- *Learning from Africa* (Umalusi 2007b)[11] research compared the syllabi and examinations of Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Zambia at Senior Secondary level to ascertain the standards of South Africa's courses in Mathematics, Physical Science, Biology and English.
  This first detailed and systematic comparative international study provided the groundwork for similar studies that followed. These investigations served to lead Umalusi towards understanding the importance of curriculum in setting and maintaining standards, and how comparability could be established across curricula and qualifications. It was also the first time in which the nature and design of the whole qualification was taken into consideration while seeking to understand the standards of curricula and examinations.

- *Making Educational Judgements* (Umalusi 2007c). From the start Umalusi's comparative research utilised teams of subject specialists who were briefed as groups regarding the theoretical frameworks and evaluation tools to be used. The evaluators then conducted their evaluations individually at different sites, using the tools provided. This method was adopted to reduce bias and provide triangulated results, thus serving to strengthen the robustness of the research. As Umalusi progressed between projects, the briefs provided to the evaluators became increasingly specific. Eventually the process of developing the evaluation instruments used became the focus of self-reflection. The report, *Making Educational Judgements* (Umalusi 2007c) presented a review and analysis of the methodology used in previous Umalusi research between 2004 and 2007. It considered the implications of Umalusi's work in making judgements about intended and examined curricula. The evaluation served to strengthen Umalusi's evaluation instruments.

- *The 'f' word: The Quality of the 'Fundamental' Component of Qualifications in General and Further Education and Training* (Umalusi 2008d) report describes the findings of Umalusi research into the standards of Mathematics and English courses that were being offered by different providers and certified by different quality assurance bodies, as part of the requirements for compulsory 'fundamentals' in all qualifications registered on National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Levels 1 to 4.

  Through the attempt to conduct a detailed analysis of a sample of courses on offer, and through first-level descriptions of submissions from providers, the research found that there appeared to be highly variable standards across different programmes. It also found that unit standards did not seem to be an appropriate vehicle to ensure commensurate standards, and had caused a series of identifiable difficulties and complications for both providers and quality assurance bodies. Further, many providers presented courses that may well have been of good quality, in formats which made it very difficult for a quality assurer to evaluate them.

  The research recommended a few possible solutions to these problems. It confirmed that in the GFET Qualifications Sub-Framework, national standards could not be set by using outcome statements and the delegation of curriculum development and assessment to providers. In this context, a national curriculum had to underpin national qualifications so that curricula could be examined externally, for national standards to be set and maintained. This finding was found to be especially relevant in a country with limited and uneven resources and expertise.

As shown in this sub-section of the report, Umalusi consolidated its thinking and deepened its understanding of quality and standards in education and training over time. All this work was informed by

[11] This research is reported in *All the cattle in the kraal* (Umalusi 2013a).

research and experience, and reflection on this research and experience. Sections 6.1.7 and 6.1.8 below detail further implications of this work.

By 2008, with the advent of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) and the change in Umalusi's mandate, Umalusi had fully conceptualised a qualifications sub-framework for General and Further Education and Training; implemented quality assurance approaches for curricula, assessment and provision at sites of learning; and had in place a sophisticated certification system. Sections 6.1.6, 6.1.7, 6.1.8 and 6.1.9 below show the incremental nature of ongoing efforts to strengthen this work.

6.1.5 Conceptualising standards and quality

As a consequence of its interrogation and research, Umalusi has, over time, deepened its understanding of *how* standards are held in a number of places such as in qualification specifications and pass requirements, in curricula and assessment guidelines, in curriculum implementation and delivery, and in assessment instruments.

Umalusi clarifies its conceptualisation of standards and quality in the two sub-sections that follow.

6.1.5.1 Standards in the context of the GFETQSF

Umalusi defines the concept of *standard* as 'the statement of a level of quality of the attainment required'[12].

Umalusi works on the premise that in the context of the General and Further Education and Training Sub-Framework (GFETQSF), apart from being represented in the qualification itself, educational standards are located and held in the following places:

- the *intended curriculum*, through the depth, breadth and cognitive demand of intended curriculum and by extension, in the design and rules of combination that govern qualifications;
- the *enacted curriculum*. through the implementation and delivery of the curriculum and its attendant assessment at sites of learning; and
- the *assessed curriculum,* as reflected in the types and levels of cognitive demand, including the levels of difficulty of assessments; the secure administration of examinations; and the reliability of the related marking[13].

6.1.5.2 Quality in the context of the GFETQSF

Umalusi's specific insights regarding standards inform its positions on quality, quality assurance and the systems which it puts in place to carry out its responsibilities.

Umalusi's understands *quality assurance* to mean the process of measuring, evaluating and reporting on quality against standards, and monitoring for ongoing improvement in qualifications, intended curricula/

[12] This concept is widely disseminated – see for example the document *Policy and Criteria for the Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Monitoring of Independent Schools and Private Assessment Bodies* (Umalusi, October 2012b).
[13] This approach has been in place since 2007 – see *A Qualifications Sub-Framework for General and Further Education and Training* (Umalusi 2007d).

programmes, institutional capacity to offer and/ or assess the qualifications at the required standards, actual implementation and delivery of curriculum, and assessment[14].

Umalusi therefore understands that *quality* is necessarily determined concurrently by the nature of the qualifications, curricula, assessments and provision required to meet the standards and requirements set by Umalusi[15].

Umalusi argues that its role in maintaining and improving quality entails focusing its attention on the quality of three aspects of the education system, namely:

- the qualification and its prescribed curriculum statements or syllabi (the intended curriculum);
- the examinations through which these curricula are tested (assessed curriculum); and
- the institutions in which provision is offered (enacted curriculum)[16].

Umalusi further asserts that through making judgements on, and supporting the development of, these three aspects of the education system, it is able to improve the overall quality of the standards of education programmes offered to large numbers of learners. The focus on national standards to ensure comparability of achievements across different providers is seen as one of its key responsibilities.

Consequently, Umalusi does not accept a fully decentralised model of assessment. It is committed to issuing certificates for qualifications that have at least a 50% component of external assessments, based on approved syllabi or curriculum statements. Its accreditation of providers is directly linked to the qualifications it certifies and their participation in external assessments provided either by the state or by accredited private assessment bodies.

As a small taxpayer-funded organisation, it is incumbent on Umalusi to target key levers within the system. Further, Umalusi is of the view that well-considered, prescribed curriculum statements or syllabi, together with external examinations and institutional monitoring, are significant and relatively cost-effective ways of establishing, measuring, and improving quality[17].

As a result, Umalusi has populated its General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) with national qualification types with a very limited number of variants per type (as opposed to provider qualifications) (Umalusi 2012d). Some of these national qualifications have designated variants[18]. Each qualification consists of different combinations of subjects, each of which has a prescribed curriculum and external examinations (Umalusi *ibid.*).

In short, the GFETQSF includes two official learning pathways: one for adults and the other for school-going learners (see Section 6.1.7 for a diagram of the GFETQSF). Each of these pathways consists of a small number of qualifications that are quality assured in a robust way and are internationally comparable. The intention is to provide access for large numbers of learners through national delivery of these qualifications in schools, colleges and adult learning centres; and valid, reliable and fair large-scale assessments through a national examination system.

[14] This information is also widely disseminated in *Policy and Criteria for the Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Monitoring of Independent Schools and Private Assessment Bodies* (Umalusi, October 2012b).
[15] *ibid*.
[16] Umalusi's organisational structure reflects these focal areas of activity: its units for Qualifications, Curriculum and Certification (QCC); Assessment; and Evaluation and Accreditation (E&A) respectively focus on curriculum, assessment and provision.
[17] See the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (Umalusi 2007d).
[18] See Section 6.1.7.

6.1.6 Setting standards: Umalusi responsibilities

The allocation of responsibilities for setting and maintaining standards in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) is prescribed in legislation across a number of documents.

In terms of Section 3 of the National Education Policy Act, Act 27 of 1996 (NEPA) (RSA 1996b) and Section 6(a) of the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996c), it is the responsibility of the 'Minister of Education' to determine the minimum norms and standards for national education in both public and independent schools.

Since the split of the national Department of Education (DoE) into the Departments of Basic Education (DBE) and Higher Education and Training (DHET), in 2010, Umalusi has been funded by the DBE. Umalusi reports to the Minister of Higher Education and Training in respect of matters relating to the NQF and its Sub-Framework, and in respect of the qualifications for which it is responsible, namely: the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV); the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC); the N3 certificate, and as they are phased in, the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) and GETC for Adults (GETCA). It is only in respect of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) that Umalusi reports to the Minister of Basic Education.

The TVET Colleges Amendment Bill published in Government Gazette No. 35401 of May 2012 (RSA 2012), which amends the FET Colleges Act of 2006 and repeals the ABET Act of 2000, states in Section 43(14)[1] that the Minister 'may prescribe minimum norms and standards for continuing education and training qualifications or part-qualifications that are offered at colleges'[19].

The law therefore makes it clear that the Minister, whether of Basic Education or Higher Education and Training, is responsible for determining minimum norms and standards in national education and training policy. It is also clear that such policy is determined to protect individuals' constitutional rights in respect of education and training (RSA 1994).

Further, it is evident that the NQF Act (RSA 2008a) and the amended GENFETQA Act (RSA 2008a) require that the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi) be responsible for (a) developing policy to develop and manage the GFETQSF; (b) recommending qualifications to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) for registration on the GFETQSF component of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); and (c) the attendant quality assurance processes. In so doing Umalusi assists the Ministers of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training to ensure enactment of the norms and standards required.

Quality assuring education and training in the GFETQSF context is a complex, ongoing process integrated into every facet of the work Umalusi undertakes. In each of these areas of work, Umalusi is required to provide principles, processes and procedures that inform the public regarding how everything works and what it expects from others in the education and training system, whether these others are providers of education and training, examination moderators, certification officers or assessment bodies. Umalusi sets its own standards for the work it does in support of assuring that the Ministers' norms and standards are internalised within the education and training system.

