from the Training Boards and on Apprenticeships are currently held within the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), having been moved from the Department of Labour (DoL)<sup>16</sup>.

A great deal of work will be required in order to load these data onto the NLRD. Collaborative work between staff from the NLRD, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to date has greatly assisted population of the NLRD, and needs to continue in order to address the remaining existing gaps.

### 3.1.2.6 Summary of NLRD data for Professional Bodies and Professional Designations

NLRD data on Professional Bodies and Professional Designations are relatively new and have been loaded since the publication of the *National Policy for Recognising Professional Bodies and Registering Professional Designations for the Purpose of the National Qualifications Act, Act No. 67 of 2008* (SAQA 2012b) – one of the policies developed after promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) as part of SAQA’s mandate.

The NLRD contains a list of Professional Bodies officially recognised in the context of the NQF. Data on professional designations have been included in the NLRD since the first Professional Bodies were recognised in January 2013, and are submitted to the NLRD by the Professional Bodies themselves.

<sup>16</sup> For more detail see Section 6.3 of the report.



It is expected that this process will be smooth as one of the criteria for official recognition of a Professional Body under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) is that a Professional Body must have a viable information system that is capable of uploading its data to the NLRD. Data-loading workshops are held for those Professional Bodies that require them.

### **3.1.3 Use and users of the NLRD**

This sub-section of the report touches on searchable databases in the NLRD, NLRD-related services and developmental assistance provided by the NLRD.

#### **3.1.3.1 Searchable databases in the NLRD**

Some of the data in the NLRD is searchable. These databases are accessed via SAQA's website and searched through the use of drop-down menus and keywords. The searchable databases lie 'outside' the main NLRD for security reasons. People viewing or querying this information are not querying the 'live' NLRD. Data in the searchable databases are updated automatically every 24 hours.

There are searchable databases, as follows:

- **NQF-registered qualifications and unit standards:** qualifications and unit standards that are registered on the NQF, and fully quality assured<sup>17</sup>.
- **Trades:** the full list of trades, as received by SAQA from the Department of Labour (DoL), and with SAQA Identity Numbers (IDs).
- **All qualifications and unit standards and other part-qualifications available in South Africa:** all qualifications and unit standards, regardless of their status in terms of currency or the extent to which they are quality-assured.
- **Fundamental unit standards and unit standards with general applicability:** unit standards that can be utilised as part of many different qualifications, usually as 'fundamentals'. These unit standards mostly relate to communication, literacy, numeracy, health/ safety, HIV and AIDs, generic management, project management, administration and information technology<sup>18</sup>.
- **Qualifications and unit standards that have passed their Registration End Dates:** qualifications and unit standards that were registered on the NQF and have subsequently expired, including qualifications and unit standards that have been replaced by others.

<sup>17</sup> Since promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) there are no longer qualifications and unit standards registered for public comment as part of their development processes, as the Quality Councils now manage these processes for their respective NQF Sub-Frameworks before the qualifications/ part-qualifications are registered on the NQF. There is however a summary on the NLRD of qualifications and part-qualifications still under development, and their stage of development. 'N' part-qualifications (which are no longer referred to as 'N' programmes) have now been registered on the NQF and can be searched for under Registered Qualifications, Part-Qualifications and unit standards. Before they were integrated in this way, the N qualifications used to form the eighth searchable database.

<sup>18</sup> These unit standards are listed regardless of their registration status on the NQF, in order to increase ease of access to them.

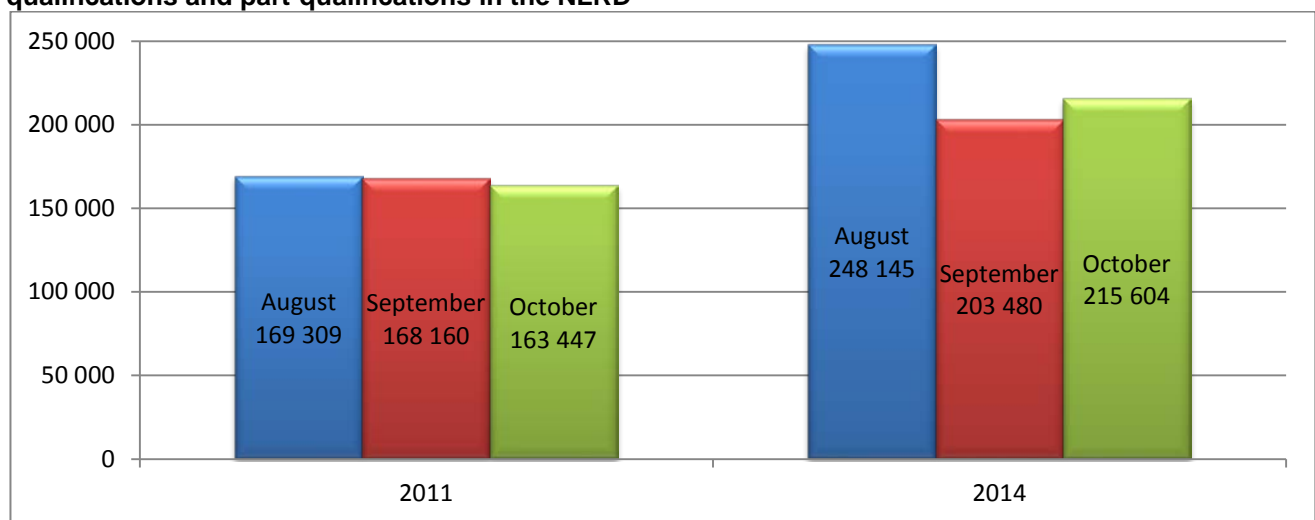
There is an ‘XML URL Builder’ service for downloading information in bulk from the searchable databases, which certain categories of subscribers meeting specified criteria<sup>19</sup> may apply for and pay. This service, which is a fairly specialised requirement, is not widely publicised (Shapiro 2013).

### 3.1.3.2 Visits to the NLRD

Users of searchable databases can subscribe to receive SAQA web alerts every time new data – such as new qualifications or part-qualifications – are added to the searchable databases.

Figure 12 shows the comparison between the number of visits to the searchable databases per month for the period August to October 2011, and for August to October 2014<sup>20</sup>. Three years earlier, in 2008, the average visits per month had been 80 480; in 2011 for those three months the average was 166 970 (an increase of 207%) and in 2014 it was 222 410 (a further increase of 133%).

**Figure 12: Number of visits per month, for specified periods, to the searchable databases of qualifications and part-qualifications in the NLRD**



(Source: NLRD, November 2014)

### 3.1.3.3 NLRD-related services

NLRD clients – another category of ‘NLRD User’ – can commission and pay for analyses of NLRD data, for which they receive reports such as the number of people who have South African qualifications in specific fields at specific levels, aggregated by demographics such as population group, gender and age.

These individually requested reports differ from the *NLRD Trends Reports* (SAQA 2002, 2012), in that they focus on a particular subset of the NLRD data in more fine-grained detail than that covered in the *Trends Reports* (SAQA *ibid.*).

Analyses of trends relating to redress, learner access, success and progression can be conducted in all of these ways. The services also enhance the transparency of the system (see Chapter 5 for more details).

<sup>19</sup> Criteria to be met for access to bulk downloading are available on request. Typically, SETAs, education and training institutions and some private organisations make use of this service. It is not widely publicised in the interests of minimising the misuse of data.

<sup>20</sup> These periods were selected when the analysis of the most recent three months was performed during November 2014, and was compared with the same period a year earlier.

### **3.1.3.4 Developmental assistance provided by the NLRD**

A further category of 'NLRD User' comprises National Qualifications Authorities or their equivalents in countries other than South Africa, who wish to build management information systems for their National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs).

SAQA has assisted several countries since the inception of the NLRD. The nature of this assistance ranges from hosting and giving presentations to visiting delegations from other countries, to running workshops (in South Africa or in the relevant countries), addressing conferences and writing or co-writing the necessary specifications for setting up NLRD-type systems.

While this work is relevant for learner progression, it also greatly aids systemic transparency. More detail regarding this transparency is provided in Chapter 5.

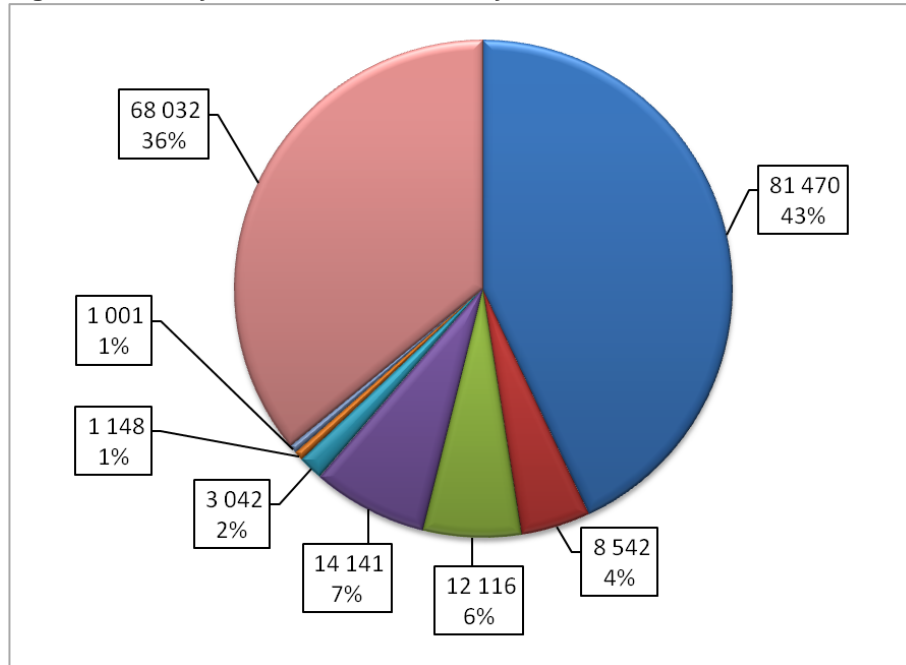
### **3.1.4 Developmental areas for the NLRD**

Areas in which development is needed in the NLRD are pointed to in Section 3.1.2. An additional recent developmental focus includes expanding the recording of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and foreign qualifications, and adding new data fields to assist the National Career Advice Portal (NCAP) (Shapiro 2013). Another comprises assisting the NLRD's data suppliers to align with the new Health and Functioning ratings that have replaced the former Disability Codes that were utilised by Statistics South Africa (Shapiro *ibid.*). The Health and Functioning ratings per category<sup>21</sup> will significantly assist to improve data analysis for an important and often neglected aspect of redress.

Figure 13 shows the only analysis that is possible at present (taken from all of the people currently on the NLRD for whom any disability has been recorded). By the next cycle of the NQF Impact Study, it will be possible to show exactly what the multiple disabilities are, as well as the level of severity of each.

<sup>21</sup> The categories are: Seeing, Hearing, Communicating, Walking, Remembering, Self-Care. The ratings per category are: 1 - No difficulty; 2 - Some difficulty; 3 - A lot of difficulty; 4 - Cannot do at all; 5 - (Stats SA code not used by the NLRD); 6 - Cannot yet be determined; 80 - Former difficulty - none now (this is an NLRD code, not a Stats SA code)

**Figure 13: Analysis of current Disability Codes**



**Legend:**

- Sight (even with glasses)
- Hearing (even with hearing aid)
- Communication (talk/listen)
- Physical (move/stand etc)
- Intellectual (learn etc)
- Emotional (behavioural/psychological)
- Multiple
- Disabled but unspecified

**3.1.4.1 Status of RPL data in the NLRD**

There is already information for over 200 RPL providers in the NLRD. Thousands of learner achievements via RPL are also recorded, but this remains an area for development as it is known that there are many more successful RPL achievements not recorded, or recorded but with the provider or quality assuring body not specifically noting that they were achieved via RPL.

The main reason for the current state of RPL data in the NLRD is that submission of such data was optional prior to publication of the *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* (SAQA 2013a), and most entities did not submit this information. The *National Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)* makes submission of RPL-related data to the NLRD mandatory. This data will however remain strictly confidential to protect learners from any potential related stigma, and will be used for analysis, monitoring and evaluation only.

Trends in the RPL data are presented in Section 3.8.

**3.1.4.2 Status of foreign qualification records in the NLRD**

SAQA’s Directorate: Foreign Qualifications Evaluation Services (DFQEAS) processes about 600 queries for evaluation of foreign qualifications per day (see Chapter 5). Work is under way to load the relevant associated learner records onto the NLRD.

### **3.1.4.3 NLRD data that support NQF advisory services**

The National Career Advice Portal (NCAP), Career Development Services and the planned NQF Navigator services (see Section 1.1.2 of this report) all draw on information in the NLRD. New data fields to assist the NCAP include items such as the Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates and web addresses of providers, and related information.

## **3.2 Data held by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)**

As noted in Section 3.1, the DHET holds the public Higher Education data for 1999 onwards, in the Higher Education Management and Information System (HEMIS). It also holds the data up to 1998 in the former SAPSE system, which consisted of aggregations and not of unit records. At the time of reporting, the DHET was in the process of rolling out the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Management Information System (TVETMIS).

The relatively new Higher Education and Training Management Information System (HETMIS) received data from 2010 onwards, for skills planning purposes. Several of the nine main feeder system for HETMIS are already submitting data twice a year.

The way these data feed into the NLRD is discussed in Section 3.1 of the report. The data are also fed into the following publications, which were used as sources for the analyses in the report.

- *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2011* (DHET 2013d).
- *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2012* (DHET 2014b).

## **3.3 Data held by the Department of Basic Education (DBE)**

The National Department of Education (DoE), before it split into the Departments of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and Basic Education (DBE) in 2010 (see Section 1.3 for details), collected, processed and integrated data from the nine provincial Departments of Education<sup>22</sup>. These data reside in the Education Management Information System (EMIS)<sup>23</sup>. The DBE continues to manage EMIS<sup>24</sup>. The way these data feed into the NLRD is discussed in Section 3.1 of the report.

The data are also fed into the publications, *Education Statistics* and *EMIS: School Realities*. The following publications were used in the report in the attempt to provide snapshots of shifts in developments over time:

- *Education Statistics in South Africa: 2006* (DoE 2008)
- *Education Statistics in South Africa: 2009* (DBE 2010a)
- *Education Statistics in South Africa: 2010* (DBE 2012d)
- *Education Statistics in South Africa: 2011* (DBE 2013a)
- *EMIS: School Realities 2009* (DoE 2010)
- *EMIS: School Realities 2010* (DBE 2011a)
- *EMIS: School Realities 2011* (DBE 2012a)
- *EMIS: School Realities 2012* (DBE 2013b)
- *EMIS: School Realities 2013* (DBE 2014a)

<sup>22</sup> The Department of Basic Education has continued this work to date.

<sup>23</sup> A Further Education and Training Management Information System (FETMIS) existed, which never contained any unitary data and which is being replaced by the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Management Information System (TVETMIS).

<sup>24</sup> See Section 3.3 for more detail.

- *EMIS: School Realities 2014* (DBE 2015a).

The publications (DHET 2013d, 2014b) were also used to analyse DHET. A sub-section on statistics for Post-School Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) level is also included, based on the analyses of data in the following publications:

- *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2011* (DHET 2013d)
- *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2012* (DHET 2014b).

### **3.4 Data used for analyses of redress, and learner access, success and progression in the Sub-Framework contexts**

The large national databases held by SAQA, the DHET and the DBE, and related publications, were presented in Sections 3.1 to 3.3. Different data subsets were used and combined for the trends analyses in the report, in the three NQF Sub-Framework contexts, and to assess progress regarding including people outside the system.