To this end, Umalusi is also responsible for determining standards according to which it quality assures those nationally set minimum norms and standards for education. Nevertheless, there are some cases where the standards according to which Umalusi is required to function *are* based directly on the

[19] In this case the Minister being referred to is the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

Ministers' standards. This is the case for example, when Umalusi moderators are required to evaluate examinations against the assessment guidelines contained in national curricula. Umalusi engages with the standards set by curriculum documents and assessment requirements and may propose new standards to the Minister concerned if necessary.

The standards developed by Umalusi are embodied in a range of policy documents, some of which are regulated by the Ministers of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, and some of which Umalusi's Council is mandated to approve and implement. Examples of policies binding on the national education system, regardless of whether the institutions are public or independent are, *inter alia* as follows:

- General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (DHET 2013a) and Policy for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (Umalusi 2014g).

- Standards and Quality Assurance for General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi 2013d).

- Policy for the Development, Review and Management of Qualifications in the GFETQSF (Umalusi 2014f)[20].

- Policies that govern the purpose, rationale, outcomes, entry requirements, structure, design and other aspects of qualifications such as, but not limited to:

  (1) The National Senior Certificate: A qualification at Level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (DBE 2005); and

  (2) The Policy for the National Senior Certificate for Adults at Level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (Umalusi 2014h)[21].

- Regulations pertaining to the conduct, administration and management of the National Senior Certificate examinations (DBE 2014c).

- Directives for the certification of qualifications such as, but not limited to the:

  (1) Policy for the Certification of Candidate Records for Qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (Umalusi 2012c);
  (2) Directives for Certification: Senior Certificate, as amended (Umalusi 2014c);
  (3) Directives for Certification: National Senior Certificate (Umalusi 2008aa); and
  (4) Directives for Certification: National Certificate (Vocational), Levels 2-4 (Umalusi 2007a)[22].

[20] In terms of the NQF Act, Umalusi is required to develop policy and criteria for the management of qualifications for its Sub-Framework. Umalusi has minimum criteria for consideration when a qualification is considered for approval, but also extends the list of criteria to align the qualifications under consideration to the quality assurance requirements of its Sub-Framework, such as the necessity for the qualification to be curriculum-based. Once Umalusi's Council has approved a new or reviewed qualification, it is then considered ready for submission into the SAQA process to register qualifications on the NQF. Umalusi's policy captures in broad strokes the ways in which qualifications are developed, reviewed and managed up to the point of submission to SAQA for NQF-registration processes.

[21] A qualification such as the National Senior Certificate (NSC), National Certificate: Vocational (NCV), National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) is explained in a policy that details its purpose and rationale, outcomes, entry requirements, structure and design, and other aspects. A review of these qualifications entails a review of the qualification's related policy document(s) and may require adapting the qualification policy requirements to strengthen the qualification.

- The framework for quality assurance of assessment as evidenced in policy, directives and guidelines such as, but not limited to the :

  (1) Policy Framework for the Quality Assurance of Assessment for Qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Sub-Framework (Umalusi 2012d, amended in 2014); and
  (2) Quality Assurance of Assessment: Directives, Guidelines, Requirements (Umalusi 2006c).

- Policies relating to the quality assurance, accreditation and monitoring of assessment bodies; independent schools; Further Education and Training Colleges and Adult Learning Centres such as, but not limited to the:

  (1) Policy and Criteria for the Accreditation and Monitoring of Private Further Education and Training Colleges, Private Adult Education and Training Centres and Private Assessment Bodies (DHET 2010a); and
  (2) Policy and Criteria for the Accreditation and Monitoring of Independent Schools and Private Assessment Bodies (DBE 2012c).

Each of these documents serves to direct the conduct of all involved in delivering qualifications registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework[23].

6.1.7 Development and implementation of the GFETQSF

The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) was published in August 2013 by the South African Qualifications Authority (Government Gazette No 36 797, 30 August 2013), and subsequently gazetted as the Policy for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework by Umalusi (Government Gazette No 38 029, 29 September 2014).

The policy for the GFETQSF sets out the qualifications that Umalusi quality assures and certifies, and makes clear the relative relationships of the qualifications with one another across NQF levels, the nature of these qualifications and the quality assurance processes associated with them (Umalusi 2014g).

Importantly, the GFETQSF also outlines articulation possibilities between its qualifications and those on the other two NQF Sub-Frameworks, namely the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) and the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF).

[22] Directives for certification are developed by Umalusi directly from the requirements expressed in the qualification's policy documents. Certification directives frequently make explicit how a policy statement is to be interpreted in the determination of whether a candidate has actually passed the whole qualification or not. The directives also spell out the format in which the data needs to be submitted by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to Umalusi so that candidates can be certified. Every qualification thus has its own set of certification directives. Certification directives are approved by Umalusi's Council in line with Umalusi's founding Act, the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, Act 58 of 2001.
[23] Standards and Quality Assurance for the GFETQSF, June 2008, revised February 2013 (Umalusi 2013d).

The GFETQSF is illustrated in Figure 94 below.

Figure 94: The General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF)[24]

NQF level	Qualification types and qualifications					Certificates for units of learning
Level 4	**National Certificate (NC)**					Subject certificates towards one or more qualification-designated variants
Designated variants	Senior Certificate *and* National Senior Certificate (Colleges)	National Senior Certificate (NSC)	National Certificate (Vocational) Level 4	National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA)	National Certificate (Vocational) for Adults (NACVA)	
Level 3	**Intermediate Certificate (IC)**					Subject certificates towards one or more qualification-designated variants
Designated variants	[NSC – Gr 11]		National Certificate (Vocational) Level 3	Intermediate Certificate of Education		
Level 2	**Elementary Certificate (EC)**					Subject certificates towards one or more qualification-designated variants
Designated variants	[NSC – Gr 10]		National Certificate (Vocational) Level 2	Elementary Certificate of Education		
Level 1	**General Certificate (GC)**					Subject (LA) certificates for adult learners
Designated variants	General Certificate		of Education (GCE)	General Education and Training Certificate: ABET	General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA)	

[24] It should be noted that some of the qualifications in the GFETQSF are in use (e.g. the NSC and the NCV qualifications); some are registered but not yet implemented (e.g. the NASCA); some are in development (e.g. the GETCA, which will replace the GETC: ABET Level 4 [NQF Level 1]), and others are currently proposed as possibilities (e.g. the Elementary and Intermediate Certificates of Education in the adult stream and the GCE in schools. In this Sub-Framework vocational opportunities (the green column) co-exist with conventional academic qualifications for schools (yellow column) and adults (blue column).

The purpose of the qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) is to fulfil the state's constitutional responsibility to citizens regarding rights to basic and further education. In South Africa everyone has a right to a basic education – including adult basic education – and to further education, which is to be made progressively available and accessible(RSA 1994: Clause 29[1]).

The qualifications on the GFET Sub-Framework are thus organised into two streams which cater for two distinct learner groups: (1) children and adolescents involved in the acquisition of a basic education in schools, and (2) adolescents who are already out of school and adults. This latter group has diverse needs that range from Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET)[25] to achieving a school-leaving certificate. The groups overlap substantially in terms of age, yet have distinct needs.

The qualifications on the GFETQSF prepare learners in a broad general way for further learning, and for becoming educated South African citizens with some readiness to enter the world of work. Qualifications in this Sub-Framework are either academic or vocational in nature, but not occupational[26].

All the qualifications in the GFETQSF are supported by curricula that are discipline-based and include foundational learning which requires proficiency in one or more languages and in some form of Mathematics or Mathematical Literacy. All these qualifications are nationally assessed through external examinations set by the national Department of Basic Education or the Department of Higher Education and Training – or private accredited assessment bodies.

The GFET Sub-Framework is designed to cater for adults' basic literacy needs as well as their general academic and vocational requirements in order to build a post-schooling environment supportive of a wide range of adult needs.

The Policy for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (Umalusi 2014g) integrates existing discipline-based qualifications offered at institutions – such as schools, Technical and Vocational (TVET), and adult education and training centres – both public and private, into the Sub-Framework. It also allows for the development of new qualifications needed to respond to emerging learning needs.

This policy (Umalusi 2014g) determines the structure for new General and Further Education and Training qualifications which are not occupational qualifications. Existing qualifications retain their structure until they are reviewed and re-registered. Guidance for the development of new qualifications, and for the review of existing qualifications, is provided in the Policy for the Development, Review and Management of Qualifications in the GFETQSF (Umalusi 2014f).

All new qualifications and existing qualifications, once reviewed, need to conform to the requirements set out in this policy (Umalusi 2014g).

6.1.8 Understanding and evaluating standards: Consolidating insights

This section of the report builds on the sub-sections immediately preceding it as well as on Section 6.1.4.2 above, which details research and analyses conducted in support of Umalusi's standard-setting and quality assurance work in its first five years.

[25] Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is also referred to as Adult Education and Training (AET).

[26] By 'vocational' qualifications Umalusi refers to a general education that orients learners to the world of work and creates foundations for work-related learning, while 'occupational' qualifications refer to qualifications that prepare learners for specific jobs.

Between 2006 and 2012 Umalusi undertook further comparative/ benchmarking studies in a series of initiatives to understand the relative standards of qualifications it was quality assuring and certifying, and to inform and facilitate articulation between qualifications on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF).

These projects served to highlight debates on the complex issue of standards, what standards in General and Further Education and Training should be and how such standards could be measured. The body of research led to the refinement of analytical tools developed in Umalusi's first five years for judging standards in curricula and examinations. These tools continue to be refined through the implementation of evaluation processes.

As reported in Section 6.1.4.2 above, Umalusi investigated *inter alia* the standards of the Senior Certificate (Umalusi 2004), the relative standards of Senior Certificate and N-course subjects in the *Apples and Oranges* project (Umalusi 2006a), the standards of South Africa's senior secondary school subjects relative to their counterparts in Ghana, Kenya and Zambia (Umalusi 2007b), and the quality of selected aspects of adult education and training (Allais and Bolton 2008a, 2008b). The sections that follow detail comparative and benchmarking studies that focused on qualifications, curricula and assessment in the sub-sectors in the GFETQSF context, benchmarking in this Sub-Framework context, and particular challenges relating to standards and quality-related issues.