#### **3.4.1 Data used for analyses in the GFETQSF context**

Analyses by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as reported in its annual *Education Statistics* and *EMIS: Education Realities* publications, and by the DHET in its *Statistics for Post-School Education and Training*, were drawn upon in Section 3.5 of the report to show trends in this sector.

Redress and learner access, success and progression trends in the GFETQSF context – shown in Section 3.5 – can be read bearing in mind the macro-level developments related by Umalusi, Council for Quality assurance in General and Further Education and Training in Section 6.1.

#### **3.4.2 Data used for analyses in the HEQSF context**

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) has developed publications entitled *Vital Stats: Public Higher Education* (CHE 2012, 2013, 2014), which present Higher Education and Training system data. Each of these publications presents audited data in figure and table formats for five-year periods up to two years before each publication date. The data are drawn from HEMIS and from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) databases.

The *Vital Stats* publications (CHE *op.cit.*) include data on student enrolment, achievement and throughput rates, by demographic categories such as population group, gender and age, and disciplinary categories such as qualification type and field of study<sup>25</sup>. *Vital Stats 2012* (CHE 2014d) includes extensive data on both under and postgraduate students and qualifications, whereas its earlier counterparts (CHE 2012, 2013) focused mainly on data for undergraduate studies. *Vital Stats 2012* (CHE 2014d) also includes new sections on financial and research data.

The report draws on data in the *Vital Stats* publications for its fine-grained analyses of trends in public Higher Education and Training since 2005, as reported in Section 3.6 of the report. NLRD data are used for analyses based on data from 1992.

<sup>25</sup> These publications also include data on staff in Higher Education Institutions and staff-student ratios – data not used in the present report.

Again, redress and student access, success and progression trends in the HEQSF context – shown in Section 3.6 – can be read bearing in mind the macro-level developments related by the CHE in Section 6.2.

### **3.4.3 Data used for analyses in the OQSF context**

Analyses of trends in the OQSF sector are presented in Section 3.7 of the report. These analyses are based on NLRD data from 2002.

As for the other two Sub-Frameworks, redress and learner access, success and progression trends in the OQSF context – shown in Section 3.7 – can be read bearing in mind the macro-level developments related by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) in Section 6.3.

### **3.4.4 Integrating existing trends analyses**

From time to time SAQA produces a *Trends Analysis* document based on NLRD data. Three such reports have been developed to date (see SAQA 2003b, 2006, 2013d). The relevant analyses were used to expand the analyses in the Sub-Framework contexts where possible. The existing reports and analyses planned for the future are described briefly below for convenience.

#### **3.4.4.1 NLRD Trends in Public Higher Education in South Africa, 1992 to 2001 – NLRD Report 1**

The report, *Trends in Public Higher Education in South Africa, 1992 to 2001* (SAQA 2003b, NLRD Report 1), analyses the public Higher Education achievement trends for 1992 to 2001 in five broad fields of study, further divided into 54 occupational categories. Furthermore, it analyses the ‘availability’ statistics (the best estimate pool of people in each category who are in South Africa and aged below 65 years, for three ‘snapshots’ in time.

#### **3.4.4.2 NLRD Trends in Public Higher Education in South Africa, 1995 to 2004 – NLRD Report 2**

The report, *Trends in Public Higher Education in South Africa, 1995 to 2004* (SAQA 2006, NLRD Report 2), performs the same analyses as those reported in the 1992-2001 analysis (SAQA 2003), this time spanning the decade 1995 to 2004.

#### **3.4.4.3 Work-Related Qualifications and Part-Qualifications Registered on the NQF: Trends 2002 to 2011 – NLRD Report 3**

The report, *Work-Related Qualifications and Part-Qualifications Registered on the NQF: Trends 2002 to 2011* (SAQA 2013d, NLRD Report 3) analyses the data loaded by the former Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs), now referred to as Quality Assuring Bodies, for the decade 2002 to 2011<sup>26</sup>.

This analysis consists of the data representing learner achievement (completion) of qualifications and unit standards in the trades and occupations sector. It is intended that the analysis will be updated at regular intervals, for a ‘rolling’ decade.

#### **3.4.4.4 Future NLRD Trends reports**

To enable the analyses towards the production of future trends reports based on NLRD data, the following activities are in progress or have been flagged for attention at high levels.

<sup>26</sup> Although the report was produced during 2013, there was not yet enough 2012 information present in the NLRD to enable the inclusion of 2012 data in the analysis: it is common practice that publications featuring education statistics lag two years behind the latest data.

Private Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) submissions are being checked for gaps, as the totals that the Private HEIs submit to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in their Annual Reports are usually higher than the aggregations of the unitary data that they submit to the HEQCIS, whereas there should be no differences. This check is currently under way at the DHET, with inputs from the HEQCIS and the NLRD being factored into the process.

A means of recording the existence of Skills Programmes on the NQF and thus on the NLRD (even if they never have 'Registered' status) is necessary in order to understand the suites of unit standards that many learners study. These suites of unit standards make up unique Skills Programmes, and are often the only piece of a specific qualification that the learners will ever study. Without being able to record the organising and linking function played by grouping these unit standards together as Skills Programmes, these records of learning would give the impression that some learners only study random stand-alone unit standards. These perceptions were illustrated in *Work-Related Qualifications and Part-Qualifications Registered on the NQF: Trends 2002 to 2011 – NLRD Report 3* (SAQA 2013). It is hoped that by the time the update of this report is produced, the decision to acknowledge Skills Programmes will have been taken and implemented.

The digitisation requirements mentioned in Section 3.1.2 are essential for the NLRD to undertake the extensive analyses needed for its fourth *Trends* report, on learners' movement across the South African education and training system. The NLRD is uniquely placed to be the foundation database for this report as it contains data on qualifications, part-qualifications, learners and providers across all three Sub-Frameworks of the NQF. Undertaking gap estimates where data are not digitised is onerous and expensive and accuracy is not guaranteed. The gap-filling initiatives demonstrate SAQA's intention not to undertake gap estimates.

#### **3.4.4.5 Potential of the NLRD Trends reports**

While there are systemic challenges, which the NLRD highlights, the *Trends* reports are potentially tools for NQF development.

##### *3.4.4.5.1 Challenges for the Trends reports*

Challenges to be addressed regarding the *Trends* reports include that it has not been possible or ideal to do a trends analysis that shows the total number of registered qualifications over time, for two reasons. First, in order to remain up to date, qualifications that are registered on the NQF must be reviewed every three years and they have to be re-registered or replaced accordingly. At the same time, new qualifications are developed within the NQF Sub-Framework contexts and are registered on the NQF. Qualifications making up the NQF thus rightly shift over time as they remain relevant for changing times.

A second challenging aspect is that, following the shift in the NQF from eight to ten levels<sup>27</sup>, it has not been straightforward, uncontested or possible to assign new NQF levels to all qualifications. In order to capture qualification-related developments over time, analyses need to be done of snapshots at certain moments in time. Programming for this (quantitative) work is complex and were attempted for the purposes of the report.

<sup>27</sup> The eight-level NQF developed under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) was extended to its current 10-level form under the NQF Act (2008a) from 2009, to accommodate greater differentiation between qualifications. .



#### 3.4.4.5.2 Potential of the Trends reports

Notwithstanding these challenges, it is argued that the *Trends* reports based on the NLRD are an important part of assessing the impact of the NQF for a number of reasons. First, the reports provide credible evidence for NQF-related developments. Second, the data are versatile in that they show different aspects of development. Third, planning a *Trends* report well in advance, and ensuring that the necessary data are available when the analysis is needed have the potential to drive development in certain much-needed focal areas.

Sections 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 that follow, present the shifts in patterns relating to redress and learner access, success and progression, and the extent to which these patterns reflect nationally desired trends in the GFETQSF, HEQSF and OQSF contexts respectively.

### 3.5 Redress and learner access, success and progression in the GFETQSF context

The view in some quarters that the schooling sector falls outside the NQF must be noted. This view is a false one, in that the schooling sector – including pre-school Early Childhood Development (ECD), Grade R and the 12 years of school – are as much part of the NQF as are Higher Education and Training, the education and training in the Trades and Occupations sector and Adult Education and Training (AET). ECD, Grade R and schooling form the foundation from which learners can progress (or can be prevented from progressing) to learning in the other Sub-Framework contexts. Alternative forms of access such as the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) exist. The reality however is that the *quality* of schooling and learner achievements influence the extent to which learners are able to progress in the system for education, training, development and work.

Section 3.5 presents trends in learner enrolments and achievements at all school levels, for public and private schools overall, and by gender and population group whenever this information was available.

#### 3.5.1 School enrolment patterns

While the 17 education departments and differing school curricula under *apartheid* were integrated into a single schooling system with a single national curriculum very early in South Africa's democracy (see Section 6.1), the goals of universal enrolment for Basic Education, gender parity and quality in the provision of schooling and learner achievements remain. Further, Education White Paper 5 (National DoE 2001) stipulated that by 2010 all learners entering school Grade 1 in the country must have participated in an accredited Reception Year Programme (Grade R), whether offered at primary schools or stand-alone community-based sites.

In this sub-section of the report, readily available data is analysed in an attempt to understand shifts in school enrolment patterns, in terms of the total numbers of learners enrolling, gross enrolment ratios relative to the school and national populations, the proportions of learners in different school phases, gender parity, and type of school sector.

Table 10 shows the numbers of learners enrolled in ordinary schools by school sector, school grade and gender for 2009-2014. This table and those that follow in the section were compiled from data in comparable formats across a number of publications issued by the Departments of Education (DoE 2008) and Basic Education (DBE 2010a, 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a).

Table 10 shows a steady rise in the numbers of learners enrolling for Grade R across the years 2009-2014. There is also a general rise – with some fluctuations – in the numbers of learners enrolling in the Foundation Phase grades (Grades 1-3) across 2009-2014. In the Intermediate and Senior Phases (Grades 4-

6 and 7-9 respectively), and in Grades 11 and 12, the numbers of learners fluctuate across these years. Numbers of learners enrolled for Grade 10 rose slowly in this period, possibly reflecting a tendency to hold back or repeat Grade 10 in the interests of gaining better results in the final school grades. The table reflects the perception of a trend of relatively high numbers of learners enrolling for school, while over time and especially at secondary school level, enrolment fell.

These patterns are explored in more detail in the sections and tables that follow.

**Table 10: Numbers of learners enrolled in ordinary schools by school sector, school grade, and gender 2009-2014**

School sector	Gender	Year	Grade R	Grades 1-3	Grades 4-6	Grades 7-9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Public	Female	2009	298 072	1 453 458	1 443 000	1 399 777	497 152	458 745	311 711
		2010	337 923	1 430 715	1 393 392	1 443 773	511 977	430 900	297 855
		2011	350 361	1 455 193	1 348 596	1 434 653	543 435	436 158	267 241
		2012	365 191	1 505 034	1 326 471	1 418 503	548 279	454 517	279 343
		2013	370 251	1 554 897	1 305 192	1 379 550	571 170	433 731	306 594
		2014	386 278	1 591 212	1 339 550	1 349 989	567 321	465 832	290 796
	Male	2009	301 135	1 565 130	1 512 458	1 398 345	490 528	392 261	257 284
		2010	342 442	1 544 458	1 472 997	1 446 527	494 404	377 997	245 559
		2011	354 693	1 565 674	1 433 045	1 460 228	512 355	376 469	229 352
		2012	342 442	1 544 458	1 472 997	1 446 527	494 404	377 997	245 559
		2013	377 075	1 673 310	1 388 533	1 433 667	535 743	363 573	249 851
		2014	391 682	1 719 767	1 409 594	1 402 587	533 556	392 937	241 757
	Total	2009	599 207	3 018 588	2 955 458	2 798 122	987 680	351 006	568 995
		2010	680 365	2 975 173	2 866 389	2 890 300	1 006 381	808 897	543 414
		2011	705 054	3 020 867	2 781 641	2 894 881	1 055 790	812 627	496 593
		2012	735 846	3 123 335	2 739 719	2 874 442	1 064 898	835 667	512 133
		2013	747 326	3 228 207	2 693 725	2 813 217	1 106 913	797 304	556 445
		2014	777 960	3 310 979	2 749 144	2 752 576	1 100 877	858 769	532 553
Independent	Female	2009	10 556	46 111	41 643	45 043	14 869	15 678	16 673
		2010	13 428	54 251	47 127	52 417	17 122	17 311	19 720
		2011	14 895	58 715	48 835	53 930	20 104	18 395	20 448
		2012	15 870	63 803	50 745	54 469	20 018	20 688	21 530
		2013	15 926	67 814	51 853	53 720	20 388	19 767	22 192
		2014	17 597	73 960	56 136	54 912	20 000	20 369	21 485
	Male	2009	10 460	46 552	40 382	41 380	13 811	13 831	13 958
		2010	13 410	54 553	46 128	48 537	16 259	15 607	16 250
		2011	14 705	58 069	48 014	50 494	18 295	16 716	17 457
		2012	16 149	63 996	50 356	51 239	18 579	17 976	18 174
		2013	16 118	68 442	51 709	50 567	18 894	17 540	18 559
		2014	17 487	74 303	55 350	52 270	18 995	18 204	17 781
	Total	2009	21 016	93 063	82 025	86 423	28 680	29 509	30 631
		2010	26 838	108 804	93 255	100 954	33 281	32 918	35 970
		2011	29 600	116 784	96 849	104 424	38 399	35 111	37 905
		2012	32 019	127 799	101 101	105 708	38 597	38 664	39 704
		2013	32 044	136 256	103 562	104 287	39 372	37 307	40 751
		2014	35 084	148 263	111 486	107 182	38 995	38 573	39 266
Public + Independent	Female	2009	308 628	1 499 969	1 484 643	1 444 820	512 021	474 423	328 384
		2010	351 351	1 484 966	1 440 519	1 496 190	529 099	448 211	317 575
		2011	365 256	1 513 908	1 397 431	1 488 583	563 539	454 553	287 689
		2012	381 061	1 568 837	1 377 216	1 472 972	568 297	475 205	300 873
		2013	386 177	1 622 711	1 357 045	1 433 270	591 558	453 498	328 786
		2014	403 875	1 665 172	1 395 686	1 404 901	587 321	486 201	312 281
	Male	2009	311 595	1 611 682	1 552 840	1 439 725	504 339	406 092	271 242
		2010	355 852	1 599 011	1 519 125	1 495 064	510 663	393 604	261 809
		2011	369 398	1 623 743	1 481 059	1 510 722	530 650	393 185	246 809
		2012	386 804	1 682 297	1 463 604	1 507 178	535 198	399 126	250 964
		2013	393 193	1 741 752	1 440 242	1 484 234	554 727	381 113	268 410
		2014	409 169	1 794 070	1 464 944	1 454 857	552 551	411 141	259 538
	Total	2009	620 223	3 111 651	3 037 483	2 884 545	1 016 360	880 515	599 626
		2010	707 203	3 083 977	2 959 644	2 991 254	1 039 762	841 815	579 384
		2011	734 654	3 137 651	2 878 490	2 999 305	1 094 189	847 738	534 498
		2012	767 865	3 251 134	2 840 820	2 980 150	1 103 495	874 331	551 837
		2013	779 370	3 364 463	2 797 287	2 917 504	1 146 285	834 611	597 196
		2014	813 044	3 459 242	2 860 630	2 859 758	1 139 872	897 342	571 819

(Sources of data on which calculations are based: DoE 2008, 2010; DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

### 3.5.1.1 Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Gender Parity Index (GPI) in ordinary schools, 2006 and 2009-2011

Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) refers to the numbers of learners regardless of age, enrolled for the specific school grades noted, as a percentage of the total appropriate school-age population (DBE 2013a: 7). A GER of over 100% indicates that there are more learners in the formal school system than in the corresponding school age cohort in the general population (DBE 2013a: 7), possibly due to under-age enrolment, attrition (repetition of grades) or over-age participation.