6.1.8.1 Benchmarking the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) for Adults

Umalusi's first investigation to focus purely on the Adult Education sector looked into the quality of the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) for Adults (GETC: Adult Basic Education and Training [ABET]), an NQF Level 1 qualification offered by the Department of Education[27] and the Independent Examinations Board (IEB).

The intention was that the GETC: ABET would provide General Education and Training (GET) for adults, and potentially lay the foundations for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The need for insight into how the constituent unit standards underpinning the GETC prepared adults for Further Education and Training was clear, as very few adult learners were transitioning into TVET.

The resulting research report was entitled *Inspecting the Foundations: Towards an understanding of the intended and examined curricula for the General Education and Training Certificate for Adults* (Allais and Bolton 2008a, 2008b). The findings showed once again the dangers of decentralising curricula. While there was no national curriculum, the unit standards were fleshed out in some instances at the level of provincial Departments of Education, and in other cases at the level of individual Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs). The curriculum with which the adult learners engaged varied greatly across these differing contexts.

6.1.8.2 Maintaining standards in the context of system change

In 2008, the first cohort of learners following the new post-1994 curriculum introduced to all Grade 1 learners in the country in 1996, and culminating in the then-new National Senior Certificate (NSC), reached matric level.

As with most large-scale examination systems in the world, Umalusi needed measures to ensure consistency in learners' performance over time. Umalusi needed to standardise the 2008 results across

[27] Part of the delivery of this qualification lay with the national Department of Education (before it split into the Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training), part lay with the provincial Departments of Education, and part lay with the Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs).

provinces in South Africa, and in relation to previous matric examinations for the old Senior Certificate. To complicate matters, curricula and examinations for the old Senior Certificate had been offered and taken up by learners at Higher Grade and Standard Grade levels[28]. The new NSC was based on one national curriculum per school subject, and one set of exam papers for all qualifying Grade 12 learners in the country. For the first time in the history of the country one set of differentiated examination questions needed to differentiate learners: those achieving at high levels and subject to specified criteria would be eligible for entry to Higher Education; those writing the same examinations but achieving at lower levels would follow other routes into further learning and work.

For the 2008 matriculation examinations there were no historical norms upon which Umalusi could standardise the new NSC examination results. In order to ensure the integrity of these learners' results, Umalusi required a clear understanding of the quality, types and levels of cognitive demand of the new curricula and exams, relative to those they had replaced.

To this end, Umalusi conducted a study to compare the Higher and Standard Grade curricula and exams of key Senior Certificate (SC) subjects from 2005, 2006 and 2007, with the corresponding curricula and exams for the same subjects for the new National Senior Certificate (NSC) (Umalusi 2008a). The fact that the new NSC exams had not yet been written when the analysis had to take place caused a logistical challenge addressed by analysing *exemplar* NSC exam papers, and as many final exam papers as could be analysed before the standardisation process began. The intention was to gain understanding of the relative quality and types and levels of cognitive demand of the six 'gateway' subjects[29]: Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy, English First Additional Language (FAL)[30], Physical Science, Life Sciences and Geography, in the old and new qualifications.

The purpose of Umalusi's (2008a) *Maintaining Standards* research was to ensure the continuity of standards between the old and better-known Senior Certificate qualification, and the new NSC. A bridge between the two qualifications was required.

The research instruments were robust, including tools to evaluate and record individual exam questions and part-questions which could be aggregated for an evaluation of a whole paper, and credible triangulation methods. The results proved to be extremely useful for Umalusi's Assessment Standards Committee, and for the standardisation required.

Umalusi's (2008a) *Maintaining Standards* research was thus extended to include an investigation of the extent to which trends found in 2008 were strengthened or otherwise in 2009. The evaluation tools were used to evaluate the 2009 exam papers for the same NSC subjects. An additional four subjects, namely History, Accounting, Business Studies and Economics were also included in the analysis.

Findings from the *Maintaining Standards* research (Umalusi 2008a, 2009b) enabled the continuation of credible and fair standardisation of learner results across the transition from the Senior Certificate to the

[28] Curricula at Higher Grade level tended to focus on relatively high-level disciplinary knowledge and associated examination questions required problem-solving in new situations, and relatively sophisticated analysis and synthesis, as well as recall and the application of knowledge in new situations (Bolton 2005). Curricula at Standard Grade level in contrast included more everyday knowledge and examination questions, while including some high-order competencies, focused to a far greater extent on recall (Bolton *ibid*.).

[29] These subjects were and remain important for entrance to Higher Education, Vocational Education and Training, and the world of work.

[30] Most secondary school learners in South Africa write their matriculation examinations for all subjects in English rather than in their home languages. The subject English itself however, is written in most instances at First Additional Language (FAL) level, hence the importance of the focus on English (FAL) in the research.

new NSC. The findings of the research were also fed into Umalusi's other internal work, contributing to and strengthening other quality assurance processes and instruments.

6.1.8.3 Towards quality assuring different types of knowledge

It is widely understood that general and vocational education involve differing kinds of knowledge. Umalusi's (2006a) *Apples and Oranges* research provides one example of this reality.

In 2009 Umalusi investigated some of these differences. A distinguishing feature of any curriculum that leads to a vocational or professional qualification is that it requires a mix of different types of knowledge, drawn from domains that are both non-empirical (conceptual) and empirical (situated in everyday life). The strong emphasis on practice, which characterises the college and practical school subjects quality assured by Umalusi, might thus call for analytical instruments different from the tools that have been developed by Umalusi thus far to evaluate cognitive challenges (Umalusi 2007c, 2009b, 2013b).

The internal concept paper, *The relationship between knowledge and practice in curriculum and assessment* (Umalusi 2009, unpublished), provides a theoretical model of types of knowledge that goes some way towards clarifying the ways in which knowledge and practice combine. The paper sets out conceptual tools to create options towards a framework for the quality assurance of curricula and assessment in practical subjects offered in schools and colleges.

The challenge of understanding the nature of practical assessment has been engaged with deeply in Umalusi's most recent curriculum and assessment related research, *What's in the CAPS package?* (Umalusi 2014j). Research into the so-called services subjects has included investigation of the practical assessment in both the NSC and NCV qualifications. The findings for subjects such as Tourism, Hospitality and Consumer Studies have emphasised that the nature of practical assessment is qualitatively different from that of more conventional academic subjects and that the success of these subjects depends closely on an understanding of the vocational and workplace practices to which these school and college subjects relate. The impact of these findings, and the stakeholder processes which gave rise to the findings and recommendations, are just beginning to be felt.

6.1.8.4 Quality assuring the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV)

In 2009 Umalusi adapted the evaluation tools used in the *Maintaining Standards* research (Umalusi 2008a, 2009b) for use in a comparative study of four subjects offered as part of the new National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) at TVET Colleges and the National Senior Certificate (NSC) at schools. The subjects on which the research focused were English First Additional Language (EFAL), Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Physical Science[31].

This study was linked to previous research reported in *Apples and Oranges* (Umalusi 2006a), that compared selected curricula for subjects offered in schools and at TVET Colleges respectively. It also built on *The 'f' word: The quality of the 'Fundamental' component in General and Further Education and Training* (Umalusi 2008d). It is reported in *The 'F' in NCV: Benchmarking common subjects in the NSC and the NCV* (Umalusi 2010a). The findings informed Umalusi's subsequent understanding of articulation possibilities between the two qualifications.

[31] Most secondary school learners in South Africa write their TVET-level examinations for all subjects in English rather than in their home languages. The subject English itself however, is written in most instances at First Additional Language (FAL) level, hence the focus on English (FAL) in the research.

More recently, in 2013-2014, Umalusi conducted an investigation into the NCV Hospitality and Tourism curriculum, in partnership with the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA), the Department of Tourism and other stakeholders,. The research led to the re-curriculation of the NCV Hospitality and Tourism course. It is reported in *At your service: Towards an informed understanding of the NCV Tourism and Hospitality programmes* (Umalusi 2013b).

6.1.8.5 Benchmarking South African GFETQSF qualifications with their international counterparts

Two investigations are reported here.

6.1.7.5.1 Benchmarking the National Senior Certificate (NSC) internationally

While Umalusi was satisfied that it had established a clear understanding of the relationship between the National Senior Certificate (NSC) and its Senior Certificate (SC) predecessor in both its Higher and Standard Grade forms (Umalusi 2008a, 2009b), Umalusi needed to know more about the comparability of the NSC to its international counterparts. Umalusi's next step was to initiate a study with this focus. It was thought that such a study would also assist Higher Education South Africa (HESA) in its equivalence-setting work[32]. At the time, HESA needed to 'establish whether or not a foreign qualification could be recognised as [being] fully or partially comparable to the NSC, and the minimum requirements for admission to degree, diploma and higher certificate status in South Africa'.

The study is reported in *Evaluating the South African National Senior Certificate in relation to selected international qualifications: A self-referencing exercise to determine the standing of the NSC* (Umalusi 2010b).

The research benchmarked the NSC qualification's curricula and exams in five key gate-keeping subjects namely, English First Additional Language[33], Mathematics, Physical Sciences, Biology/ Life Sciences and Geography, against the equivalent-level curricula and examinations of these subjects in the International Baccalaureate (IB) qualification at both Standard and Higher Levels, and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) offered by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) at O-Level, A-Level and Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level[34]. It sought to establish the extent to which the NSC could be recognised as being fully or partially comparable to these international qualifications.

Many dimensions of the curricula and exams were compared in the study. Overall, the NSC curricula were found to fit "comparably within the range of the selected curricula" (Umalusi 2010b: 11). Regarding the content, and types and levels of cognitive demand covered in the curricula, the NSC was found to be most

[32] HESA's mandate is to facilitate the development of informed public policy on Higher Education and to encourage cooperation among universities and government, industry and other sectors of society in South Africa. In particular, HESA aims (1) to be the single, credible, authoritative and respected voice of public Higher Education; (2) to be the single, unified national body equitably representing all sectors of the public Higher Education system; and (3) to be the primary point of contact for government, the media, national and international organisations, prospective students and anyone who seeks information or interaction with public Higher Education in the Republic.

[33] Most matric learners in South Africa write the final examinations at the end of secondary school for all their subjects in the English language, although English is not their home language. For many of these learners, the school subject itself – English – is written at First Additional Language level. The English First Additional Language papers are thus an important focus for research.

[34] Advanced (A) Level in the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) is for 16 to 19-year-olds who need advanced studies in preparation for entry to Higher Education. It is widely perceived as a 'gold standard' and typically takes two years. Advanced Subsidiary (AS) Level study can also serve towards preparation for entry to Higher Education. It typically lasts for a year and can lead to A-Level study (www.cie.org.uk, accessed 17 November 2014).

similar to the "IB Standard Level and the CIE Advanced Subsidiary Level, and in some instances such as English FAL, more like the CIE Advanced Level" (Umalusi *ibid.*). The report (Umalusi 2010b) details more specific overlaps for the particular subjects studied. Particular subjects do exactly match *overall* trends.

6.1.8.5.2 International benchmarking of selected National Curriculum Statements (NCS) at Primary School level

Nationally, 2008 saw the launch of the *Foundations for Learning* initiative by the then-Department of Education (DoE). Responding to the low performance levels of South African primary school learners in international and national standardised tests such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2008); Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Mullis *et al.* 2001, 2006); and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Measuring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) studies, this campaign focused on improving the reading, writing and numeracy performance levels of all children at Foundation Phase (FP)[35] level in the country.

At the same time, the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) remained the official curriculum for South African learners. The report *Comparing the learning bases* (Umalusi 2009a) documents Umalusi's evaluation of the NCS for the General Education and Training (GET) Band (Grades 1-9).

The intention was for the research to commence by providing insights into the curriculum and standards available to learners in the Foundation Phase. The learning areas of Literacy, Numeracy, Life Orientation and English were selected for the first set of curriculum comparisons, these subjects providing the basic skills required by learners to progress through schooling.

Umalusi conducted this research in the face of ongoing public criticism of the NCS and attempts to improve the national curricula in the country. The findings of the study were fed into the curriculum review process under way at the time, namely the revision of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). These findings were published in the report *Comparing the learning bases: An evaluation of the Foundation Phase curricula in South Africa, British Columbia: Canada, Singapore and Kenya* (Hoadley *et al.* 2010).

The following two sub-sections of this report sketch recent Umalusi research towards addressing known challenges in selected priority areas. Items in these sections serve as examples of Umalusi's research agenda only; other projects not reported here can be accessed on Umalusi's website (www.umalusi.org.za).

6.1.8.6 The issue of language in curriculum and examinations

Given that South Africa has 11 official languages, the issue of language in curricula and examinations is central in Umalusi's research. This sub-section of the report first covers Umalusi research into African languages curricula (Reeves 2010) and a larger project currently under way.

6.1.8.6.1 Comparing African languages curricula

Research reported in *Comparing the learning bases: A comparative evaluation of African languages Foundation Phase curricula in South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe* (Reeves 2010) comprised a detailed comparative evaluation of the learning areas making up the South African Foundation Phase (FP) curriculum. In this report, the South African FP African languages curriculum for an

[35] Schooling in South Africa has four phases, each comprising three school grades as follows: Foundation Phase (Grades 1-3); Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6); Senior Phase (Grades 7-9); and Further Education and Training (Grades 10-12).

Nguni (isiZulu) and a Sotho (Setswana) language, were compared with the language curricula for the same school grades in Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

The report laid the foundation for ongoing investigation into the standards of languages in curricula across school grades. This work coincided with the revision of the National Curriculum Statements (NCS) and their replacement with the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAPS) by the Minister of Basic Education in 2011, and led to the work described in the following section.

6.1.8.6.2 Towards understanding the implications of officially recognised multilingualism for national curricula

While conducting an extensive evaluation of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy statements (CAPS) for all phases of schooling (from Foundation Phase through to the TVET Phase) from 2012 to the present, Umalusi began to focus its research on particular educational issues within the system that required the most urgent attention, such as the issue of language and multilingualism within the South African GENFET Qualifications Sub-Framework.

This research has followed three strands: firstly, attempting to understand *Academic Literacy* – the foundational skills that must be mastered in a language for a learner to be able to perform academically in that language.

Secondly, since assessment forms a fundamental part of educational advancement and is also at the centre of Umalusi's mandate, another area being explored is the *Assessment Stream*. Projects that fall within this stream have focused on the comparability of language examinations and methods for standardising different language examinations, or controlling for language variables within examinations.

The third thread of the research focuses on the *Intended Curriculum,* which represents the sum of what the education system expects learners to master during their GENFET studies. Umalusi has analysed the intended curriculum to ensure that it scaffolds learners' language development adequately and that the language requirements throughout the curriculum are appropriate, both within subjects that are explicitly language related, and content subjects (Umalusi 2012a, 2012f, 2013e, 2014a).

To date Umalusi has published four language-related reports, as follows:

- *Developing a framework for assessing and comparing the cognitive challenge of Home Language examinations* (Umalusi 2012a).
- *The standards of National Senior Certificate Home Language examinations: A comparison of South African official languages* (Umalusi 2012f).
- *Towards a construct for assessing high-level language ability in Grade 12* (Umalusi 2013e).
- *Academic literacy at foundation phase level: An exploratory investigation* (Umalusi 2014a)[36].

6.1.8.7 Researching assessment standards

Umalusi requires deep understanding of the many facets of quality assurance of assessment in the context of the GFETQSF. Three papers developed towards deepening these insights are described here.

6.1.8.7.1 Continuous Assessment (CASS) versus examination marks

It is widely known that internal assessment results (or results from assessment conducted within schools) vary widely across schools. It is to be expected that this trend would be especially marked in a country like

[36] This article features in Umalusi's Annual Report for the 2012/2013 financial year.

South Africa with its large Gini co-efficient[37]. The results of internal assessment are far less reliable as indicators of learner competence levels than are the standardised results from externally moderated national examinations.

The report *Signalling performance: An analysis of continuous assessment and matriculation examination marks in South African schools* (Umalusi 2008b) presents an analysis that compared Continuous Assessment (CASS) and examination data. It illuminates the severity of the problem of inaccurate CASS marks in the country (Umalusi 2010c).

6.1.8.7.2 Fine-tuning the maintenance and enhancement of standards over time

In 2007-2008 Umalusi investigated the implications of using *Item Response Theory* (IRT). The study is reported in *The role of IRT in selected examination systems* (Umalusi 2008e). This research explored the use of psychometric approaches such as IRT to determine whether these approaches could provide additional information to allow Umalusi to report more meaningfully to the public on standards in education.

Umalusi's research into IRT continues and has led to an embryonic project of item development and banking (Umalusi 2010b). It is anticipated that this initiative will feed into the assessment model for the newly developed National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) to be implemented in 2017, and which it is hoped will in time move the general approach to assessment from norm referencing to criterion referencing[38].

6.1.8.7.3 Continued fine-tuning of the maintenance and enhancement of standards

In any country, there is a tension between the authorities wanting to pass as many entrants as write exams in the final year of secondary school as possible, and wanting to ensure that only those who perform at the requisite levels are successful. While passing the maximum number of learners will benefit more people in the short term, if learners pass and are later found to be lacking in the required competencies for further/ higher levels of study, or for workplaces, they will quickly find themselves disadvantaged. While in South Africa attempts are being made to increase post-school opportunities (Department of Higher Education and Training 2013), clearly at the same time the aim needs to be to pass as many learners meeting the standards required as possible.

With the high unemployment levels in the country – especially among those in the 16-24 year age cohort – and given the link between education and training on the one hand and work on the other, it is not surprising that public debate on educational standards intensified in 2013. Public understanding of education and training processes is sometimes limited however.

As these debates focused particularly on NSC pass requirements, Umalusi commissioned a paper, *Cut them off at the Pass!* (Wedekind 2013). This document interrogated the concerns around the NSC pass requirements, looked at international practices across seven countries and made recommendations based on the findings. The paper was approved by Umalusi's Council as its official position and was provided as advice to the Minister of Basic Education. It has fed into the work of the Ministerial Task Team established in 2014 to take this matter forward.

[37] The Gini coefficient (also known as the Gini index or Gini ratio) is a measure of statistical dispersion that represents the income distribution of a nation's residents; it is a commonly used measure of socio-economic inequality.
[38] With norm referencing learner achievements are understood in relation to established norms; criterion referencing focuses on achievement in relation to the standard of the content assessed.

6.1.8.8 Overarching comments: Umalusi research, standards and quality assurance in the GFETQSF

As is evident from the research described here, Umalusi has worked hard to develop its understanding of the complex nature of standards in the context of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF).

Umalusi has used the findings of the research related here to support its approaches in determining the standards against which it measures the quality of qualifications, curricula, assessment and educational provision. Research findings have been used to inform policies governing the GFETQSF, Umalusi's positions as it carries out its responsibilities, and how Umalusi manages and articulates the qualifications in the GFETQSF. In addition, the research had served and continues to serve to support Umalusi's internal and external processes, such as the standardisation of results and tools, including but not limited to the development of common assessment constructs for languages and other subjects, moderator training manuals and vocationally-oriented evaluation instruments.

Umalusi's extensive research into curriculum and assessment standards has led to a deep understanding of educational standards within Umalusi and the constituencies with which it works.

Through its research, Umalusi has come to realise that among other things, comparability – and not equivalence – in the GFETQSF context can safely be established only at the level of curriculum and assessment, and only in a limited sense at the level of a qualification. It has come to understand that how levels of cognitive demand are sequenced and scaffolded, and how learning is paced, play a significant part in the 'setting of standards' and how well learners learn. Umalusi's research repeatedly confirmed that the manner in which the curriculum is mediated and assessed is critical for the setting, maintaining and enhancing of standards.

Umalusi's research has enabled it to carry out its mandate of enhancing quality in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework.

6.1.9 Enhancing Quality in General and Further Education and Training

This section covers achievements and setbacks in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF), with particular reference to maintaining and enhancing quality in schooling, vocational education in the context of the GFETQSF, and Adult Education in the 13 years since Umalusi's creation. It also contains reflections on development of the GFETQSF as a whole, relational work done by Umalusi and the integration of Umalusi's voice in the system.