Table 11 shows a shift away from the desired GER for female and male learners between 2006 and 2011. In the Primary Phase (and GET Band) the gap is bigger for female learners. In the Secondary Phase (and TVET Band) it is bigger for male learners. It is also important to note that the GER scores presented in Table 11 are national averages: GER scores across provinces range from 59 (for male learners in the TVET Band in the Western Cape in 2010) to 112 (for male learners in the Primary Phase in the Western Cape in 2011), with a variety of GER scores spanning this range, across the nine provinces in this period (DBE 2010a: 8; DBE 2012d: 6; DBE 2013a: 7).

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is defined as GER for female learners divided by the GER for male learners. It is used to describe levels of access to education for females and males (DBE 2013a: 8). A GPI of more than '1' indicates that, in relation to the corresponding school-age cohort in the general population, there are more females than males in the school system (DBE 2013a: 8).

Table 11 shows that there are more male than female learners in the first years of schooling – in the Primary Phase and GET Band – and that this pattern is reversed in secondary school and the TVET Band, where there are more female than male learners.

**Table 11: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Gender Parity Index (GPI) in ordinary schools for 2006 and 2009-2011**

School sector	Gender	Year	School phases (Grades 1-12)				School Bands (Grades R-12)			
			GER %		GPI		GER %		GPI %	
			Primary Phase (Gr. 1-7)	Secondary Phase (Gr. 8-12)	Primary Phase (Gr. 1-7)	Secondary Phase (Gr. 8-12)	GET Band (Gr. R-9)	TVET Band (Gr. 10-12)	GET Band (Gr. R-9)	TVET Band (Gr. 10-12)
Public and independent schools	Female	2006	100	95	N/A	N/A	95	92	N/A	N/A
		2009	96	88			92	85		
		2010	92	89			90	84		
		2011	91	90			90	84		
	Male	2006	104	87	N/A	N/A	97	80	N/A	N/A
		2009	99	82			94	75		
		2010	96	83			93	75		
		2011	95	84			93	75		
	Total	2006	102	91	0.96	1.09	96	86	0.98	1.15
		2009	98	85	0.97	1.07	93	80	0.98	1.13
		2010	94	86	0.96	1.07	92	80	0.98	1.12
		2011	93	87	0.96	1.07	92	80	0.97	1.13

(Sources of data on which calculations are based: DoE 2008, 2010; DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2013b)

### 3.5.1.2 Numbers of learners at schools in relation to numbers in the corresponding population groups in 2006, and 2009-2011

Table 12 draws on readily available data to show the numbers of learners enrolled in ordinary public schools in 2006 and 2009-11, compared with the corresponding age groups in the population.

Grade R enrolment, while increasing steadily, still falls short of the 100% target (EASA 2015). It must be noted that research (MM 2015) shows that this part of the system is short of resources and capacity.

Between Grades 1 and 10 – not all represented visually in Table 12 - the numbers of learners enrolled in each grade are just below or just above the numbers in the corresponding population groups (DoE 2008; DBE 2010a, 2012d, 2013a). In 2006, the numbers of learners in all Primary Phase grades were slightly higher than those for the related population groups, suggesting learner repeats of these grades. In the 2009-2011 years, apart from Grade 1, numbers of learners were between 6-9% lower than for the corresponding population groups (*Ibid.*).

Table 12 shows the phenomenon of ‘over-enrolment’ in Grades 1 and 10. In these instances learners were probably being held back – or in the case of Grade 10s, choosing to repeat the grade – due to under-preparedness for the subsequent grades.

Declining percentages of learners enrolling for Grades 11 and 12 are also evident in this table. The reasons for these patterns are worth investigating. It may be that the decreases are swelling the ranks of ‘NEET’ youth – people between the ages of 18 and 24 years *not in employment, education or training* (Cloete and Papier 2012). Or perhaps they signify movement into desired learning pathways that include Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) or Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges (DHET 2014b). Understandings gleaned from cohort studies would potentially enable assessments of the extent to which patterns are moving in desired directions or otherwise.

**Table 12: Numbers of learners enrolled in ordinary public schools in 2006 and 2009-14, compared with the corresponding age groups in the population**

Year	Grade R (%)	Grade 1 (%)	Grade 10 (%)	Grade 11 (%)	Grade 12 (%)
2006	441 587(44) 999 331	1 185 198 (108) 1 000 596	1 093 297 (109) 997 200	890 564 (90) 988 227	568 664 (58) 978 710
2009	620 813 (60) 1 035 221	1 106 827 (107) 1 037 462	1 017 341 (97) 1 046 444	881 661 (85) 1 042 376	599 626 (58) 1 034 380
2010	707 203 (66) 1 063 880	1 116 899 (105) 1 066 387	1 039 762 (100.2) 1 037 439	841 815 (82) 1 027 731	579 384 (57) 1 016 659
2011	734 654 (69) 1 058 162	1 177 089 (108) 1 061 609	1 094 189 (105) 1 044 695	847 738 (82) 1 036 647	534 498 (52) 1 026 916

(Sources of data on which calculation are based: DoE 2008; DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b<sup>28</sup>)

**Legend:**

**BLACK** = Numbers of learners enrolled

**RED** = Numbers of people in the corresponding age group in the general population

**BLUE** = Percentages of learners enrolled higher than the numbers of people in the corresponding population group

<sup>28</sup> The figures in the *Education Statistics* publications (DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013a) differ from those in the *School Realities* publications (DBE 2012d, 2013b), but are of a similar order of magnitude.

### 3.5.1.3 Learner enrolment patterns across school grades over time

Table 13 provides additional detail that complements the data already shown in Table 10. It shows the extent to which patterns in learner enrolment numbers across school grades shift over time.

Increasing Grade R learner enrolment numbers across the years 2006 and 2009-2014 has already been noted. The drop in learner enrolment numbers between the Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3) and the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) is worth noting, as are the steep drops in numbers between the Senior Phase (Grades 7-9) and Grade 10, and further decreases between Grades 10, 11 and 12. There is a need to conduct cohort studies to understand better the reasons underlying these patterns and design appropriate interventions, especially as they remained – if sometimes fluctuating – across the period analysed.

**Table 13: Numbers of learners enrolled in ordinary schools in 2006 and 2009-2014, showing percentage changes in numbers across phase/ grade**

Year	Grade R <sup>1</sup>	Grades 1-3	Grades 4-6 (%)	Grades 7-9 (%)	Grade 10 (%)	Grade 11 (%)	Grade 12 (%)
2006	441 587 (44)	3 807 756	3 018 298 (-20)	2 863 731 (-5)	1 093 297 (-62)	890 564 (-19)	568 664 (-36)
2009	620 223 (60)	3 111 651	3 037 483 (-2)	2 884 545 (-5)	1 016 360 (-65)	880 515 (-13)	599 626 (-32)
2010	707 203 (66)	3 083 977	2 959 644 (-4)	2 991 254 (+1)	1 039 762 (-65)	841 815 (-20)	579 384 (-31)
2011	734 654 (69)	3 137 651	2 878 490 (-8)	2 999 305 (+4)	1 094 189 (-64)	847 738 (-23)	534 498 (-37)
2012	767 865 (**)	3 251 134	2 840 820 (-13)	2 980 150 (+5)	1 103 495 (-63)	874 331 (-21)	551 837 (-37)
2013	779 370 (**)	3 364 463	2 797 287 (-17)	2 917 504 (+4)	1 146 285 (-61)	834 611 (-27)	597 196 (-28)
2014	813 044 (**)	3 459 242	2 860 630 (-17)	2 859 758 (-1)	1 139 872 (-60)	897 342 (-21)	571 819 (-36)

(Sources of data on which calculations are based: DoE 2008, 2010; DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in this column refer to percentages of learners enrolled for Grade R compared with the corresponding age group in the population

(\*\*) Information not yet available

### 3.5.1.4 Gender parity for the already-enrolled within schools

This section of the report addresses patterns in school learners' success rates. Table 14 shows National Senior Certificate (NSC) matriculation examination results for selected subjects by gender for 2008-2011 (DBE 2010a, 2012d, 2013a).

For most NSC subjects, similar percentages of female and male Grade 12 learners achieved scores of 40% and higher – the percentages for Accounting and Business Studies (subjects with relatively high learner enrolment numbers) are shown in Table 14 as examples of the extent of these similarities.

For four subjects however, there are distinct gender patterns. More female learners achieved scores over 40% for the subject Life Sciences (previously Biology). More male learners achieved scores over 40% for Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Physical Science.

Data for the years prior to 2008 tend to mirror these patterns but are not shown here as, relating to an earlier set of national curricula now superseded, they exist in different formats.

**Table 14: National Senior Certificate matriculation examination results for selected subjects by gender for 2008-2011**

School subject	Year	Numbers and percentages of candidates who wrote and achieved			
		Candidates who wrote		Candidates who scored 40% and above	
		Female	Male	Female (%)	Male (%)
Life Sciences	2008	160 275	137 142	65 886 (41.1)	51 901 (37.8)
	2009	162 915	135 748	66 051 (40.5)	53 018 (39.1)
	2010	156 844	128 652	81 678 (52.1)	65 840 (51.2)
	2011	143 698	121 121	66 655 (46.4)	55 647 (45.9)
Mathematics	2008	160 421	138 400	43 555 (27.2)	46 233 (33.4)
	2009	156 953	133 454	41 250 (26.3)	44 106 (33.0)
	2010	142 990	120 044	39 367 (27.5)	42 007 (35.0)
	2011	119 645	104 990	31 246 (26.1)	36 295 (34.6)
Mathematical Literacy	2008	142 920	120 544	75 736 (53.0)	69 094 (57.3)
	2009	152 268	125 409	73 653 (48.4)	68 055 (54.3)
	2010	153 601	127 235	95 277 (62.0)	86 517 (68.0)
	2011	147 717	127 663	92 178 (62.4)	86 721 (67.9)
Physical Science	2008	109 546	108 610	29 111 (26.6)	33 419 (30.8)
	2009	112 910	107 972	20 869 (18.5)	24 583 (22.8)
	2010	106 746	98 618	29 110 (27.3)	31 807 (32.3)
	2011	92 984	87 601	28 263 (30.4)	32 846 (37.5)
Business Studies	2008	120 758	84 041	52 188 (43.2)	35 365 (42.1)
	2009	122 370	84 183	57 607 (47.1)	38 880 (46.2)
	2010	118 627	82 168	54 879 (46.3)	37 380 (45.5)
	2011	108 013	79 664	60 146 (55.7)	43 881 (55.1)
Accounting	2008	107 043	69 035	33 630 (31.4)	21 534 (31.2)
	2009	106 200	68 147	38 010 (35.8)	24 733 (36.0)
	2010	98 123	62 868	34 440 (35.1)	22 312 (35.5)
	2011	81 788	56 115	28 696 (35.1)	20 672 (36.8)

(Sources of data on which calculations are based: DBE 2010a, 2012d, 2013a)

### **3.5.1.5 Numbers and percentages of learners enrolled in public and independent schools, and gender**

Table 15 expands on data already shown in Table 10. It shows the numbers and percentages of learners enrolled in ordinary schools by school sector and phase/ grade, in 2006 and the 2009-2014 period (DoE 2008; DBE 2010a, 2012d, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a).

While the numbers of learners in independent schools are a fraction of the numbers of learners in public schools, it is worth noting – as shown in Table 15 – increasing *percentages* of learners attended independent schools in the Intermediate and Senior Phases, and in Grades 11 and 12, across the 2006-2014 years.

Further, when considering the data for the numbers and percentages of male and female learners in public and independent schools shown in Table 10, gendered patterns can be seen.

According to Table 10, there were more male than female learners in Grades R-6 in public schools in the years analysed<sup>29</sup>. In public schools this gender distribution gap started to close between Grades 7-9, and percentages of female learners increased considerably between the Senior Phase and Grades 10, 11 and 12 respectively.

Gender patterns in independent schools differed from those described here for public schools in the years analysed, and also from the dominant GER trends shown in Table 11. In independent schools the proportions of male and female learners in Grades R-6 were more similar than they were in public schools where these proportions differed – such as in the higher proportion of male learners in 2012-2013 for Grade R, and in 2013-2014 for the Foundation Phase.

Between Grades 7 and 12 the proportions of female and male learners widened increasingly with female learners being in the majority, at both types of schools. The data in Table 11 suggest an important role for independent schools, in providing additional alternative pathways for learners not wanting or able to remain in the state schooling system, and in addressing gender disparities – should enough of these schools choose to focus on these areas.

**Table 15: Percentages of learners enrolled in ordinary schools by school sector and phase/ grade, 2006 and 2009-2014**

School sector	Year	Foundation Phase Grades 1-3 (%)	Intermediate Phase Grades 4-6 (%)	Senior Phase Grades 7-9 (%)	TVET Phase, only Grade 10 (%)	TVET Phase, only Grade 11 (%)	TVET Phase, only Grade 12 (%)
Public	2006	3 282 414 (86)	2 945 597 (98)	2 784 097 (97)	1 063 915 (97)	862 900 (97)	538 972 (95)
	2009	3 018 588 (97)	2 955 458 (97)	2 798 122 (97)	987 680 (97)	851 006 (97)	568 995 (95)
	2010	2 975 173 (97)	2 866 389 (97)	2 890 300 (97)	1 006 381 (97)	808 897 (96)	543 414 (94)
	2011	3 020 867 (96)	2 781 641 (97)	2 894 881 (97)	1 055 790 (96)	812 627 (96)	496 593 (93)
	2012	3 123 335 (96)	2 739 719 (96)	2 874 442 (96)	1 064 898 (97)	835 667 (96)	512 133 (93)
	2013	3 228 207 (96)	2 693 725 (96)	2 813 217 (96)	1 106 913 (97)	797 304 (96)	556 445 (93)
	2014	3 310 979 (96)	2 749 144 (96)	2 752 576 (96)	1 100 877 (96)	858 769 (96)	532 553 (93)
Public + Independent	2006	3 807 756	3 018 298	2 863 731	1 093 297	890 564	568 664
	2009	3 111 651	3 037 483	2 884 545	1 016 360	880 515	599 626
	2010	3 083 977	2 959 644	2 991 254	1 039 762	841 815	579 384
	2011	3 137 651	2 878 490	2 999 305	1 094 189	847 738	534 498
	2012	3 251 134	2 840 820	2 980 150	1 103 495	874 331	551 837
	2013	3 364 463	2 797 287	2 917 504	1 146 285	834 611	597 196
	2014	3 459 242	2 860 630	2 859 758	1 139 872	897 342	571 819

(Sources of data on which calculations are based: DoE 2008, 2010; DBE 2012d, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

A summary of learner enrolment trends in 2008-2014 is provided below.

#### Summary of school enrolment data, 2008-2014

- There was a steady rise in the numbers of learners enrolling for Grade R in the period 2009-2014. Universal enrolment had not been achieved at the time of the latest available data.
- There was a general rise in the numbers of learners enrolling in the 2009-2014 period in the Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3), Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6), Senior Phase (Grades 7-9) and Grade 10 in schools, with a small number of fluctuations across years. Grade 11 and 12 enrolment numbers fluctuated across these years.
- The rise in the numbers of learners enrolling in Grades 1-10 in the period 2009-2014 needs to be offset by the drop in enrolment numbers between school phases: between the Foundation and Intermediate Phases learner numbers dropped between 4-20%; between the Senior Phase and

<sup>29</sup> The exception the proportions of male and female learners enrolled for Grade R in public schools in 2012 is noted.