6.1.9.1 Transforming general education and further education and training in the GFETQSF: overarching achievements

This sub-section of the report builds on Sections 1.2.2.2 and 6.1.1–6.1.7 of the report – the general historical note on the NQF, and Umalusi's descriptions of shifts in Basic Education and Further Education and Training over the last 20 years; its own journeys towards defining quality and developing its approaches to quality assurance; and the research underpinning and strengthening its work respectively.

The present sub-section points to these earlier parts of the report in order to highlight three key developments.

First, by 2001, the year in which Umalusi was established (see Section 6.1.1) a number of significant changes had already taken place in the South African education and training landscape. One of the most important developments in the context of the GFETQSF was the creation of a single national Department

of Education from 18 departments previously divided on the basis of race, ethnicity and region. Recasting the single new national department into nine provincial departments of education was not as easily achieved, but it did create a new political basis for the governance of education that nullified the logic of race in the education system's constitution (Jansen and Taylor 2003).

Radical school curriculum reform was introduced in 1996, and the first national examination for the first cohort of learners in this new system wrote one set of Senior Certificate examinations in 2008. For the first time in the country, learners, irrespective of race or geographical location, had the same curriculum and assessment (Jansen and Taylor 2003).

Second, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established through an Act of Parliament in 1995. As a consequence, the process of integrating the whole education and training system – through development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) –commenced. Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were established for each economic sector, and under the auspices of the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b), SAQA began accrediting Education and Training Quality Assuring bodies (ETQAs) to quality assure provision. Umalusi was established as a band ETQA accredited to quality assure General and Further Education and Training at NQF Levels 1-4. Importantly, the emphasis on learning outcomes and the alignment of education and training with the Constitution of the country, associated with the NQF, rapidly began to permeate national school curricula. These influences can be seen in the form and content of the school curricula and their accompanying textbooks, as well as in the use and character of the learning outcomes and assessment standards, the critical and developmental outcomes, and the fact that the curricula were national for the first time in the history of the country.

Third, there were far-reaching changes in institutional types. Changes included the creation of 52 Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges merged from the previous 150; the incorporation of Colleges of Education into universities[39]; merging of previously racially-divided public technikons and universities into 23 and later 25 public Higher Education Institutions; and the introduction of learnerships and internships into the vocational education and training landscape.

For Umalusi, the Department of Education's radical reform of the curricula for schooling, TVET Colleges and Adult Education was an urgent area for research, with changes in the school curriculum being the most urgent focus of all.

6.1.9.2 Umalusi's enhancement of quality in schools over time

6.1.9.2.1 Curriculum 2005 and beyond

The establishment in 1996 of a new curriculum for schooling – Curriculum 2005 – was at the heart of educational reform in South Africa's new democracy. Curriculum 2005 was a progressive model based on the principles of outcomes-based, learner-centred education in which the teacher played the role of facilitator. It was heavily criticised in academic and some professional circles for its highly inaccessible language, the under-preparedness of teachers to deliver the new curriculum, and general discrepancies in the resources and capacity of schools which affected implementation (Dada *et al.* 2009).

Criticisms were also levelled from an epistemological perspective. It was feared that the under-specification of curriculum content, lack of explicit curricular sequencing and prioritising of the integration of learners' everyday experiences into school work covered would lead to losses in terms of conceptual understanding and development (Dada *et al*. 2009). It was widely asserted that well-resourced schools

[39] Colleges of Education at the time focused mainly on pre-school, primary and secondary school up to then-Standard 8 (Grade 10) level teacher training, and training for selected disciplinary or occupational areas such as nursing.

would be far more likely than their under-resourced counterparts, to be able to implement the new curriculum. There were fears that Curriculum 2005 could increase rather than address existing inequalities in terms of access to high-level conceptual knowledge (Dada *et al. ibid.*).

Between 2002 and 2010 several waves of curriculum reform sought to address these concerns[40] (see also Section 6.1.7.6 of this report). Umalusi research has been fed into the related processes.

6.1.9.2.2 Quality assuring the matric exams as the system transformed

From 2001 Umalusi was responsible for the quality assurance of the externally set, marked and moderated exit examinations linked to the Senior Certificate achieved on successful completion of secondary school (see Section 6.1.5.2 above). Umalusi was also responsible for quality assuring school-based continuous assessment (CASS) which formed part of the requirements for learner attainment of the Senior Certificate (see Section 6.1.8.7 above).

Umalusi undertook its first research into the standards of the Senior Certificate in support of this work in 2003-2004 (Umalusi 2004, see Section 6.1.4.2.2 above), amid a public outcry against what was perceived as a lowering of standards. This perception was arguably based partly on the high matric pass rate in 2003, and partly on ongoing criticisms from Higher Education Institutions of the calibre of learners entering these institutions. The research report *Investigation into the Standard of the Senior Certificate Examination* (Umalusi 2004) presented a robust and transparent evaluation that established whether or not standards had shifted, and if so, *how* (as standards are related to individual subjects, and to papers within subjects). The findings were fed into moderation of the Senior Certificate and continued research into maintaining and enhancing standards from that time (Reeves 2013a, Umalusi 2008a, 2009b). This work has to an extent served to reassure the public about the credibility of the qualification (Reeves 2013a).

6.1.9.2.3 Accreditation of independent institutions

In 2004 Umalusi commenced with its accreditation process for independent schools, private TVET Colleges and Adult Learning Centres, as well as for private assessment bodies.

Between 2005 and 2014, Umalusi accredited two private assessment bodies – the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) and Eksamenraad vir Christelike Onderwys (ERCO) – and withdrew the accreditation of one (ERCO). Two new assessment bodies – the South African Comprehensive Assessment Institute (SACAI), and Benchmark – were in the process of being accredited.

6.1.9.2.4 Evaluating the public national assessment system

In 2005 Umalusi undertook a national evaluation of the assessment system linked to the Senior Certificate. The evaluation took place at four levels in the system: 1) the then National Department of Education (Head Office); 2) the nine Provincial Departments of Education; 3) District; and 4) learning site (examination centres).

The recommendations of this report moved the national assessment system to a new level of credibility in that the report highlighted areas for improvement, especially in respect of capacity building and security of examinations, and these aspects were addressed swiftly.

[40] These reforms included the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) in 2002, the Learning Programme and Subject Assessment Guidelines (2006-2008) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy statements (CAPS) gazetted in 2012.

6.1.9.2.5 Quality assurance from the Senior Certificate to the new National Senior Certificate

In 2005 the then-Minister of Education initiated the replacement of the Senior Certificate with the new matriculation qualification, the National Senior Certificate (NSC), which not only required a new curriculum from Grades 10-12 but also reconceptualised the whole design of the qualification and its pass requirements. The introduction of this qualification marked the end of an era: the last vestiges of the *apartheid*-era provincial examination system with its Higher and Standard Grade levels were removed.

The transition from the Senior Certificate to the new NSC created a particularly challenging situation for Umalusi, which had to ensure that continuity in standards was maintained despite the sweeping changes. The *Maintaining Standards* research (Umalusi 2008a, 2009b) accomplished this continuity (see Section 6.1.8.2).

6.1.9.2.6 Fine-tuning the quality of a now widely accepted curriculum for Basic Education

In 2009 the Minister of Basic Education commenced the third wave of curriculum reform since the onset of democracy in South Africa, manifested in the form of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) which have currency at present. Importantly, it could be argued that the extent of the changes in each successive wave of curriculum reform in Basic Education has decreased over time – at least for many of the curricula involved.

While the CAPS can be described – for many subjects at TVET level – as a 're-packaging of content', this description is not true in terms of the explanation of its context, theoretical approach and organising principles. In these aspects a drastic change of focus is evident, and the shift has been towards a syllabus-type curriculum[41] with a teacher-centred approach (Grussendorff, Booyse and Burroughs 2014).

The CAPS curriculum was implemented between 2012 and 2014 as follows:

- January 2012: Foundation Phase (Grades R-3) and Grade 10 (FET)
- January 2013: Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) and Grade 11 (TVET)
- January 2014: Senior Phase (Grades 7-9) and Grade 12 (TVET).

Umalusi has evaluated the CAPS documents from the Foundation phase to the TVET phase. This research includes international benchmarking and a longitudinal study that considers the sequencing and progression of learning within and across the school phases. The findings are presented as a package of documents that includes an overview report and six subject-related reports collectively entitled *What's in the CAPS Package?* (Umalusi 2014j). The final consolidated longitudinal report would be available in 2015.

The reports in *What's in the CAPS Package?* (Umalusi 2014j) comprise advice to the Minister of Basic Education regarding the design, content standards, progression and cognitive demand of the full curriculum, as well as management of the curriculum development, review and implementation processes.

[41] The reader is reminded that 'curriculum' refers to the underpinning policy provided for a qualification to facilitate its implementation. Curriculum has three components: (a) The *intended* (documented) curriculum for a qualification, which provides the core features and principles of the subject discipline, and includes a more detailed description (syllabus) which covers topic areas and specifies, in terms of the depth, breadth and types and levels of cognitive demand, outcomes required of candidates for the purpose of the qualification to be fulfilled; (b) The *enacted* curriculum, which is the responsible, distinctive and creative delivery of the curriculum in an institution which includes leadership and management, the ethos and values, teaching and learning, extra-curricular activities, learner support, institutional performance and the management of quality towards improvement; and (c) The *assessed* curriculum: the internal assessment and the external examination of the intended curriculum. In short, the curriculum policy and its syllabi provide the information necessary for the enactment of the curriculum in the institution and the necessary framework for assessment (see also Section 6.1.5).

6.1.9.3 Developing quality in Vocational Education in the context of the GFETQSF

In this sub-section of the report, the quality assurance of curricula in vocational education within the GFETQSF, and contextual factors shaping this quality assurance, are addressed.

6.1.9.3.1 Vocational Education in the GFETQSF: Summary of contextual factors

Curriculum reform in Vocational and Adult Education took longer to emerge than did reform in the schooling sector. In summary, the following developments have had far-reaching effects on Vocational Education and Training.

- The rationalisation in 2006 of 150 public colleges into 52 FET Colleges through the Further Education and Training Colleges Act, Act 16 of 2006 (RSA 2006: Section 6: 15), accompanied by changes in governance (RSA 2006: Section 9: 20) and the qualifications to be offered (RSA 2006: Section 42: 38).

- The 2001-2007 review of National Qualifications Framework (NQF) policy and replacement of the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) with the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), and the related amendments of the GENTVETQA Act (RSA 2001a); Higher Education Act (RSA 1997) and the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b) – together with the creation of a third Quality Council, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO).

- The split in 2009 of the Department of Education into the Department of Basic Education (DBE) for schooling and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) for Further and Higher Education and Training (FET and HET), which transferred the competency of TVET Colleges and Adult Education and Training Centres to the DHET by proclamation of the President of the Republic of South Africa in 2009[42].

- Publication of the 2013 White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013), which proposed that Technical and Vocational (TVET) Colleges and Community Education and Training (CET) Colleges replace TVET Colleges and Adult Education and Training Centres respectively.

- Publication in 2013 and 2014 of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks, namely the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) and the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (DHET 2013), Policy for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (Umalusi 2014g) and the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) (RSA 2014).

6.1.9.3.2 Umalusi quality assurance of curriculum reform in Vocational Education within the GFETQSF

Curriculum reform began in the TVET College sector in 2006, just prior to the advent of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) and the splitting of the Department of Education (DoE) into the Departments of Basic Education (DBE) and Higher Education and Training (DHET).

The National Technical Certificate N1-N3 (located at NQF Levels 2-4) and N4-N6 (located at NQF Level 5) consisted of modularised programmes developed initially to support apprenticeships and technical occupations. Over time the N programmes were extended to other occupational fields such as Business Studies.

[42] Proclamation of the President of the Republic of South Africa, No. 44 of 1 July 2009.

From 2007 the Department of Education began a process of phasing out the N-courses and replaced these qualifications with the newly-developed National Certificate: Vocational (NCV). The idea behind these developments was to create a qualification firstly that could replace the National Technical Certificate (N1-N3), and secondly, that could absorb Grade 9 learners choosing to leave school at that point to follow vocational learning pathways[43]. At that time FET Colleges were offering the new NCV qualifications, N-qualifications that were in the process of being phased out and increasingly, unit standard-based industry qualifications and learnerships and apprenticeships.

Umalusi's predecessor, the South African Certification Council (SAFCERT), quality assured and certificated the National Technical Certificate (N3)[44] offered at technical colleges in the period 1992-2000, and Umalusi has continued to do so.

The N4-6 programmes were quality assured by the Department of Education initially and more recently by the QCTO. When TVET Colleges also started to offer unit standard-based qualifications, skills programmes and learnerships in about 1998, these were quality assured by Sector Education Authorities (SETAs) accredited by SAQA.

From the start the NCV qualifications were quality assured by Umalusi. The first exit examination for the NCV was written, quality assured and certificated by Umalusi in 2009.

To ascertain the types and levels of cognitive content in the NCV qualifications, Umalusi undertook a comparative study of selected subjects within the NCV and the National Senior Certificate (NSC) (Umalusi 2010a). The findings of this research directly led to the possibility of articulation of these two qualifications within the GFETQSF.

From 2010-2012 Umalusi also undertook a national evaluation of the NCV assessment system (Umalusi 2012e). Umalusi reported to the Minister of Higher Education and Training on the shortcomings of this system, with the intention of improving the implementation and assessment of the NCV curriculum.

The NCV is recognised by Higher Education South Africa (HESA) as a qualification that provides learners with access to Higher Education (RSA 2009b). In practice however, few learners with NCV qualifications have been admitted into Higher Education Institutions[45].

In 2010, before the process of phasing out of the N-courses was completed, it was reversed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training due to the widespread support for these qualifications. The National Technical Certificate (Engineering Studies) was reinstated specifically for apprentices, although this requirement was later amended to allow open access to the Engineering courses (RSA 2010c). This extension was to continue until the QCTO had published the Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework (OQSF) and was able to provide occupational qualifications. Notwithstanding these developments, Umalusi has to date continued to quality assure and certificate the National Technical Certificate N3.

In 2011 Umalusi conducted a curriculum and examination analysis of the Engineering programmes in the National Technical Certificate and the NCV. The intention was that the research, a comparative evaluation of engineering subjects within the NCV and the N-courses, would point to areas of strength and the need for possible improvements within each qualification. An important part of the intent was also to

[43] At that time many of the technical high schools previously in existence had been closed down.
[44] The N3 qualification is located at NQF Level 4.
[45] It is common knowledge that few learners with NCV qualifications have been able to access Higher Education to date. It is also widely known that a small number of Higher Education Institutions have partnered with TVET Colleges in their geographical vicinities in order to align the TVET Curricula involved to enable access to that Higher Education Institution for successful (NCV) graduates from those Colleges.

understand the relationship between the three levels of the NCV qualification – the NCV2, NCV3 and NCV4, respectively located at NQF Levels 2, 3 and 4 – and the National Technical Certificates (N-courses). The rationale was that such an understanding would help with issues of recognition for the purposes of articulation between the two sets of qualifications. This research is reported in *The Ns and the Engineering NCVs: A comparison of selected engineering subjects within the National Certificate N2 and N3, and selected programmes of the NCV* (Matshoba 2010).

The report found that by and large, the NCV covers more ground theoretically than do the NTC: N2 and N3 combined, which is unsurprising, given that the NCV programme is longer and more comprehensive. The second significant difference is the fact that NCV subjects contain substantive opportunities for *skills development*, a feature which was included in the programme precisely because it was recognised that many students undertaking the N-courses no longer had opportunities to gain on-the-job experience, a prerequisite of the Manpower Training Act, Act 56 of 1981, for access to the Trade Test. Umalusi's evaluators agreed that some workplace experience was needed for access to the Trade Test, but argued that this period could be significantly shorter for NCV candidates than was the case in the old apprenticeship system, because of the specific focus on the acquisition of practical skills in the structure of the NCV.

The analysis of the NCV curriculum (Matshoba 2010) provided pointers for curriculum reform of the NTC: N2–N3 content with regard to Mathematics, Engineering Science and Electrical Trade Theory. However, in the case of the fourth subject, Engineering Drawing, the NCV could take some cues from the NC: N1-N3 subject in terms of the packaging of the content.

Analysis of the assessment of the two qualifications (Matshoba 2010) revealed that the level at which the subjects are assessed in the NCV and the N-courses is significantly different. Firstly, the NCV has two question papers, a theory and a practical paper, while the NTC: N3 has one paper, which is a theory paper. The practical paper of the NCV, the Integrated Summative Assessment Task (ISAT), focuses on the *application* of knowledge and problem-solving, while the focus in the theory paper is on knowledge and understanding.

Furthermore, the comparison of the examinations, in terms of the type and level of cognitive demand (Matshoba 2010) showed that, due to insufficient guidance for the setting of the NTC: N3 examinations, the four different instructional offerings examined differed considerably in terms of the spread of type and level of cognitive demand. This unevenness was not the case with the NCV, where there was an acceptable distribution of types and levels of cognitive demand across the four subjects.

The findings of this research (Matshoba 2010) were generally well received, especially by the National Artisan Moderating Body (NAMB), which saw the benefits of the recommendations proposed by Umalusi.

6.1.9.4 Umalusi quality assurance in Adult Education

6.1.9.4.1 Adult Education in the context of the GFETQSF: Developments over time

When the GETC: ABET Level 4 (NQF Level 1) was introduced as a new qualification to address the needs of adults in South African education, its certification, and consequently its quality assurance, was assigned to Umalusi, presumably because the state had few options for its location at the time.

Umalusi has taken its mandate in respect of Adult Education seriously, particularly in the light of national needs in this sector, and it being a constitutional responsibility for the state. As a result, the GFETQSF has a well-defined pathway for General and Further Education for adults.

Adult Education however, remains an area of education that suffers profound neglect and which requires constant championing.

Umalusi's championing to date has been through its research, its assessment body accreditation efforts, its development of new qualifications for the sector, and its quality assurance of examinations and site-based assessment.

Adult education requires the development of national, provincial, district and site-based infrastructure, and a budget that would allow this part of the system to establish itself properly and to grow, especially since statistics suggest that up to 20% of South Africa's adult population need some form of basic education (General and/ or Further Education and Training) to support success in employment, and education and training in the workplace.

6.1.9.4.2 The General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) for Adults

A qualification for adults at what was then termed the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) level – and is currently referred to as Adult Education and Training (AET) – was developed by the Department of Education in 2000. ABET had four levels with ABET Level 4 located at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 1. The qualification – the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC): ABET Level 4 – was awarded at NQF Level 1. The assessment and provision of the GETC was, and continues to be, quality assured and certificated by Umalusi. Umalusi also accredits private providers to offer this qualification.

The original intention underlying the GETC was to provide General Education and Training for adults, and potentially to lay the foundations for Further Education and Training for these learners. It became clear however, that the qualification did not serve the adult sector as expected. In 2005 Umalusi jointly hosted a colloquium with the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and the Umsobomvu Youth Fund, with the theme *Beyond ABET* [46]. The colloquium sought to address what forms of qualification, curriculum and quality assurance would best serve this sector.

The GETC – a unit standards-based qualification – was an anomaly on the GFETQSF. The assumption behind the unit standards model was that providers would develop their own curricula against prescribed unit standards. All of the other qualifications in the GFETQSF, by contrast, are based on curricula. The GETC has been variously revised and will be retained in its latest form in the system until the curricula for the new qualification, the General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA), have been developed by the Department of Higher Education and Training, and until this new qualification replaces it.

In 2008, in line with Umalusi's approach to quality assurance in which certification is against prescribed curricula and examinations, a decision was taken to investigate how GETC curricula prepared adults for Further Education and Training. However, what constituted GETC curricula was not clear, as the qualification was unit standards-based.

In the case of the GETC: ABET, originally developed by the national Standards Generating Body (SGB): GET/ TVET Language and Communication[47], a range of supplementary documents were available to assist with representations of the intended curricula. However, these documents varied considerably across provinces and Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs). The report *Inspecting the foundations: Towards an understanding of the intended and examined curricula for the General Education and Training Certificate*

[46] Beyond ABET: An Umalusi/ UKZN/ Umsobomvu Colloquium 2005.