Grade 10 there were drops of around 60%; between Grade 10 and 11 by around 20%, and between Grade 11 and 12 by around 30%.

- Between 2006 and 2011 the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of learners in the GET and TVET Bands – the proportions of learners in Grades 1-9, and Grades 10-12 respectively, relative to the proportions of people in the corresponding age groups in the general population – shifted away from the desired relationships: fewer learners were enrolled in schools than should have been. In Grades 1 and 10 however, there were proportionally higher numbers of learners, suggesting that learners were staying back or being held back in these grades.
- The Gender Parity Index for the 2006-2011 period shows that in public schools, there were more male than female learners in primary school, and more female than male learners in secondary school, with the gap increasing with increase in school grade: the numbers of male learners dropped steadily over the course of schooling. In independent schools there was more similarity between the genders in primary school. In secondary school there were again higher and increasing proportions of female learners with the rise in school grades.
- The numbers of learners enrolled in independent schools were small relative to those enrolled in public schools across the 2006-2014 period but the proportions increased steadily across these years, from 3-4% for learners in Grades 1-11, and from 5-7% for Grade 12 learners.

Further to understand redress, learner access, success, and progression in the school sector, school enrolment data is considered alongside readily available data for learner achievements in the Annual National Assessments (ANA), and National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations.

### **3.5.2 Patterns in school learner achievements in the Annual National Assessments (ANA) and National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations over time: redress, access, success, progression**

Considering learner success rates in national assessments in conjunction with learner enrolment patterns in public schools has the potential to shed light on redress, learner access, success and progression in the school sector. Success in national assessments is seen here as an additional level of access – or access at a deeper level than that provided by physical access.

Learner achievements are considered in relation to selected National Senior Certificate (NSC) and Annual National Assessment (ANA) results – these being the only national assessments at school level in the country.

#### **3.5.2.1 The Annual National Assessments (ANA)**

In 2012 the Department of Basic Education (DBE) instituted Annual National Assessments (ANA) for learners in Grades 1-6 and 9 in public and state-subsidised independent schools (DBE 2014d), after introducing ANA for Grades 1-6 in 2011. This assessment initiative was one of the actions taken by the Department in response to the high attrition rates of learners at various points in the school system (see Section 3.5.1) and to strengthen National Senior Certificate (NSC) results and the competencies of learners exiting the school system.

The idea is to assess levels of learner competence in literacy and numeracy annually, and to use the ANA results to identify and address gaps before learners exit the system or struggle with the National Senior Certificate.



In the three years of its implementation prior to the report, emphasis was placed on strengthening the reliability and validity of the ANA tools used, and the data obtained through use of these tools (DBE 2014d). Finalisation of the CAPS curricula in 2014 (see Section 6.1) enabled alignment of the ANA tests and the curricula. Diagnostic reports from each ANA have been used to inform the development and administration of subsequent ANA, and related interventions (DBE 2014d).

Importantly, as part of improving the overall quality of the ANA, starting from the year after full commencement of the ANA – in 2013 – a ‘Verification Stream’ of tests was run in selected schools alongside the ‘General Stream’ of tests which all schools received. While schools in the General Stream conducted ANA at Grade 1-6 and 9 levels, the Verification Stream tests were only run at Grades 3, 6 and 9 levels in the selected schools in 2013 and 2014. The Verification Stream tests were the same as those in the General Stream but were administered and marked by an independent team (ANA in the General Stream were marked by the teachers of the learners involved). The results of the Verification Stream tests were used to confirm the reliability of the results of the General Stream.

ANA test papers were developed for Mathematics, Home Languages and First Additional Languages in all 11 official languages for the Foundation Phase tests, and in English and Afrikaans for the Senior Phase tests.

#### 3.5.2.1.1 Overarching ANA results, 2012-2014

In his 2010 State of the Nation Address, the South African President said that by 2014 at least 60% of all Grade 3, 6 and 9 learners in the country should have achieved acceptable levels of competency. An acceptable level of competency in a learning area in this context comprises an achievement of 50% and higher in an ANA test and in a CAPS curriculum-related examination (DBE 2014d: 10).

Tables 16 and 17 show the percentages of learners obtaining scores of 50% or more in the General, and Verification Streams in the ANA tests for Mathematics, Home Languages and First Additional Languages for the 2012-2014 years.

**Table 16: Percentages of learners obtaining at least 50% in the ANA General Stream for Mathematics, Home Languages and First Additional Languages, by year**

Percentages of learners achieving at least 50% in the ANA Stream 1 tests									
Grade	Mathematics			Home Languages			First Additional Languages		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
1	68	60	68	58	61	63	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	57	59	62	55	57	31	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	41	53	56	52	51	56	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	37	37	37	43	49	57	34	39	41
5	30	33	37	40	46	57	30	37	47
6	27	39	43	43	59	63	36	46	45
9	13	14	11	43	43	48	35	33	34

(Source: DBE 2014d)

**Table 17: Percentages of learners obtaining at least 50% in the ANA Verification Stream for Mathematics, Home Languages and First Additional Languages, by year**

Percentages of learners achieving at least 50% in the ANA Stream 2 tests									
Grade	Mathematics			Home Languages			First Additional Languages		
	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014	2012	2013	2014
3	36	59	65	57	57	66	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	11	27	35	39	68	77	24	41	42
9	2	2	3	39	37	48	21	17	18

(Source: DBE 2014d)

Table 16 shows that in the General Stream for the ANA – involving almost all learners in Grades 1-6 and 9 in public and state-subsidised independent schools – the percentages of learners achieving 50% or more in the respective tests were lower than ideal, and far lower than the Presidential targets.

In the General Stream for the Mathematics ANA (Table 16), 60% or more learners achieved 50% or more in the tests only in Grade 1 (across all three years 2012-2014), and in Grade 2 in 2014. Percentages of learners achieving 50% in the Mathematics ANA generally decreased as school grades rise. However percentages of learners achieving 50% or more in the Mathematics ANA *increased* for all school grades across the years 2012-2014 (except Grade 9).

In the General Stream for the Home Languages ANA (Table 16) the Presidential target was met only in Grade 1, in 2013 and 2014, and Grade 6 in 2014. As for Mathematics, percentages of learners achieving 50% or more in the ANA for Home Languages generally decreased as school grades rise, although this pattern changed in 2014. Percentages of learners achieving 50% or more *increased* for all school grades (except Grade 2) across the years 2012-2014, and percentages of learners achieving 50% or more were generally higher for the Home Languages than for Mathematics.

Percentages of learners achieving 50% or more for First Additional Languages, although increasing across the 2012-2014 years, were low (Table 16).

Table 17, which shows the results from the Verification Stream, suggests that over half of the ANA tests to date have been appropriately managed. Where the percentages of learners achieving 50% differed by more or less than 10% from the General Stream percentages, these have been differentiated by more intense colour in Table 17 to indicate the closeness between the generally administered and verification tests. The gender and social class patterns of the ANA results are worth noting.

#### 3.5.2.1.2 ANA results, 2012-2014: gender patterns

When considering the ANA results in the years 2012-2014 in relation to the gender of learners, clear differences emerge. Table 18 shows that female learners scored higher average percentage marks than did male learners, across all three learning areas, years and school grades. The patterns are in line with world trends.

**Table 18: Average percentage marks in the ANA for Mathematics, Home Languages and First Additional Languages (FAL) by school grade, year and gender**

Year	School Grade	Mathematics %		Home Languages %		First Additional Languages %	
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
2012	3	42.9	39.6	56.1	48.2	N/A	N/A
	6	27.5	25.8	46.0	39.6	38.8	32.6
	9	13.4	11.9	46.9	39.9	38.1	31.4
2013	3	52.6	48.8	54.7	47.0	N/A	N/A
	6	40.4	37.6	62.5	55.0	49.5	42.1
	9	14.8	13.1	46.4	39.6	36.4	30.4
2014	3	57.5	53.7	60.5	52.2	N/A	N/A
	6	45.0	41.3	66.3	59.0	50.0	41.1
	9	11.7	10.0	51.3	45.3	37.8	31.2

(Sources from which the data were obtained: DBE 2012e, 2013d, 2014d)

### 3.5.2.1.3 ANA results, 2012-2014: social class patterns

When considering the ANA results in the years 2012-2014 in relation to learner quintile as an expression of the social class contexts in which they were learning, patterns also begin to emerge.

Table 19 shows that learners' average percentage marks increased with the increase in social class levels. There was generally an increase in learners' percentage marks – excluding those of the Grade 9s – across the years 2012-2014. Achievement levels were still lower than desired.

**Table 19: Average percentage marks in the ANA for First Additional Languages (FAL) by school grade and poverty quintile 2012, 2013 and 2014**

Year	School Grade	Quintile 1	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5
2012	4	31.5	31.9	34.5	38.0	44.7
	5	27.4	27.8	29.8	33.9	46.8
	6	33.0	33.9	36.3	39.8	50.2
	9	31.3	32.5	35.6	38.8	46.5
2013	4	36.7	38.9	40.2	44.5	54.8
	5	33.5	34.9	36.5	43.4	59.5
	6	43.3	45.0	46.9	51.3	59.2
	9	30.4	31.7	33.9	37.2	47.5
2014	4	38.7	40.2	42.7	46.5	49.8
	5	44.0	46.2	48.0	52.2	56.9
	6	43.0	44.7	46.6	50.6	60.0
	9	32.4	33.6	34.7	37.0	42.9

(Sources from which the data were obtained: DBE 2012e, 2013d, 2014d)

### 3.5.2.1.4 Comment on the 2012-2014 ANA results

Overall, while the ANA results were lower than they should have been, some movement in the desired directions can be seen in Tables 16, 17, 18 and 19.

The DBE (2014d) has identified the Grade 9 results as being problematic. Issues identified regarding the Mathematics ANA at Grade 9 level included that learners were found to be unfamiliar with Mathematical

terminology and properties, had not mastered algebraic skills and were not able to solve problems involving spatial manipulations (DBE *ibid.*: 11). Issues relating to the Language ANA at this level included learners struggling to respond to questions that required the use of their own words, being unable to interpret sentences and lacking editing skills (DBE *ibid.*).

The understanding and use of language has emerged as a major issue. This reality is underscored by Census 2011 findings (Statistics South Africa 2011), which show that English is a home language for just over 8% of South Africans. All of the Home Language scores – reflecting, in effect, basic literacy – were too low.

### 3.5.2.1.5 Quality interventions reported by the DBE in relation to the ANA

Table 20 summarises the main interventions reported by the DBE (DBE 2012e, 2013d, 2014d) towards enhancing systemic quality that could in turn enhance learner achievements in the ANA. The quality enhancing initiatives of Umalusi, another essential component of quality promotion in the schooling system, are described in Section 6.1.

It is worth noting the sheer extent of the initiatives under way, as presented in Table 20 and Section 6.1 of the report (by Umalusi). The DBE not only continued and maintained its quality-enhancing activities, but has expanded and added to these initiatives across the years analysed. What is needed, is not necessarily more initiatives, but maintenance of existing successful initiatives and monitoring of their impact. This area of work is possibly one for inclusion in future NQF impact study reports.

**Table 20: Summary of DBE interventions towards enhancing quality, cited in the ANA reports by year**

2012
<p><b>Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements:</b> To mitigate the challenges associated with the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for Grades R–9, the re-packaged curriculum – the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) – was introduced from the beginning of 2012 (see also Section 6.1).</p> <p><b>Integrated National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy:</b> This whole-school approach – which has introduced systems, processes and procedures aimed at improving classroom practice and learner achievement – has been introduced in all public and state-supported schools.</p> <p><b>Annual National Assessment Exemplars:</b> The ANA test developers created three sets of exemplars for Languages and Mathematics, to expose teachers to different ways of questioning that suit differing learning styles without compromising the skills assessed.</p> <p><b>Curriculum Coverage Instrument:</b> The DBE has developed a national instrument to monitor curriculum coverage in schools. It focuses on intensified monitoring, guidance, control and support of teaching and learning.</p> <p><b>National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA):</b> The NSLA is a strategy to effect the DBE’s <i>Action Plan</i> to improve learner performance.</p> <p><b>Workbooks:</b> During the 2011 academic year the DBE distributed Literacy and Numeracy workbooks to over 11 million learners (Grades 1–6). In 2012, Mathematics workbooks were also printed and distributed to learners in Grade 9. These workbooks were developed in conjunction with the CAPS to assist teachers and learners with the sequencing and pacing of work required, through planned worksheets.</p> <p><b>Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS) and District Support:</b> A total of 70 external moderators were deployed in all provinces to monitor and evaluate, among others, the implementation of the IQMS in schools, the quality of internal and external assessment, and monitoring the implementation of schools’ intervention strategies emanating from the ANA results.</p>
2013
<p><b>Introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) in Grades 1–6:</b> Incremental</p>

implementation of the CAPS curricula commenced. In 2013, the Grades 1–6 ANA tests aligned to the CAPS. By 2014 all ANA tests for Grade 9 would be aligned to these curricula.

**Monitoring of curriculum coverage:** The DBE developed a national instrument to monitor curriculum coverage in schools, based on intensified monitoring, guidance, control and support of teaching/ learning.

**Extended monitoring of schools:** To provide the Minister of Basic Education with an independent account of the state and developmental needs of schools, the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) was launched in 2009. NEEDU work continued in 2013.

**Development of teachers:** Following the ANA 2012 results, the DBE developed a diagnostic report on areas of weakness identified, and developed a step-by-step guide for teachers on learning from the ANA results.

**Enhancing the National Strategy for Learner Attainment:** The ANA results were used by the DBE to enhance the National Strategy for Learner Attainment (NSLA).

**National reading interventions:** The National Reading Strategy was developed in 2008, leading to initiatives such as (a) 100 Storybook project (the provisioning of storybooks to historically disadvantaged primary schools); (b) Drop All and Read Campaign; (c) Teaching Reading in the Early Grades, A Teacher’s Handbook; and (d) The Foundations for Learning (FFL) Campaign.

**Integrated national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy:** The whole-school approach cited in 2012.

**Support for English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT):** The DBE in collaboration with the British Council (BC) provided training to Foundation and Intermediate Phase English Language teaching specialists in provincial structures; Higher Education Institutions; and members of teacher unions.

**Mathematics Intervention:** A diagnostic analysis of the ANA 2012 results was conducted early in 2013 to identify challenges and develop teaching strategies to address the issues.

**Provision of exemplars and support materials:** In 2013, the DBE strengthened the materials used to prepare learners for the writing of the ANA tests.

**Provision of workbooks:** Workbooks (also cited in 2012) were provided again in 2013.

## 2014

**CAPS Implementation:** The CAPS curricula were implemented in the Senior Phase in 2014. DBE support accompanied the implementation and would continue to be provided.

**2013 Diagnostic Report & 2014 Framework for Improvement:** The Framework for Improvement was generated to guide the sector on how to address challenging ANA topics which were identified as being problematic due to inappropriate teaching and learning. The Framework was mediated with provincial coordinators who were then expected to develop Provincial Improvement Plans and District Improvement Plans for targeted support to teachers.

**DBE-SASOL INZALO Workbooks:** The DBE, in partnership with the Sasol-Inzalo Foundation, developed high quality CAPS-aligned workbooks for Mathematics in the Senior Phase, which provide clarity regarding content, and teaching and assessment methodologies.

**Reconfiguration of Dinaledi and Technical Schools Grants:** The current Dinaledi and Technical Schools grants would be consolidated into a new Maths, Science and Technology Schools Improvement grant.