[47] Under the SAQA Act, Act 58 of 1995, the development of qualifications was through centralised representative bodies – the Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) and the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) – see Section 6.3.1.2 for more details. Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) there is differentiated development of qualifications in the contexts of the GFTQSF, the HEQSF and the OQSF.

for Adults (Allais and Bolton 2008a, 2008b), details Umalusi research into these issues. The impact of the study led to a national evaluation of the assessment system for the GETC by Umalusi in 2012, the results of which were given to the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

All this work informed a review of the qualification in 2013. The proposal for a new qualification, the General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA) was approved by the Umalusi Council for submission to SAQA for registration on the NQF.

6.1.9.4.3 The National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA)

The National Senior Certificate for Adults, commonly known as NASCA, was registered on the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF) in December 2013. It was developed as an equivalent to the South African school-leaving qualification, the National Senior Certificate (NSC). For the purposes of the NASCA, adults are defined as being people of eighteen years or older.

The purpose of this new qualification is to allow the many people who do not complete secondary schooling in the country a fresh start to achieve a school-leaving certificate that says to the world: 'This adult has the kind of knowledge and types of skills one could reasonably expect from a person leaving school after twelve years of solid education'.

One of the defining features of the NASCA is that it has no formal entry requirements for study. It could thus be considered as being a form of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), since it is an opportunity for adult learners to demonstrate what they know. Learners do not have to present Grade 10 or 11 (or any) reports or pre-NQF Level 4 qualifications in order to be eligible to enter NASCA learning programmes. Colleges offering the NASCA will have the responsibility of screening potential candidates to determine whether they would benefit from the programmes, and to provide alternatives for those who would not.

The Department of Higher Education and Training is finalising draft curricula for the NASCA. Once this process has been completed, the qualification will be implemented.

6.1.10 Umalusi and other NQF Organisations: Relational work accomplished and planned

From its inception to date, Umalusi has enjoyed healthy relationships with, the Department of Education (DoE) and, following the split of the DoE, with the Departments of Basic Education (DBE) and Higher Education and Training (DHET) – providing advice to the respective Ministers. This advice originates in Umalusi's research and its operational work. Over the years this advice has informed substantially the work of these departments in qualification and curriculum development, assessment and educational standards.

Umalusi's relationship with SAQA has focused primarily on the requirements legislated by the NQF Act, Act 67 of 2008. Umalusi has engaged with SAQA around:

- NQF Level Descriptors and their uses within the GFETQSF;
- consultation in relation to SAQA and Umalusi policies for the management of qualifications on the Sub-Framework;
- national and Sub-Framework policies for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT), assessment and articulation;
- the determination of nomenclature for the NQF Sub-Frameworks and cross-cutting aspects of the NQF; and
- other work determined by various Ministerial Guidelines.

Umalusi, SAQA and the Departments of Basic and Higher Education and Training, have also engaged around contested areas in a qualification proposed for registration, namely the NASCA.

Umalusi has engaged with SAQA, the Departments and the other two Quality Councils in various ways, to clarify the roles of the Quality Councils and their respective Sub-Frameworks, including:

- engagement with SAQA's position paper regarding the roles of the Quality Councils and the various 'streams' of education, in 2012[48];
- the 'Great Debate' coordinated by SAQA in 2012[49]; and
- Umalusi inputs into Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) processes organised by the DHET and related to the nature of the post-school environment, among others.

Umalusi has engaged with the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) through the structures created by SAQA and the DHET to take the NQF forward[50].

Umalusi has ensured that the Higher Education sector is consulted regarding the articulation of all the qualifications registered at NQF Level 4 on the GFETQSF namely, the amended Senior Certificate (SC), the National Senior Certificate (NSC), the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) and the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA).

Currently Umalusi and the QCTO share the quality assurance of the National Technical Certificate. Umalusi quality assures the N1-N3 qualifications while the QCTO certifies the N4-N6 qualifications. Related common issues are discussed between the organisations from time to time. As the Quality Council remits are finalised these engagements will increase[51].

Areas for development include:

- engagement with the area of Early Childhood Development (ECD);
- the role of languages in education from inception to the end of schooling;
- the introduction of cyclical curriculum development and renewal;
- enhancing understanding of the role of arts subjects in schooling and societal development;
- supporting suitable teacher development based on improved understanding of curricula;
- forging closer relations with industry with respect to vocational curricula, teaching and assessment; and
- with the role that Item Response Theory (IRT) should play in informing future assessment practice.

At the time of Umalusi's establishment in 2001, the education and training landscape consisted of SAQA, 21 newly established Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) – each of which included an Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) accredited by SAQA – as well as two band ETQAs, namely, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and Umalusi. Umalusi was the band ETQA for General and Further Education and Training (GFET), at NQF Levels 1-4, which placed it in a highly contested terrain with the SETAs which were developing and registering qualifications in the same band.

[48] SAQA developed a position paper in 2012, in consultation with the Quality Councils, on their respective responsibilities in relation to the NQF Sub-Frameworks.
[49] SAQA was asked by the DHET in 2012 to host a Great Debate that focused on contested areas in NQF development such as the location and quality assurance of N-qualifications, the NCV and Higher Certificates. These debates took place in 2012.
[50] These structures include the Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee and the CEO Committee – see Chapter 4 for more details.
[51] The Ministers of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training issue remits – or detailed responsibilities, scopes of responsibility and targets – to the Quality Councils and to SAQA from time to time.

Umalusi found itself conceptually at odds with the system of unit standard-based qualifications, where the curriculum development and assessment was devolved to the provider. The Senior Certificate, which was Umalusi's qualification with the largest enrolments, was based on a national curriculum with national examinations at the exit point.

The quality assurance approaches across the various kinds of qualifications in the GFET NQF Levels 1-4 band were also significantly different, with the SETA ETQAs opting for a compliance-based model and Umalusi moving towards a more qualitative approach. These differences led to tensions in the working relationships between SAQA, Umalusi and the SETAs, and to a large extent Umalusi worked in isolation from the then-new qualification development structures under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995).

Notwithstanding these realities, Umalusi always had a well-established relationship with the national and provincial Departments of Education.

Importantly, in the transition from being an ETQA under the SAQA Act to being a Quality Council under the NQF Act, Umalusi's collaborative relationships with the other role-players in the NQF system have strengthened.

6.1.11 Integrating Umalusi's voice

Umalusi's research findings and positions have found their way into the fabric of the education and training system in a number of ways. Ways in which this integration has been achieved include:

- providing advice to the Ministers of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training;
- proactive dissemination of Umalusi's approaches and positions (Umalusi hosts between four and six research events annually – research seminars, workshops, and conferences – to which representatives of the other two Quality Councils, SAQA, and Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, as well as providers of qualifications in its Sub-Framework, are invited);
- extensive publication of its research; and
- feeding research findings and positions directly into Umalusi's policies and work, as has been illustrated in numerous parts of Section 6.1 of this report.

Since 2005 Umalusi has hosted an annual seminar series in partnership with the Centre for Educational Policy Development (CEPD) and Wits University. This seminar series has addressed a range of topical subjects including:

- The Standardisation of Matric Marks by Umalusi (2011)
- Language in Education in South African Schools: The Nexus of Failure? (2011)
- Youth who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs): Whose problem is it? (2011)
- Education District Reform: Challenges and future developments (2012)
- The National Senior Certificate Home Language examinations: Comparability, construction and cognitive demand (2012)
- The future of education in rural areas: Research and teaching (2013)
- Rethinking ABET and Community Education (2013)
- Towards a construct for assessing high-level language ability in the National Senior Certificate examinations (2013)
- Working our way up: Maths and Science education after poor international ratings (2014)
- Education and South African political parties: Considerations for the General Election (2014)

Umalusi's voice is increasingly heard in local and international conferences. Umalusi has a long tradition in this regard. It is a founding member of the Association for Educational Assessment in Africa (AEAA), and has been a member of the International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) since 2001. It hosted the AEAA conference in 2003. More recently – since 2010 – the SADC countries have worked together in the Southern African Association for Educational Assessment (SAAEA), of which Umalusi is also a founding member. Umalusi has contributed to SAAEA conferences since 2012.

In 2012 Umalusi hosted an international conference with the theme, *Standards in Education and Training – The Challenge,* which was attended by over 200 delegates and which resulted in the publication of papers in two peer-reviewed journals namely: *Perspectives in Education*, Vol. 32: 1 (March 2014) and *Per Linguam*, Vol. 28: 2 (2012). In 2016 Umalusi was scheduled to host the International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) Conference in Cape Town.

In addition to hosting conferences Umalusi actively participates in conferences hosted by other local and international organisations. Listed below are the most recent large-scale events for the 2012-2014 period:

- Global Conference on Education, hosted by the University of Riverside in Los Angeles, 2012.
- International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) Conference, *Designing the Assessment of Learning Outcomes to make a Positive Impact on Individuals and Institutions*, Astana, Kazakhstan, 2012.
- SAQA's *NQF Conference: Building Articulation and Integration*, Johannesburg 2013.
- European Association for International Education (EAIE) Conference, *Weaving the Future of Global Partnerships*, Istanbul 2013.
- International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) Conference, *Educational Assessment 2.0: Technology in Educational Assessment*, Tel Aviv, Israel, 2013.
- International Academic Forum (IAFOR) Conference *Globalisation, Culture and Society: What Role Does Language Play?* Dubai 2014.
- SAQA's *National RPL Conference: Tried and Tested, Tools, Templates,* Johannesburg 2014.
- Southern African Association for Educational Assessment (SAAEA) Conference *Educational Assessment and Evaluation in Diversity*, Namibia 2014.
- International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) Conference *Assessment Innovations for the 21st Century*, Singapore, 2014.

In taking up its place in the education and training system Umalusi has fostered partnerships with universities, particularly with schools of education within universities. Umalusi's well-established relationships with HESA and the CHE have served to enhance the recognition and use of its research and work. Umalusi has participated fully in all of the workshops, conferences, committees, task teams and reference groups organised by SAQA towards taking forward NQF development. Umalusi also works closely with both the DHET and the DBE in the execution of its mandate. Workshops are conducted to share Umalusi research findings as part of its mandate to 'provide advice to the Minister' (GENFETQA Amendment Act, Act 50 of 2008) (RSA 2008a).