**Language Framework:** The DBE developed a Language Framework for Strengthening the Teaching and Learning of Languages as Subjects and as Languages of Learning and Teaching (LoLT), to strengthen the promotion, development and acquisition of the official languages in the country.

**Strengthening of Teaching and Learning of English First Additional Language (EFAL):** The EFAL strategy was implemented and improved learner results in Grades 1-6.

**Library Provisioning:** The DBE identified two models that would enhance access to literacy and provide library and information services, namely (a) the provision of mobile libraries (trolley libraries) for secondary schools, and (b) the provision of classroom libraries (classroom reading corners) for primary schools.

**Launching of Book Floods:** The DBE launched two Book Flood campaigns on Mandela Day that were run simultaneously at the DBE offices and Menlyn Shopping Centre from 18 July to 18 August 2014. Over 450 books were donated during the campaign.

**Reading Norms:** Acknowledging that the use of norms in reading assessments enables teachers to make teaching and learning interventions, the DBE developed Reading Norms for Grades R-12 which are aligned to the CAPS curricula.

**Implementation of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA):** In order to assess foundational reading skills in the early grades a simple, effective and low-cost tool – the EGRA - was developed. The EGRA involves a method-

independent approach to assessment.

**Implementation of Drop All and Read:** The DBE is advocating the resuscitation of the Drop All and Read initiative by encouraging schools to set aside a dedicated period (20-30 minutes) at least once a week to encourage the entire school population (teachers, learners and support staff) to engage in a variety of reading activities that benefits each school's context and needs.

**Reading across the Curriculum:** The DBE has implemented a strategy to promote reading across the curriculum in content subjects: all teachers are encouraged to include a dedicated reading activity in their lessons.

**Strengthening of English as the Language of Learning and Teaching in Grade 4:** The DBE has embarked on a project to support learners transitioning to using English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT).

**Development of DBE Reading Resources for Grades R-3:** The First Additional Language (FAL) Reading Series for Grade 1 has been completed and Big Books were distributed to the pilot schools that were implementing the Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL). The Grade 2 FAL readers for IIAL pilot schools and Grade R Reading Series would be distributed in 2015. The Home Language Reading Series for Grades 1-3 would be ready for distribution in 2016.

**Promotion of African languages:** To date, storybooks were developed in isiXhosa, Sesotho, isiNdebele, Xitsonga and Setswana. Schools and teachers are encouraged to access and contribute to the development of resources.

**Support to Multi-Grade Schools to Improve Learner Performance:** The Department of Basic Education has embarked on the following initiatives in support of multi-grade schools: (a) Teacher and Subject Advisor Training; (b) Multi-grade Toolkit for Multi-grade Schools; and (c) Learn English Audio Project (LEAP).

**The Certificate in Primary English Language Teaching (CiPELT)** in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, as well as a similar programme in the Senior Phase called the **Certificate in Senior English Language Teaching (CiSELT)**, were introduced, to be monitored by provincial Departments of Education.

**The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy** and the **National Reading Programme** were introduced.

**Strengthened District Support** was instituted by the DBE. This initiative included encouraging district officials to take leadership and ownership of their districts.

**Monitoring and Support** was strengthened through the submission of quarterly reports by provinces.

*(Sources from which the summaries were made: DBE 2012A, 2013A, 2014A)*

A summary of learner achievements in the ANA in 2012-2014 is presented in the box below.

#### **Summary of learner achievements in the ANA, in 2012-2014**

- Learner achievements in the ANA were far below the Presidential targets of 60% of learners achieving 50% or more in the ANA. Of all the school grades doing the tests, the scores of Grade 1-3 learners were closest to these targets in the 2012-2014 tests.
- Decreasing percentages of Grade 1-6 and 9 learners achieved 50% or more in the ANA tests for Mathematics and Home Languages as school grades increased, across all three years analysed.
- Percentages of Grade 9 learners achieving 50% or more for the ANA tests were extremely low across all three years, 2012-2014.
- More female than male learners achieved 50% or more in all the ANA tests.
- The average percentages of learners achieving 50% or more for the ANA were similar – and relatively low – for learners in Quintiles 1-3; the percentages of learners achieving at these levels in Quintile 4 were higher, and the percentages of learners achieving 50% or more were highest in Quintile 5.
- On the positive side, increasing percentages of Grade 1-6 learners achieved 50% or more in the ANA tests for Mathematics, Home Languages and First Additional Languages, across the 2012-2014 years.
- The gap between percentages of learners achieving 50% in the Verification Stream and percentages in the rest of the schools started to close across the years 2012-2014, indicating improving management of the administration and marking of the tests across these years.

### 3.5.2.2 The National Senior Certificate (NSC)

The ANA have been administered in schools up to Grade 9 level since 2012. The matriculation (Grade 12) examinations on the other hand have existed as a single set of national examinations for all learners completing secondary school since shortly after the achievement of democracy in South Africa in 1994. Since then, following a number of curriculum revisions as the school system integrated (see Section 6.1 for more details), the form of the matriculation examinations has shifted.

Up to 2007, at school Grade 10-12 level, school subjects could be taken and examined at two levels. At Higher Grade level, exam papers focused on understanding of the theoretical underpinnings and knowledge of the subjects; exams emphasised demonstration of this understanding, the application of knowledge, and analysis and synthesis in problem-solving. At Standard Grade level, learning and exams focused more on recall and description.

Integration of the two levels commenced in 2006 with the introduction of National Curriculum Statements (NCS) at Grade 10 level, and the first Grade 12 National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations were written in 2008<sup>30</sup>. In the tables and sub-sections that follow learner enrolment for NSC exams, an overarching summary of NSC results, a summary of results for selected NSC subjects, and related quality interventions – for the years 2008-2013 – are presented.

#### 3.5.2.2.1 Total enrolment for NSC examinations 2008-2013

Table 21 shows the total numbers and percentages of full-time and part-time learners enrolling to write NSC examinations across the years 2008-2013<sup>31</sup>, the period for which comparable data were available. In this period, the percentages of full-time learners decreased, with a corresponding increase in part-time learners. These patterns have implications for the mode of delivery of the NSC, and for the Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) needed. The low percentages of learners enrolling in relation to the corresponding age group in the general population is discussed in Section 3.5.1.2.

**Table 21: Total numbers of full-time and part-time learners enrolling to write National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, 2008-2013**

Year	No. of learners (%) Full-time	No. of learners (%) Part-time	Total
2008	588 643 (99.8)	1 116 (0.2)	589 759
2009	580 937 (93.7)	39 255 (6.3)	620 192
2010	559 166 (87.1)	82 835 (12.9)	642 001
2011	511 038 (81.9)	112 780 (18.1)	623 818
2012	527 814 (81.6)	120 484 (18.4)	647 074
2013	576 490 (81.5)	130 646 (18.5)	707 136

(Sources from which the data were obtained: DoE 2010; DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)<sup>32</sup>

#### 3.5.2.2.2 Summary of overall results for NSC examinations, 2008-2013

Table 22 shows the numbers of learners enrolling for, writing and passing the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations in 2008-2013 – as reported by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). A column has

<sup>30</sup> Extensive research conducted by Umalusi to inform the quality assurance of the new exams is reported in *'From NATED 550 to the new National Curriculum: Maintaining standards in 2008'* (Umalusi 2009b).

<sup>31</sup> The numbers of learners recorded across DoE and DBE publications within particular years are not necessarily the same (examples include but are not limited to DoE 2008, DBE 2010a, 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2013b, 2013d, 2014a, 2014d).

<sup>32</sup> The numbers of learners recorded across DoE and DBE publications within particular years are not necessarily the same (examples include but are not limited to DoE 2008, DBE 2010a, 2011a, 2012a, 2012d, 2013a, 2013b, 2013d, 2014a, 2014d).

been added to the right-hand side of the table, showing the ‘actual success rate’ – the percentages of those *enrolling* who passed, given that there is drop-out between enrolment and writing. A column has also been inserted toward the left side of the table to show the order of magnitude of numbers of Grade 1 learners enrolling in the years concerned.

It is well-known that the real overall success rates of learners in schools are lower than those published, when the numbers of learners enrolling in Grade 1 are compared with the numbers passing the NSC exams. If numbers of learners to the order of magnitude of one million enroll in Grade 1, numbers of learners enrolling to write the final NSC exams amount to just over half, and numbers passing between a quarter and a third of those that entered Grade 1.

In light of these patterns – and the drops in numbers of learners between the Foundation and Intermediate Phases, between the Senior Phase and Grade 10, and between Grades 10, 11 and 12 shown in Table 13 – there is an urgent need to track cohorts of school learners, in order to guide the implementation of interventions needed and to monitor progress.

**Table 22: Total numbers of learners enrolling for, writing and passing the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, 2008-2013**

Year	No. of learners enrolled in Grade 1	No. of learners enrolled for NSC	No. of learners writing NSC exams (%)	No. of learners passing NSC exams (%)	Actual success rate (%)
2008	-----	589 759	533 561 (90.5)	344 790 (64.6)	<b>344 790 (58.5)</b>
2009	1 105 186	620 192	552 073 (89.0)	337 180 (61.1)	<b>337 180 (54.4)</b>
2010	1 116 899	642 001	537 543 (83.7)	364 513(67.8)	<b>364 513 (56.8)</b>
2011	1 177 089	623 818	496 090 (79.5)	348 117(70.2)	<b>348 117 (55.8)</b>
2012	1 208 973	647 074	511 152 (79.0)	377 829(73.9)	<b>377 829 (58.4)</b>
2013	1 222 851	707 136	562 112 (79.5)	439 779(78.2)	<b>439 779 (62.2)</b>

(Sources from which the data were calculated: DoE 2010; DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

**Legend**

----- Information not available in the documents analysed

**3.5.2.2.3 Summary of overall results for NSC examinations, 2008-2013**

Table 23 shows the numbers of learners writing and passing selected subjects in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations in the years 2008-2013. Considering Tables 23 and 24 together, the pattern of numbers and percentages of learners writing the NSC Mathematics exams declining in the period analysed, while those for Mathematical Literacy increased, is noted.

The increases in pass rates for the subjects shown, while widely mistrusted by the public, are based on very thorough quality assurance measures implemented by Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (see Section 6.1). On the one hand, public education is needed regarding this quality assurance; on the other, cohort studies of the progression of learners in Post-School Education and Training and the world of work are needed to understand the strengths and gaps in the competencies of learners who are successful in the NSC examinations.



**Table 23: Numbers of learners writing and passing selected subjects in National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, 2008-2013**

Subjects	Year	No. writing	No. achieving 30% or higher (%) <sup>33</sup>
<b>Mathematics</b>	2008	298 821	136 503 (45.7)
	2009	290 407	133 505 (46.0)
	2010	263 034	124 749 (47.4)
	2011	224 635	104 033 (46.3)
	2012	225 874	121 970 (54.0)
	2013	241 509	142 666 (59.1)
<b>Mathematical Literacy</b>	2008	263 464	207 230 (78.7)
	2009	277 677	207 326 (74.7)
	2010	280 836	241 576 (86.0)
	2011	275 380	236 548 (85.9)
	2012	291 341	254 611 (87.4)
	2013	324 097	282 270 (87.1)
<b>Physical Science</b>	2008	218 156	119 823 (54.9)
	2009	220 882	81 356 (36.8)
	2010	205 364	98 260 (47.8)
	2011	180 585	96 441 (53.4)
	2012	179 194	109 918 (61.3)
	2013	184 383	124 206 (67.4)
<b>English First Additional Language (FAL)</b>	2008	464 174	438 832 (94.5)
	2009	469 486	435 104 (92.7)
	2010	449 080	424 392 (94.5)
	2011	414 480	398 740 (96.2)
	2012	419 263	410 255 (97.9)
	2013	454 666	449 420 (98.8)

(Sources from which the data were calculated: DoE 2010; DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

**Table 24: Numbers and percentages of learners writing Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations, 2008-2013**

Subjects	Year	No. writing	Total combined no. of learners writing Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy (%)
<b>Mathematics</b>	2008	298 821	562 285 (53)
	2009	290 407	568 084 (51)
	2010	263 034	543 870 (48)
	2011	224 635	500 015 (45)
	2012	225 874	517 215 (44)
	2013	241 509	565 606 (43)

<sup>33</sup> The achievement of 30% indicates a pass mark for the subject. To pass the whole National Senior Certificate (NSC), learners need (1) to pass at least three subjects with marks of 40% or more, with one of these subjects being a Home Language, as well as (2) achieving at least 30% for a further three subjects. Learners can fail their First Additional Language and still pass if they achieve condition (1) and their average mark is over 33.33%. Higher pass requirements are needed to progress into Higher Certificate, Diploma, and Degree studies.

<b>Mathematical Literacy</b>	2008	263 464	562 285 (47)
	2009	277 677	568 084 (49)
	2010	280 836	543 870 (52)
	2011	275 380	500 015 (55)
	2012	291 341	517 215 (56)
	2013	324 097	565 606 (57)

(Sources from which the data were calculated: DoE 2010; DBE 2011a, 2012a, 2013b, 2014a, 2015a)

#### 3.5.2.2.4 Quality interventions reported by the DBE in relation to the NSC examinations, 2008-2013

Table 25 summarises the main interventions reported by the National Department of Education (DoE 2008b, 2009), and the Department of Basic Education (DBE 2010c, 2011c, 2012e, 2013), towards enhancing the quality of learning and teaching in Grades 10-12, and thereby learner achievements in the NSC exams, in the years 2008-2013. Again, the quality-enhancing initiatives of Umalusi are described in Section 6.1.

Fewer quality-enhancing initiatives are reported in relation to teaching and learning in Grade 10-12 and the NSC, than are reported for Grade 1-9 learners and the ANA, but Table 25 still shows a range of interventions, from developing specialised (Dinaledi) schools<sup>34</sup>, to the supply of additional Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM) and other resources, monitoring, training for role-players in the system, and *ad hoc* initiatives. While some initiatives are reported in some years and not in others, it is assumed that most types of interventions continued across the years analysed.

It appears however, that there is a need to systematise successful initiatives and to turn these initiatives into national institutions. Examples of interventions in this category include in-service training for teachers and education officials at key leverage points in the system, the supply of basic and additional LTSM, Winter Schools and similar additional instructional opportunities, adopt-a-school partnerships, learning incentives such as support for annual special events like Olympiads, as well as other ongoing quality-enhancing practices. This area of work is again one for possible development and inclusion in future NQF impact study reports.

**Table 25: NSC-related quality interventions reported by the National Department of Education (DoE) in 2009 and the Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2010-2013**

<b>2009</b>
<p><b>Dinaledi Schools Project:</b> 500 schools resourced to focus on quality Mathematics and Physical Science teaching and learning.</p> <p><b>Teacher Survey:</b> In February 2009, the DBE surveyed teachers in the 500 Dinaledi schools to confirm the numbers of Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Physical Science educators at these schools.</p> <p><b>Teacher Training:</b> 2 486 Mathematics and Physical Science teachers in Dinaledi schools received subject-specific training.</p> <p><b>Intensive Monitoring and Support:</b> 254 Dinaledi schools, and the 54 schools with pass rates below 20% for Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Physical Science received monitoring and support.</p> <p><b>Participation in the 2009 Mathematics Olympiad:</b> The DBE paid for 100 learners from Dinaledi schools and top-performing schools to participate in the first round of the South African Mathematics Olympiad (SAMO).</p> <p><b>Adopt-a-School Project:</b> The project is a short-term approach to providing adequate learning and teaching facilities to selected schools with the potential to address the objectives of the Mathematics, Science and Technology Strategy.</p> <p><b>Textbook Survey:</b> The DBE distributed 9 000 textbooks to Dinaledi schools that had reported shortages during monitoring visits.</p> <p><b>Provision of Learner and Teacher Support Materials:</b> The DBE advocated that each learner in Grades 10, 11 and 12 must</p>

<sup>34</sup> The Dinaledi Schools Project was established by the then-Department of Education (DoE) in 2001, to increase the numbers of matric Mathematics and Physical Science passes at university-entrance level. The strategy involves selecting secondary schools for Dinaledi status once they have demonstrated their ability to increase the pass rates for these subjects, and providing the selected schools with the resources and support needed to improve teaching and learning in these subjects.

have at least seven textbooks, and supplied Grade 12 textbooks to 452 of the 500 Dinaledi schools that responded to the DBE textbook survey.

**Provision of Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM):** As part of its support to schools, the DBE developed, printed and distributed 8 000 copies of Accounting booklets, 21 000 copies of Life Orientation Teacher Guides, 7 000 copies of books for the Soil Module in Agriculture Science, and 7 000 copies of the Agriculture Management Guideline.

**Development, Supply and Distribution of Electronic and Print Media Support Materials:** The DBE, in partnership with businesses, publishers and independent newspapers, developed, supplied and distributed packages of support materials in both electronic and print media formats.

**Monitoring and Support of Underperforming Schools:** Schools with overall pass rates below 60% in the 2008 NSC examinations were categorised as 'underperforming schools', and provincial Departments of Education were required to take an interventionist approach in supporting these schools in their improvements.

**Subject Advisor Training:** In May and June 2009 the DBE conducted Subject Advisor training for all 29 subjects of the National Curriculum Statements (NCS). The five-day training was provided to 2 137 Subject Advisors.

**Support in the teaching and assessment of Life Orientation:** In May 2009, 121 Life Orientation Subject Advisors were trained with respect to subject content, the development of assessment tasks, designing instructions for the Physical Education Task (PET), and the implementation of internal moderation. A Grade 12 Life Orientation Teacher Guide was developed, printed and distributed to all schools in all nine provinces.

## 2010

**Provision of learning and teaching support material to schools:** Self-study guides in nine NSC subjects were distributed to provincial offices, district offices and all secondary schools.

**Additional support provided to the class of 2010:** Winter Schools and Learning Centres were implemented for the Grade 12 class of 2010. A Volunteer Corps was established for the *Lets Support the Class of 2010* campaign.

## 2011

**Self-Study Guides in selected Subjects:** The self-study guides developed in 2010 were distributed to the 2011 cohort of Grade 12 learners.

**Development of Practical Assessment Tasks (PATs):** The DBE developed and implemented the Practical Assessment Tasks (PATs) for 16 subjects in the National Curriculum Statements (NCS), for which the practical components were moderated by an examination panel of subject specialists.

**Dinaledi Project Plan for 2011-2012:** For the first time, the DBE was allocated national funding for the Dinaledi School Project, which it used to strengthen the project.

## 2012

**Teachers, Text and Time:** Teachers were required to ensure full curriculum coverage, and to conduct all Assessment Tasks and Practical Assessment Tasks (PATs) in all school grades, and especially in Grades 10-12. Provincial Departments of Education were closely monitored to ensure full and timely delivery and use of textbooks. The DBE introduced a monitoring tool which was managed by District Offices to track progress.

**Diagnostic report on learner performance:** Provincial Departments of Education were required to utilise this report to plan intervention programmes that addressed areas of weakness highlighted in the report. As a result, a number of the Teacher and Learner Support Programmes focused on specific content areas in 11 key NSC subjects.

**Improving learner and teacher access to materials (textbooks and study guides):** A total of 302 660 Mathematics and 230 715 Physical Science textbooks were distributed to schools, over and above the standard provision of textbooks in these subjects.

**Development of Practical Assessment Tasks (PATs):** The DBE further developed the Practical Assessment Tasks (PATs) for the 16 subjects in the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) which contain practical components.

**Mathematics, Science and Technology (MST):** Support of the 500 Dinaledi schools continued. The Dinaledi Schools Programme received a conditional grant of R99.7 million for the 2012-2013 year.

**Teacher Development Programme Partnerships:** Teacher Development Programmes and Provincial Departments of Education were coordinated in an initiative to improve subject knowledge, teaching skills and professionalism – 184 207 teachers participated.

*(Sources from which the information was obtained: DoE 2008b, 2009; DBE 2010c, 2011c, 2012e, 2013)*

A summary of learner achievement trends in the NSC exams, in 2008-2014, is presented in the box below.

#### **Summary of learner achievement trends in the NSC exams, 2008-2014**

- The numbers of full-time learners registering to write the NSC exams decreased steadily across the years 2008-2013, and the numbers of part-time learners increased.
- Low numbers (about half) of learners registered to write the NSC exams relative to numbers in the corresponding age cohort in the general population.
- The reported NSC pass rates for the years 2008-2013 ranged from 64-78%. However there is on average a 10% drop per year, between those enrolling to write the NSC exams, and those actually writing, and a further 20-30% drop between those writing and passing. If these patterns are considered, the 'actual' pass rates for the 2008-2013 years are between 58-62%. Comparing these figures to the numbers of learners enrolling for Grade 1, around one-eighth of the numbers of learners enrolling for Grade 1, passed the NSC exams in the period analysed. While the NSC pass rate rose steadily between 2008-2013, the numbers of learners writing exams did not.
- The proportions of learners writing the NSC exams for Mathematics decreased steadily across the years 2008-2013; proportions of learners writing the exams for Mathematical Literacy increased accordingly.
- Generally higher percentages of female than male learners achieved 40% or more for subjects in the NSC exams apart from Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Physical Science, for which more male learners achieved 40% or higher.
- On the positive side, there were general increases in the pass rates for Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy, Physical Science and English First Additional Language (FAL) across the 2008-2013 years.

As noted in the introductory comments to the present report, schooling, Higher Education, training at all levels, the world of work and community participation are connected: what happens to individuals in the schooling sector influences their post-school opportunities. While shifts between the 2001-2006 and 2008-2012 periods are in desired directions, there is still some way to go. Further, there is also the question of the relevance of the set of competencies held by successful school learners, for Higher Education, for occupational training and for the world of work. These areas are not covered in the report.

### **3.5.3 Access, success and redress in post-school Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**

The post-school Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector has seen the most radical reform of all the sectors making up the South African NQF. Developments in this sector are considered via five snapshots available.

At the time of reporting, TVET Colleges provided three broad categories of qualifications (DHET 2014b: 19):

- the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV), at Levels 2, 3 and 4 which are at the NQF Levels 2, 3 and 4 also shared by school Grades 10, 11 and 12 respectively;
- National Technical Certificates (NTC), also known as National Education (NATED) or Report 191 Certificates which can lead to (N) Diplomas after 18-24 months of work experience in the case of Business or General Studies, or after 2 000 hours of work experience in the case of Engineering Studies; and
- Occupational qualifications and part-qualifications based on programmes very closely linked to workplaces<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Statistics for these qualifications and part-qualifications are presented in Section 3.7 of the present report, while figures for the NCV and Report 191 NTC qualifications are presented in Section 3.5.3.

- Higher Certificate programmes were being phased in, in collaboration with Higher Education Institutions<sup>36</sup>.

Given post-1994 changes in post-school Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (see Sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 for further details), the phasing out and reintroduction of the National Technical Certificate (NTC) qualifications and the introduction of a new qualification – the National Certificate (Vocational) [NCV] – from 2008, there was a need to understand patterns in the system. In 2009 SAQA conducted an informal analysis of unpublished 2008 NCV-related data held by the National Board for Further Education and Training (NBFET)<sup>37</sup>. The analysis itself (SAQA 2009) was not published at the time, but selected insights from the analysis are useful as a snapshot of realities in the sector in 2008. Particularly worth noting in terms of developing the system are the differing success levels achieved by different colleges for which identities were not revealed.

In 2009 the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) published a report, *TVET Colleges: National Certificate: Vocational and Report 190/191 [Qualifications] – Report on the Conduct of National Examinations 2009* (DHET 2009b). Highlights from this report comprise a second snapshot of learning in the post-school TVET sector – in 2009. From this document, important trends on which to build include noting where the majority of learners in this sector are studying languages, Mathematics-related subjects and civil engineering and construction subjects; which languages and Mathematics subjects have high take-up; and where the success rates lie. These patterns show areas of strength on which to build.

The third snapshot is provided by the publication *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa 2011* (DHET 2013d), which contains information on the size, shape and spread of the TVET College sector in 2011. It includes head counts per programme and gender, and numbers registering for, writing and passing National Certificate: Vocational (NCV); National Senior Certificate (NSC) and National Technical Certificates (NTC) programmes in that year.

The publication *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa 2012* (DHET 2014b) is the source of the fourth snapshot. It includes an enrolment overview for the post-school TVET sector in 2012; a high-level comparison of numbers passing in 2011 and 2012; and detailed figures for numbers registering for, writing and passing NCV and NTC programmes.

Both post-school statistics publications (DHET 2013d, 2014b) provide key information on where learning pathways are emerging, and where the successes are on which to build.

Statistics provided in the four snapshots differ in form. The 2008 data relate to NCV subjects at Levels 2 and 3; 2009 data focus on a wider range of NCV and NTC subjects spanning National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Levels 2-5; 2011 data cover head counts and pass rates per programme and gender. While some of the 2012 data can be compared directly with 2011 figures, links need to be made more broadly between data provided by the four snapshots. The four datasets taken together provide a rich picture of developments between 2008 and the present, the period in which the country transitioned from the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) to the NQF Act (RSA 2008c).

A fifth snapshot is provided by the 2008-11 SAQA-University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) research study, *TVET College Lecturers: Biography; Pedagogy; Identity*. This large-scale and in-depth study produced insights

<sup>36</sup> The idea of Higher Certificates developed after the promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), although these qualifications could only be registered on the NQF once the three NQF Sub-Frameworks had been determined – in 2013-14.

<sup>37</sup> The NBFET was set up as part of the moves to integrate the TVET College sector; its responsibilities included advising the Minister of Labour. Shortly after the Ministry of Higher Education and Training was established, the NBFET was disbanded.

into TVET College lecturers and their contexts and work, key aspects of which are related in Section 4.3.1.4 below.

The five snapshots follow. GFETQSF and OQSF developments described in Sections 6.1 and 6.3 form the backdrop against which the trends in the snapshots developed.

### 3.5.3.1 Informal analysis of NCV enrolments and achievements in 2008

The following set of highlights have been taken from the unpublished informal analysis (SAQA 2009), to present a snapshot of patterns relating to the then-newly introduced qualification, the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) at NQF Levels 2 and 3.

#### 3.5.3.1.1 Overall patterns

Probably due to the newness of the qualification, numbers of learners writing NCV (Level 2 and 3) exams in 2008 were relatively low<sup>38</sup>. In 2008 around 265 000 learners wrote NCV exams at Level 2, and around 75 000 wrote at Level 3. It is estimated that, taking all enrolments for vocational qualifications at TVET level into account, the National Technical Certificate (NTC or N qualifications) and well as the NCV, the number of learners writing exams in 2008 would have been over 400 000. Over 500 000 learners wrote NSC exams in 2008.

**Table 26: Numbers of NCV subjects with particular numbers of registered learners in 2008**

Numbers of learners/ NCV Level	<1 000 learners	1 000-1 999 learners	2 000-4 999 learners	5 000-10 000 learners	>10 000 learners	No. of subjects
No. of Level 2 subjects	11	20	13	11	4	59
No. of Level 3 subjects	35	11	6	3	-	55

(Source: Unpublished analysis, SAQA 2009)

From Table 26, it is clear that in 2008, the numbers of learners registered for NCV Level 2 subjects was considerably higher than that for NCV Level 3 subjects. This was an overall pattern also repeated at the micro level of most subjects. The pattern may have arisen due to the relative newness of NQF Level 3 subjects at the time, or the chosen level at which most learners were embarking on NCV learning pathways.

Compulsory NCV subjects (English First Additional Language [FAL], Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy, Life Orientation) had the highest enrolments. In Table 26, of the 11 Level 2 subjects with between 5 000 and 10 000 learners, six were linked to scarce skills (the six were Electrical Principles and Practice, Electrical Systems and Construction, Electronic Control and Digital Systems, Engineering Fundamentals, Engineering Systems, and Engineering Technology).

Pass rates differed widely for different NCV subjects in 2008, and were generally higher for Level 3 than for Level 2 subjects. As already noted, the numbers of learners writing exams for NCV subjects at Level 3 were considerably lower than those writing exams for subjects at NCV Level 2 but, while these numbers were smaller, the learners achieved success at higher levels.

<sup>38</sup> The NCV Levels 2 and 3 qualifications (at NQF Levels 2 and 3) were available from around 2007, and the NCV Level 4 qualification (at NQF Level 4) followed shortly thereafter.

Table 27 shows numbers of NCV subjects with particular percentages of learners passing in 2008. At NCV Level 2, over 50% of learners passed in 55% of subjects; at NCV Level 3 over 50% of learners passed in 76% of subjects.

Importantly, the NCV pass rates in 2008 fluctuated across subjects and across colleges. One of the scarce skill areas – Building and Construction – is selected to illustrate an example of these fluctuating patterns.

**Table 27: Numbers of NCV subjects with particular percentages of learners passing in 2008**

Percentages of learners passing/ NCV Level	No. of subjects with <33% of learners passing	No. of subjects with 33-49% of learners passing	No. of subjects with 50-74% of learners passing	No. of subjects with 75-100% of learners passing	No. of subjects
No. of Level 2 subjects	5 (8.5%)	22 (37%)	27 (46%)	5 (8.5%)	59
No. of Level 3 subjects	5 (9%)	8 (15%)	21 (38%)	21 (38%)	55

(Source: Unpublished analysis, SAQA 2009)

### 3.5.3.1.2 Pass rates for selected NCV Level 2 and 3 subjects in 2008

Table 28 shows pass rates for subjects in the scarce skill area of Building and Construction. It is included here as an example of the fluctuating pass rates for NCV subjects. For ease of reading, pass rates are categorised as *low* when under 50% of learners writing the exams pass; *moderate* when between 51% and 74% pass; and *high* when over 75% of learners pass.

**Table 28: Numbers and percentages of learners writing and passing selected scarce-skill subjects at NCV Levels 2 and 3 in 2008**

Subject	No. of learners writing (No. passing, % passing) at NCV Level 2	Rating of Level 2 pass rate	No. of learners writing (No. passing, % passing) at NCV Level 3	Rating of Level 3 pass rate
Concrete Structures	87 (60; 69%)	Moderate	32 (28; 88%)	High
Construction Carpentry and Roof work	1 297 (464; 36%)	Low	269 (223; 83%)	High
Construction Masonry and Tiling	867 (433; 50%)	Moderate	219 (145; 66%)	Moderate
Construction Material	3 158 (1 380; 44%)	Low	709 (403; 57%)	Moderate
Construction Plant and Equipment	3 194 (1 909; 60%)	Moderate	709 (432; 61%)	Moderate
Construction Plumbing	689 (249; 36%)	Low	149 (89; 60%)	Moderate
Drawing, Setting Out, Quantities and Costing	3 222 (1 550; 48%)	Low	715 (320; 45%)	Low

(Source: Unpublished analysis, SAQA 2009)

Table 29 shows numbers and percentages of learners writing and passing compulsory subjects – Life Orientation, Language, Mathematics/ Mathematical Literacy – and another key subject, Physical Science.

**Table 29: Numbers and percentages of learners writing and passing compulsory subjects and Physical Science at NCV Levels 2 and 3 in 2008**

Subject	No. of learners writing (No. and % passing) at NCV Level 2	Rating of Level 2 pass rate	No. of learners writing (No. and % passing) at NCV Level 3	Rating of Level 3 pass rate
English First Additional Language	36,013 (25,231; <b>70%</b> )	Moderate	8348 (6385; <b>76%</b> )	High
Life Orientation	35,365 (26,111; <b>74%</b> )	Moderate	8480 (6165; <b>73%</b> )	Moderate
Mathematical Literacy	19,282 (7523; <b>39%</b> )	Low	4538 (2782; <b>61%</b> )	Moderate
Mathematics	19,949 (5646; <b>28%</b> )	Low	4978 (2100; <b>42%</b> )	Low
Physical Science	1935 (1924; <b>48%</b> )	Low	4809 (2727; <b>57%</b> )	Moderate

(Source: Unpublished analysis, SAQA 2009)

### 3.5.3.1.3 Important differences between TVET Colleges

A key finding in the informal analysis of 2008 NCV results (SAQA 2009) was the extent to which curricular offerings, learner numbers and learner results at TVET Colleges differed in 2008. A sample of NCV Civil Engineering and Building Construction subjects that were available at the time is again used as an example, in this instance of the range of differences in offerings, learner numbers and learner results, in 2008.

Table 30 shows the numbers of colleges with particular numbers of learners writing NCV Civil Engineering and Construction subjects in 2008. Table 31 shows the numbers of colleges with particular pass rates for NCV Civil Engineering and Construction subjects in 2008. Table 32 shows percentage pass rates for NCV Civil Engineering and Construction subjects per college and NCV level for the available data sample.

**Table 30: Numbers of colleges with particular numbers of learners writing NCV Civil Engineering and Construction subjects in 2008**

No. of colleges with <20 learners writing (and % of total number)	No. of colleges with 20-49 learners writing (and % of total number)	No. of colleges with 50-99 learners writing (and % of total number)	No. of colleges with 100-199 learners writing (and % of total number)	No. of colleges with 200-299 learners writing (and % of total number)
37 (16.6%)	84 (37.7%)	70 (31%)	26 (11.7%)	6 (3%)

(Source: Unpublished analysis, SAQA 2009)

**Table 31: Numbers of colleges with particular pass rates for NCV Civil Engineering and Construction subjects in 2008**

No. of colleges with pass rates of 0-24% (and % of total number)	No. of colleges with pass rates of 25-49% (and % of total number)	No. of colleges with pass rates of 50-74% (and % of total number)	No. of colleges with pass rates of 75-100% (and % of total number)
63 (28.3%)	52 (23.3%)	65 (29.1%)	43 (19.3%)

(Source: Unpublished analysis, SAQA 2009)

Pass rates for Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at individual TVET colleges differed widely in 2008 (see Table 32). Tracking this type of data across years would make it possible to identify high-achieving colleges and teachers to serve as models and enable development in their lower-achieving counterparts. Colleges in Table 32 are identified in numerical form only.



**Table 32: Percentage pass rates (and numbers of learners passing) for Civil Engineering and Construction subjects per college and NCV level in 2008)**

College	Subject and NCV Level											
	Construction Material		Construc. Plant and Equipment		Drawing, Setting out, Costing		English FAL		Maths. Literacy		Mathematics	
	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3	L2	L3
1	31 (15)	Nil	81 (38)	62 (16)	67 (32)	Nil	97 (309)	86 (136)	76 (203)	88 (126)	40 (69)	20 (13)
2	70 (89)	45 (37)	79 (99)	77 (62)	39 (50)	46 (38)	69 (586)	78 (402)	35 (67)	48 (42)	27 (212)	50 (216)
3	92 (82)	60 (40)	98 (91)	97 (65)	-	72 (48)	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	68 (151)	-	-	-	-	-	65 (1193)	-	-	-	25 (362)	-
5	-	100 (16)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
6	-	-	74 (171)	-	73 (174)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	100 (24)	-	100 (24)	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	98 (54)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	90 (154)	-	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	45 (396)	69 (153)	-	53 (66)
11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	59 (267)	-

(Source: Unpublished analysis, SAQA 2009)

L2= NCV Level 2

L3=NCV Level 3

At the time of the informal analysis (SAQA 2009), comprehensive data were not available. More comprehensive analysis was possible in 2010, based on the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) publication *Further Education and Training Colleges National Certificate: Vocational and Report 190/191: Report on the conduct of national examinations 2009* (DHET 2009).

### 3.5.3.2 NCV and N enrolments and achievements in 2009

This section of the report presents an overview of learner enrolment and achievement data for the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) and the Report 190/191 National Technical Certificate (NTC or N) qualifications in 2009<sup>39</sup>. The overview is followed by further sections that show data for learners registering, writing and passing compulsory and scarce skill subjects for the NCV and N qualifications in 2009, and compare selected 2008 and 2009 results.

Two points are noted here. First, it must be remembered that in 2009 learners could follow General or Science streams (pathways) for the N qualification: data are reported in relation to these pathways. The 'General Studies' stream encompassed 68 programmes at N Level 6, and roughly comparable numbers of programmes at N Levels 2-5; programmes such as Applied Accounting, Business Practice, Plant and Animal Production, Catering, Education, Entrepreneurship and the Arts. The 'Natural Science Studies' stream included 35 programmes at N Level 6, and similar numbers of programmes at N levels 2-5, such as Aircraft Maintenance, Building Science, Plumbing, Mining, Motor Bodywork, and Theory and Practical. Physical Science, Mathematics and Language Studies were available in *both* streams. Second, phasing out of the N programmes commenced in 2008<sup>40</sup> and was reversed in 2011-12. This process needs to be borne in mind when looking at the data.

<sup>39</sup> The vocational qualifications commonly referred to as the 'N' qualifications are also referred to as Report 190/191 qualifications, National Technical Certificates (NTCs) and National Technical Education (NATED) 190/191 qualifications. For present purposes the most widely-known term of 'N qualifications' has been used.

<sup>40</sup> This process was announced in Government Notice 1360 of 2008.

### 3.5.3.2.1 Overview of learner enrolment and achievement for NCV and N qualifications in 2009

Table 33 presents an overview of the numbers of learners enrolled for NCV and N programmes per NQF level in 2009.

**Table 33: Overview of numbers of learners enrolled for NCV and N programmes by NQF level in 2009**

NQF Level	No. of learners (NCV)	N Level	No. of learners (N General Studies)	No. of learners (N Science Studies)
2	588 224	1	-	-
3	161 580	2	320	32 814
4	35 589	3	56 440	133 076
5 – 6	-	4	207 909	169 053
	-	5	131 290	88 237
	-	6	78 048	57 743
<b>All NQF levels</b>	<b>785 393</b>	<b>All N levels</b>	<b>474 007</b>	<b>480 923</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

In Table 33 the high numbers of enrolments for the NCV at Level 2 are worth noting. The relatively sharp drop in numbers at NCV Levels 3 and 4 can be attributed, at least in part, to the relative newness of these offerings. All enrolments for the N programmes are likely to have been affected by the phase-out process which has since been reversed.

Tables 34, 35 and 36 respectively show the numbers of learners registered for writing and passing the NCV, N (General Studies) and N (Science Studies) exams in 2009.

**Table 34: Overall numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing N (General Studies) programmes in 2009**

N-Level	No. registered for the exams	No. writing the exams (and % of those registered)	No. passing the exams (and % of those registered)
N2	320	200 (62.5%)	133 (41.6%)
N3	56 440	39 530 (70.0%)	18 632 (33.0%)
N4	207 909	179 886 (86.5%)	112 354 (54.0%)
N5	131 290	118 091 (90.0%)	65 883 (50.2%)
N6	78 048	70 939 (90.9%)	45 878 (58.8%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>474 007</b>	<b>408 646 (86.2%)</b>	<b>242 880 (51.2%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

**Table 35: Overall numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing N (Science Studies) programmes in 2009**

N-Level	No. registered for the exams	No. writing the exams (and % of those registered)	No. passing the exams (and % of those registered)
N2	33 269	24 278 (73%)	8 960 (26.9%)
N3	113 076	90 274 (79.8%)	33 245 (29.4%)
N4	169 053	146 016 (86.4%)	61 923 (36.6%)
N5	88 237	77 923 (88.3%)	39 651 (44.9%)
N6	57 743	49 905 (86.4%)	25 064 (43.4%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>461 378</b>	<b>388 396 (84.2%)</b>	<b>168 843 (36.6%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

**Table 36: Overall numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing NCV programmes in 2009**

NQF Level	No. registered for the exams	No. writing the exams (and % of those registered)	No. passing the exams (and % of those registered)
Level 2	588 223	401 833 (68.3%)	227 182 (38.6%)
Level 3	161 580	123 651 (76.5%)	80 611 (49.9%)
Level 4	35 589	28 854 (81.1%)	23 347 (65.6%)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>765 972</b>	<b>554 338 (72.4%)</b>	<b>331 140 (43.2%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

The low numbers of learner enrolments in Table 33, which decrease with registration for exams, and again respectively, for writing and passing exams (Tables 34, 35, 36) were not sufficient for national skills needs. The decrease between enrolment figures (Table 33) and numbers registered to write exams, actually writing and passing (Tables 34, 35, 36) is most marked in the N (Science Studies) stream (Table 35). The fact that a very high percentage (86.2%) of learners enrolled for N (General Studies) registered to write the exams and a relatively high percentage actually wrote (Tables 33, 34), is worth noting.

### 3.5.3.2.2 Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing compulsory NCV subjects in 2009

In this sub-section the numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing the compulsory subjects of Language (English First Additional Language [FAL], Afrikaans First Additional Language [FAL], and isiXhosa First Additional Language [FAL]); Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy; and Life Orientation for the NCV programmes in 2009 are shown.

**Table 37: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing English (FAL) in the NCV programmes in 2009, per NCV level**

NQF Level	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
No. registered to write	80 394	22 158	4 956
No. writing (and % of those registered)	52 715 (65.6%)	17 591 (79.4%)	4 428 (89.4%)
No. passing (and % of those writing)	38 347 (72.7%)	14 438 (82.1%)	4 144 (93.6%)
'Actual success rate' (% passing of those originally registered)	38 347 (47.7%)	14 438 (65.2%)	4 144 (83.6%)

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

**Table 38: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Afrikaans (FAL) in the NCV programmes in 2009, per NCV level**

NQF Level	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
No. registered to write	1 196	457	152
No. writing (and % of those registered)	774 (64.7%)	353 (77.2%)	131 (86.2%)
No. passing (and % of those writing)	597 (77.1%)	330 (93.5%)	127 (97.0%)
'Actual success rate' (% passing of those originally registered)	597 (49.9%)	330 (72.2%)	127 (83.6%)

**Table 39: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing isiXhosa (FAL) in the NCV programmes in 2009, per NCV level**

NQF Level	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
No. registered to write	14	7	0
No. writing (and % of those registered)	0	0	0
No. passing (and % of those writing)	0	0	0
'Actual success rate' (% passing of those originally registered)	Nil	Nil	Nil

*(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)*

**Table 40: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Mathematics in the NCV programmes in 2009, per NCV level**

NQF Level	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
No. registered to write	42 345	11 430	2 100
No. writing (and % of those registered)	30 975 (73.2%)	8 684 (76.0%)	1 596 (76%)
No. passing (and % of those writing)	10 171 (32.8%)	3 386 (39.0%)	832 (52.1%)
'Actual success rate' (% passing of those originally registered)	10 171 (24.0%)	3 386 (29,6%)	832 (39,6%)

*(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)*

**Table 41: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Mathematical Literacy in the NCV programmes in 2009, per NCV level**

NQF Level	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
No. registered to write	45 635	12 114	2 963
No. writing (and % of those registered)	32 008 (70.1%)	9 465 (78.1%)	2 672 (90.2%)
No. passing (and % of those writing)	18 613 (58.2%)	6 947 (73.4%)	2 352 (88.0%)
'Actual success rate' (% passing of those originally registered)	18 613 (40.8%)	6 947 (57.4%)	2 352 (79.4%)

*(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)*

**Table 42: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Life Orientation in the NCV programmes in 2009, per NCV level**

NQF Level	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
No. registered to write	81 092	22 549	5 054
No. writing (and % of those registered)	58 291 (71.9%)	18 065 (80.1%)	4 252 (84.1%)
No. passing (and % of those writing)	48 127 (82.6%)	15 067 (83.4%)	4 066 (95.6%)
<b>'Actual success rate' (% passing of those originally registered)</b>	<b>48 127 (59,4%)</b>	<b>15 067 (66,8%)</b>	<b>4 066 (80,5%)</b>

*(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)*

Again, it is generally thought that numbers registered for NCV programmes in 2009 were relatively low. Tables 37-42 show that overall numbers of learners registered to write each of the compulsory NCV exams decreased steeply between NCV Levels 2 and 4 in 2009. Around two-thirds and upwards of learners registered to write the exams for the compulsory subjects actually wrote them (apart from the case of isiXhosa, see Table 39), with percentages writing increasing as NQF levels increased. With the exception of isiXhosa, percentages passing of those writing increased as NQF levels increased, for all subjects.

Pass rates followed similar patterns for the two Mathematical subjects although fewer learners were successful in these exams. For Mathematical Literacy, only just over half, to over three-quarters of learners passed between the NCV2 and NCV4 levels (Table 41). Even fewer – just over a third to half – passed Mathematics between the NCV2 and NCV4 levels (Table 40). In each of these subjects it appears that learners 'caught up' as they progressed upwards from NQF Level 2 to NQF Level 4, with higher percentages of learners passing as NQF levels increased. These patterns point especially to the need for additional support for low-achieving learners studying at NCV Levels 2 and 3.

However 'Actual success rates' for the compulsory subjects – percentages of those originally registered and passing – were lower than published pass rates calculated on the basis of percentages of those writing and passing (the latter calculations did not take account of learners registered for, but failing to write, the exams).

While actual pass rates were around 80% at NQF Level 4 for English (FAL), Afrikaans (FAL) and Life Orientation, the 'catch up' pattern was visible: roughly half to two-thirds of learners passed these subjects at NQF Levels 2 and 3 respectively (Tables 37, 38, 42). For Mathematics actual pass rates were very low: while just over a third of learners passed at NQF Level 4, only a quarter or just over a quarter passed at NQF Levels 2 and 3 (Table 40). Mathematical Literacy actual pass rates were slightly higher, with just under and just over half of learners passing at NQF Levels 2 and 3 respectively, and most learners (79%) being successful at NQF Level 4 (Table 41).

#### *3.5.3.2.3 Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing compulsory N subjects in 2009*

This sub-section presents the numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing the compulsory subjects of language (Business English First or Second Language; and Sake-Afrikaans First or Second Language) in the N General Studies stream; and Mathematics in the N Science Studies stream, in 2009

(Tables 43-47)<sup>41</sup>. As for the NCV data immediately above, ‘actual success rate’ is shown for each subject – to show the proportions of learners *originally registered* for exams and actually passing these exams, where looking at just proportions of learners *writing and passing* masks this reality.

**Table 43: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Business English First Language in N (General Studies) programmes in 2009, at N Levels 2 and 3**

N-Level	N-Level 2	N-Level 3
No. registered to write	20	4 256
No. writing (and % of those registered)	11 (55.0%)	2 768 (65.0%)
No. passing (and % of those writing)	7 (63.6%)	1 564 (56.5%)
<b>‘Actual success rate’ (% passing of those originally registered)</b>	<b>7 (35.0%)</b>	<b>1 564 (36.8%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

**Table 44: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Business English Second Language in N (General Studies) programmes in 2009, at N Levels 2 and 3**

N-Level	N-Level 2	N-Level 3
No. registered to write	21	3 684
No. writing (and % of those registered)	5 (23.8%)	2 758 (74.9%)
No. passing (and % of those writing)	3 (60.0%)	1 589 (57.6%)
<b>‘Actual success rate’ (% passing of those originally registered)</b>	<b>3 (14.3%)</b>	<b>1 589 (43.1%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

**Table 45: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Sake-Afrikaans First Language in N (General Studies) programmes in 2009, at N Levels 2 and 3**

N-Level	N-Level 2	N-Level 3
No. registered to write	2	622
No. writing (and % of those registered)	2 (100%)	410 (65.9%)
No. passing (and % of those writing)	2 (100%)	292 (71.2%)
<b>‘Actual success rate’ (% passing of those originally registered)</b>	<b>2 (100%)</b>	<b>292 (47.0%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

<sup>41</sup> In 2009 Business English and Sake-Afrikaans were offered only at N Levels 2 and 3 and Mathematics was offered at N levels 2-6: data is presented in all of these instances only. Data for the African Languages have been excluded as enrolment figures comprised nil or one learner in each instance.

**Table 46: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Sake-Afrikaans Second Language in N (General Studies) programmes in 2009, at N Levels 2 and 3**

<b>N-Level</b>	<b>N-Level 2</b>	<b>N-Level 3</b>
<b>No. registered to write</b>	21	3 841
<b>No. writing (and % of those registered)</b>	8 (38.1%)	2 046 (53.3%)
<b>No. passing (and % of those writing)</b>	2 (25.0%)	716 (35.0%)
<b>'Actual success rate' (% passing of those originally registered)</b>	2 (9.5%)	716 (18.6%)

*(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)*

Comparing learner numbers for all the N language programmes in Tables 11-14 taken together on the one hand, and for all NCV language programmes in Tables 37-38 taken together on the other, shows that far fewer learners (around 7 800) registered to write the N English and Afrikaans exams than the corresponding NCV exams (over 105 000). 'Actual success rates' were also higher for the NCV programmes, ranging from 47%-83% across all NCV language exams, as opposed to 9%-47% across all N language exams<sup>42</sup>. The reasons for these patterns are worth investigating.

At NCV Levels 2 and 3, over 120 000 learners registered to write English (FAL) in 2009 (Table 37); at similar NQF levels, just over 60 learners registered to write N Business English at First and Second Language levels (Tables 43 and 44). Over 50 000 of the former passed; as did 10 of the latter.

On the other hand, at NCV Level 4 and N Level 3 (both of which are at NQF Level 4), similar numbers registered to write: around 4 000 for English (FAL) at NCV Level 4, around 4 200 for Business English First Language at N Level 3, and around 3 600 for Business English Second Language at N Level 3 (Tables 37, 43, 44). Given the 83% success rate for the NCV Level 4 exams, over 3 000 passed, while only around 1 400 and around 1 500 passed the N3 Business English First and Second Language respectively.

Patterns for the Afrikaans programmes differed from those for the English programmes. Around 1 600 learners registered to write Afrikaans (FAL) at NCV Levels 2, 3 and 4 (Table 38). Numbers for Sake-Afrikaans Second Language at N Levels 2 and 3 were more than double, at over 3 800 (Tables 45 and 46). 'Actual success rates' yielded around 1 000 passes for both NCV exams taken together, and N exams taken together, respectively.

The 2009 pattern of increasing proportions of learners passing as NCV levels increased (Tables 37 and 38) was also visible as N levels increased (Tables 43-46); N pass rates however remained low across all language programmes.

Understanding the reasons behind learner enrolment in N and NCV language programmes, and behind exam registration, writing and passing patterns would assist the enabling of learning pathways. Table 47 shows numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Mathematics in N (Science Studies) programmes in 2009, at N Levels 2-6. Numbers registering for Mathematics in the General Studies programme were low and were not included in this analysis.

<sup>42</sup> These figures exclude numbers for the N Level 2 Sake-Afrikaans Second Language, for which two learners registered to write and passed.

**Table 47: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Mathematics in N (Science Studies) programmes in 2009, at N Levels 2-6**

N-Level	No. registered to write	No. writing (and % of those registered)	No passing (and % of those writing)	'Actual success rate' (% passing of those originally registered)
2	5 616	4 055 (72.2%)	1 188 (29.3%)	1 188 (21.2%)
3	22 578	17 789 (78.8%)	6 077 (34.2%)	6 077 (26.9%)
4	37 575	32 580 (86.7%)	13 379(41.1%)	13 379 (35.6%)
5	16 445	14 410 (87.6%)	6 022(41.8%)	6 022 (36.6%)
6	7 887	6 922 (87.8%)	3 986 (57.6%)	3 986 (50.5%)

*(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)*

In 2009 over 89 800 learners registered to write the N Mathematics exams (Table 47) while over 100 000 learners registered for the NCV Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy exams (Tables 40 and 41). Regarding Mathematics alone, the numbers of learners registering to write the N programme exams (Table 15) were almost double the 55 000 registered to write the NCV programme exams (Tables 8 and 9).

The steep drop in numbers of those registered to write the NCV Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy exams with each successive NCV level (roughly a quarter of the numbers of each preceding level registered in successive levels in 2009) (Tables 40 and 41) – is also seen across N Levels 4-6, but is not quite as steep (Table 47). For N Levels 4-6 just under half of the learners of preceding years registered in each successive year (Table 47).

The 'actual success rates' of 24-39% across NCV Mathematics exams and 21%-50% across N Mathematics exams are not that dissimilar (Tables 40, 41, 47).

As with the languages, understanding the reasons behind learner enrolment in N and NCV Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy programmes, and behind exam registration, writing and passing patterns would assist the enabling of much-needed learning and work pathways. More learners registered for language exams in the NCV than in the N programmes, and their success rates were higher (Tables 37, 38 and 43-46). More learners registered to write Mathematics exams in the N than in the NCV programmes, and success rates were similar (Tables 40 and 47). Do these patterns show emerging learning pathways, and if so, are the pathways nationally desired?

The next section presents the numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing selected scarce skills subjects.

#### *3.5.3.2.4 Numbers of learners writing and passing selected scarce skills subjects, 2008-2009 (NCV 2, 3, 4)*

In this section of the report an attempt is made to capture emerging patterns across years. Data available and informal analyses by SAQA (2009) make possible some comparison of learner performance in Civil Engineering and Construction subjects in 2008 with performance in these subjects in 2009 (DHET 2009). Tables 48-52 show overall pass rates for selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects in the NCV Level 2 and 3 programmes, selected because of their links to scarce skills and high enrolment rates.

Tables 48 and 49 show the numbers of learners writing and passing selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at NCV Levels 2 and 3 in 2008 and 2009.



**Table 48: Numbers of learners writing and passing selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at NCV Level 2 in 2008 and 2009**

Subject	2008		2009	
	Wrote	Passed (and % of those writing)	Wrote	Passed (and % of those writing)
Construction Planning	Data not available	Data not available	4818	1822 (37.8%)
Construction Materials	3 158	1 380 (43.7%)	5007	1353 (27.0%)
Plant and Equipment	3 194	1 909 (59.8%)	4 916	1 499 (30.5%)

*(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)*

**Table 49: Numbers of learners writing and passing selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at NCV Level 3 in 2008 and 2009**

Subject	2008		2009	
	Wrote	Passed (and % of those writing)	Wrote	Passed (and % of those writing)
Construction Material	709	403 (56.8%)	1 328	666 (50.2%)
Construction Plant and Equipment	709	432 (60.9%)	1 382	1 022 (74.0%)
Drawings, Setting Out, Quantities and Costing	715	320 (44.8%)	1 394	773 (55.5%)

*(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)*

The numbers of learners writing key Civil and Engineering subjects at NCV Level 2 increased between 2008 and 2009; the numbers and percentages passing did not – with the net result that fewer learners passed these subjects in 2009 (Table 48). At NCV Level 3 however, the numbers writing and passing increased between 2008 and 2009 (Table 49). Understanding the reasons behind this pattern would potentially assist building on the successes at NCV Level 3.

Tables 50 and 51 use available data to show more detailed breakdowns of learner achievement patterns in further Civil Engineering and Construction subjects in NCV programmes at Levels 2 and 3. Similar patterns emerge, for the most part, when comparing Table 50 with Table 48 for NCV Level 2 subjects, and Table 51 with Table 49 for NCV Level 3 subjects.

**Table 50: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at NCV Level 2 in 2009 ( and 2008**

Subject	No. registered to write in 2009	No. writing (and % of those registered) in 2009	No. passing (and % of those writing) 2009	'Actual success rate' (no. and % passing of those originally registered) 2009	No. writing (No. and % passing) 2008
Materials	7 053	5 007 (71.0%)	1 353 (27.0%)	1 353 (19.2%)	3158 (1380; 44%)
Plant and Equipment	6 901	4 916 (71.2%)	1 499 (30.5%)	1 499 (21.7%)	3194 (1909; 60%)
Carpentry and Roof Work	2 476	1 651 (66.7%)	601 (36.4%)	601 (24.3%)	1297 (464; 36%)
Concrete Structures	266	179 (67.3%)	69 (38.6%)	69 (25.9%)	87 (60; 69%)
Masonry	2 472	1 597 (64.6%)	358 (22.4%)	358 (14.5%)	867 (433; 50%)
Plumbing	1 518	1 094 (72.1%)	513 (46.9%)	513 (33.8%)	689 (249; 36%)

(Source of 2008 data on which calculations are based: Unpublished analysis, SAQA 2010; source of 2009 data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009)

**Table 51: Numbers of learners registering for, writing and passing selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at NCV Level 3 in 2009 and 2008**

Subject	No. registered to write in 2009	No. writing (and % of those registered) in 2009	No. passing (and % of those writing) 2009	'Actual success rate' (no. and % passing of those originally registered) 2009	No. writing (No. and % passing) 2008
Construction Material	1 754	1 328 (75.7%)	666 (50.2%)	666 (38.0%)	709 (403; 57%)
Drawings, Setting Out, Quantities and Costing	1 789	1 394 (77.9%)	773 (55.5%)	773 (43.2%)	715 (320; 45%)
Construction Plant and Equipment	1 741	1 382 (79.4%)	1 022 (74.0%)	1 022 (58.7%)	709 (432; 61%)
Construction Carpentry and Roof Work	567	441 (77.8%)	301 (68.3%)	301 (53.1%)	269 (223; 83%)
Concrete Structures	87	60 (69.0%)	54 (90.0%)	54 (62.1%)	32 (28; 88%)
Construction Masonry and Tiling	537	394 (73.4%)	232 (58.9%)	232 (43.2%)	219 (145; 66%)
Construction Plumbing	402	283 (70.4%)	202 (71.4%)	202 (50.3%)	149 (89; 60%)

(Source of 2008 data on which calculations are based: Unpublished analysis, SAQA 2010; source of 2009 data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009)

Table 52 shows the numbers of learners writing and passing Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at NCV Level 4 in 2009, compared with the numbers writing and passing the subjects at NCV Levels 2 and 3, based on available data.

**Table 52: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at NCV Level 4 in 2009, compared with Levels 2 and 3**

Subject	No. registered to write NCV Level 4	No. writing (and % of those registered) NCV Level 4	No. passing (and % of those writing) NCV Level 4	No. passing (and % of those writing) NCV Level 3	No. passing (and % of those writing) NCV Level 2
Construction Materials	412	52 (12.6%)	22 (42.3%)	666 (50.2%)	1353 (27.0%)
Construction Supervision	410	80 (19.5%)	50 (62.5%)	n/a	n/a
Drawings, Setting Out, Quantities and Costing	409	266 (65.0%)	153 (57.5%)	773 (55.5%)	n/a
Civil Construction Technology	384	101 (26.3%)	58 (57.4%)	n/a	n/a
Physical Science	114	76 (66.7%)	38 (50.0%)	127 (33%)	516 (37.5%)

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

The following sub-section of the report presents statistics for the numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing Civil Engineering and Construction subjects in N programmes Level 2-6.

#### 3.5.3.2.4 Numbers of learners writing and passing selected scarce skills subjects, 2008-2009 (N 2-6)

Tables 53-57 show the numbers registered for, writing and passing Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at N Levels 2-6 in 2009 (DHET 2009a).

The numbers registered to write the exams at N Levels 2 and 3 have clearly been affected by the phase-out and reintroduction process, and are lower than the numbers at N Levels 4-6 would lead one to expect (Tables 53-57). The numbers registered decrease between N Levels 4-6, while pass rates increase as the levels increase (Tables 55-57).

**Table 53: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at N Level 2 in 2009**

Subject	No. registered to write	No. writing (and % of those registered)	No. passing (and % of those writing)	'Actual success rate' (no. and % passing of those originally registered)
Carpentry and Roofing Theory	107	64 (59.8%)	29 (45.3%)	29 (27.1%)
Building Drawing	154	94 (61.0%)	27 (28.7%)	27 (17.5%)
Building Science	126	44 (34.9%)	14 (31.8%)	14 (11.1%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>202 (52.2%)</b>	<b>70 (34.7%)</b>	<b>70 (18.1%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

**Table 54: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at N Level 3 in 2009**

Subject	No. registered to write	No. writing (and % of those registered)	No. passing (and % of those writing)	'Actual success rate' (no. and % passing of those originally registered)
Building and Civil Technology	1 223	972 (79.5%)	656 (67.5%)	656 (53.6%)
Building Drawing	1 315	988 (75.1%)	475 (48.1%)	475 (36.1%)
Building Science	2 085	1 693 (81.2%)	657 (38.8%)	657 (31.5%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4 623</b>	<b>3 653 (79.0%)</b>	<b>1 788 (49.0%)</b>	<b>1 788 (38.7%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

**Table 55: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing selected Civil Engineering and Construction subjects at N Level 4 in 2009**

Subject	No. registered to write	No. writing (and % of those registered)	No. passing (and % of those writing)	'Actual success rate' (no. and % passing of those originally registered)
Building Administration	6 115	5 518 (90.2%)	2 529 (45.8%)	2 529 (41.4%)
Building and Structural Construction	4 816	4 183 (86.9%)	2 706 (64.7%)	2 706 (56.2%)
Building and Structural Surveying	6 313	5 711 (90.5%)	1 915 (33.5%)	1 915 (30.3%)
Quantity Surveying	5 085	4 569 (89.9%)	2 428 (53.1%)	2 428 (47.8%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>22 329</b>	<b>19 981 (89.5%)</b>	<b>9 578 (47.9%)</b>	<b>9 578 (42.9%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)

**Table 56: Numbers of learners registered for, writing and passing selected Civil Engineering/ Construction subjects at N Level 5, 2009**

Subject	No. registered to write	No. writing (and % of those registered)	No. passing (and % of those writing)	'Actual success rate' (no. and % passing of those originally registered)
Building Administration	2 711	2 543 (93.8%)	1 979 (77.8%)	1 979 (73.0%)
Building and Structural Construction	4 067	3 763 (92.5%)	1 068 (28.4%)	1 068 (26.3%)
Building and Structural Surveying	2 877	2 698 (93.8%)	2 120 (78.6%)	2 120 (73.7%)
Quantity Surveying	4 728	4 423 (93.6%)	1 776 (40.2%)	1 776 (37.6%)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>14 383</b>	<b>13 427 (93.4%)</b>	<b>6 943 (51.7%)</b>	<b>6 943 (48.3%)</b>

(Source of data on which calculations are based: DHET 2009a)