However, as already noted, inasmuch as Umalusi's voice is defined by its mandate, it is but one of many voices in the education and training space. Umalusi's advice, always based on research, while well respected is not always heard – possibly because of a lack of coordination of the 'advice to the Minister' across the various bodies that advise the Ministers of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training. Other bodies that also work in an advisory capacity to these Ministers include the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), established to evaluate and improve public schools; the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT), established to strengthen partnerships between business, civil society, government and labour in order to achieve the education goals of the National Development

Plan – The NECT strives to support and influence the agenda for reform of basic education; the South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (SAIVCET), established to develop and improve TVET Colleges; and various Ministerial Task Teams established to do work that relates to qualifications on the GFETQSF.

6.1.12 Summarising Umalusi's recent, current and planned quality assurance activities

This section of the report serves to highlight the main achievements discussed in Section 6.1 – the part of the report compiled by Umalusi – in relation to particular aspects of Umalusi's mandate.

Regarding Umalusi's mandate to develop and propose policy for the development, registration, management and publication of qualifications for the GFETQSF in particular, and to contribute to NQF development in general, post-NQF Act (2008c) highlights comprise approval of the following policies by Umalusi's Council:

- Policy Framework for the Quality Assurance of Assessment (Umalusi 2012d), which has more recently been amended (Umalusi 2014i) to align with SAQA's National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa (SAQA 2014a).
- Policy for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) (Umalusi 2014g).
- Policy for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (Umalusi 2013c).
- Policy for the Development and Management of the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (Umalusi 2014f).
- Policy on Credit Accumulation, Exemption, Recognition and Transfer in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (Umalusi 2014d).
- Policy for the Certification of Candidate Records for the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Framework (Umalusi 2014e).

Regarding Umalusi's mandate to evaluate, review and develop qualifications in the context of the GFETQSF, significant achievements include the following:

- Development of two new qualifications, namely the General Education and Training Certificate for Adults (GETCA), and the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA).
- The evaluations and reviews of qualifications highlighted in descriptions of Umalusi research throughout Section 6.1, and summarised in *All the cattle in the kraal* (Reeves 2013b).
- All Umalusi's quality assurance of the exit assessments of qualifications on the GFETQSF.
- Umalusi's 2005, 2009-2010 and 2012 national audits of the assessment systems for the Senior Certificate, NCV and GETC qualifications respectively.

Regarding Umalusi accreditation of private providers to offer and/ or assess qualifications on the GFETQSF – in the period 2005–2014, Umalusi accredited more than 3 000 private providers of education and training (including independent schools, private FET Colleges and private AET Centres) and two private assessment bodies, of which one's accreditation status was withdrawn (see Section 3.1.9.2.3). Two new assessment bodies are in the process of being accredited. Umalusi is rolling out a revised accreditation

process in line with post-2009 departmental policy (DHET 2010a, DBE 2012c)[52]. The shifts in this work mirror shifts in NQF policy: previously Umalusi used centralised accreditation criteria published by SAQA, and accreditation focused mainly on compliance. One of the main ways in which the new DHET (2010a) and DBE (2012c) policies have impacted on the accreditation process, has been to enhance qualitative aspects of the developmental processes involved.

Lastly, highlights relating to advising the Ministers of Higher Education and Training and Basic Education, include Umalusi inputs into the Green Paper, and its counterpart the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013) that followed. Umalusi has served on several Ministerial Task Teams as well as on various structures towards NQF development[53].

6.1.13 Reporting against indicators

Umalusi's strength lies in its research-based approaches that have ensured that its work is located in educational realities. Umalusi sees evidence that it has permeated the education and training system with well-researched positions and ideas on educational standards. It is difficult to quantify such impact. Umalusi has thus resisted working to managerial 'numerical targets', preferring to approach the measuring of its accomplishments by looking for 'meaning' in the statistics produced by the education system and insisting that 'educational realities' inform debates around quality. Umalusi has adopted a strategy of 'putting ideas out there' through its research and its dissemination that acts as a vanguard to the changes it would like to see.

As a statutory body, Umalusi reports on its achievements. The types of targets against which Umalusi has reported to date, and will probably report in the immediate future, are shown in Table 79 below.

[52] This work is in line with policy released by the Minister of Higher Education and Training (MHET), *Policy and Criteria for the Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Monitoring of Private Further Education and Training colleges, private Adult Education and Training Centres and Private Assessment Bodies* (DHET 2010a), which includes the accreditation criteria for TVET Colleges, AET Centres, and assessment bodies assessing adult and vocational qualifications. It is also in line with policy released by the Minister of Basic Education *Policy and Criteria for the Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Monitoring of Independent Schools and Private Assessment Bodies* (DBE 2012c), which captures the accreditation criteria for independent schools and assessment bodies that assess school qualifications.

[53] Umalusi served on the Task Teams for the Review of the National Certificate (Vocational) in 2013; and the development of Level Descriptors for the South African NQF (SAQA 2012a); Policy and Criteria for Recognising a Professional Body and Registering a Professional Designation for the Purposes of the NQF (SAQA 2012b), Policy and Criteria for Registering Qualifications and Part-Qualifications on the NQF (SAQA 2013c), Policy and Criteria for the Implementation of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in the Context of the South African NQF (SAQA 2013a), Policy and Criteria for Designing Assessment for Qualifications, Part-Qualifications and Professional Designations in the Context of the South African NQF (SAQA 2014a), and Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer in the Context of the South African NQF (SAQA 2014b). It also serves on the Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee, the CEO Committee, the SAQA Board and the Councils of the other two Quality Councils (See Chapter 4).

Table 79: Types of targets against which Umalusi reports, clustered for the purposes of the present study, under the indicators of the study

Indicator 1: Systemic integration Qualifications, curricula and supporting policies are developed and/ or reviewed to facilitate articulation where possible within and across the NQF Sub-Frameworks to support portability; and standards are benchmarked locally and internationally as identified.
Indicator 2: Beneficiary gain The GFETQSF is served by sufficient and benchmarked qualifications to ensure increased learner access and portability, and assessment standards are benchmarked and maintained. Institutions offering education, training and/ or assessment for qualifications on the GFETQSF have the capacity to do so at the required standard, i.e. are recognised through an accreditation process.
Indicator 3: Enhanced quality The findings of research in respect of the GFETQSF; quality assurance reports on qualifications, curriculum, assessment and quality of provision; and systemic evaluations of curriculum implementation and assessment are reported and presented as advice to the Ministers of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, with the purpose of improving the education and training system.

6.1.14 Concluding comments from Umalusi

Umalusi's reflection in Section 6.1 sketches the trajectory from "Certifying body" (SAFCERT, 1992-2000) to band quality assurer (Umalusi, 2001-2009) to standard setter for general and further education and training (Umalusi Quality Council, 2009 onwards), and the attendant shifts in mandate. Umalusi has shown how it has strengthened its quality assurance processes over time.

Umalusi's reflections seek to emphasise Umalusi's quest to understand educational standards across all of the areas of its work: qualifications and curriculum, assessment and educational provision – in schooling, vocational education and Adult Education within the GFETQSF. In so doing a number of themes, taken up in its approaches and policies, emerged as follows:

- Educational standards are held in a number of places such as in the design of a qualification (rules of combination and pass requirements), the depth, breadth and cognitive demand of the curriculum, the cognitive demand of assessment, and the quality of teaching at sites of learning.
- National education systems are best served by national qualifications (as opposed to provider qualifications) and national assessments that allow for access going to scale.
- National assessment standards are best set and maintained through national external assessments.
- The value of a few robust qualifications that are recognised locally and internationally (rather than many, poorly taken up, 'small' qualifications).
- Qualifications that provide basic education should, as a matter of principle, provide for literacy in language and mathematics.
- Unit standards do not set or hold standards reliably and qualifications are best supported by curricula that spell out in detail what should be taught and learned.

- Comparability between qualifications is determined at the level of the curriculum (the primary principle that informs articulation).
- The value of a certificate relies primarily on all of the above.

Umalusi's 'value-add' to education and training has been tracked across time from the organisation's inception to the present, and its current quality assurance practices are detailed. Umalusi's reflection ends by highlighting the problematic nature of trying to reduce Umalusi's work to targets and indicators, affirming instead that Umalusi's work is not bureaucratic in conception but seeks rather to be a research-directed catalyst in the education and training system.

In closing it should be said that given the size, nature and mandate of the organisation, Umalusi is not able to extend its reach into many areas that are perceived as needing attention. One such area is the 'public school classrooms', where learning is mediated. It is therefore critical that organisations that are able to work in this space, such as the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) and the National Educational Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), work with Umalusi so that the standards set by Umalusi are translated into these classrooms, and so that Umalusi's research, especially in the area of curriculum, is used to enhance and support teaching and teacher development.

6.2 Quality in Higher Education: Mandate and responsibilities of the Council on Higher Education (CHE)

The purpose of this sub-section is to sketch the CHE's mandate, standard setting and quality assurance work, and achievements and challenges to date – and the impact of shifts in these aspects. The section also provides brief notes on the historical context for the work of the CHE, some indicators, and some concluding comments from the CHE. Inputs in this section were provided by senior CHE staff members.

6.2.1 Enhancing Quality in Higher Education

6.2.1.1 Quality assurance in Higher Education

Prior to 1994 there was no national quality assurance system for Higher Education. In this period quality assurance was limited to institutional arrangements for monitoring the quality of programmes through the use of external examiners and the accreditation of programmes offered by Higher Education Institutions by the Universities and Technikons Advisory Council (AUT), and peer review. The purpose of the accreditation was to ensure that programmes were in line with the separate and parallel qualification structures for the universities and technikons (now universities of technology).

The post-*apartheid* transformation of the Higher Education system, which was premised on the creation of a single, national coordinated Higher Education system, as outlined in *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education* (DoE 1997), laid the basis for the development of a national quality assurance system for Higher Education. This quality assurance system included a single qualifications structure in line with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

In line with these developments, since 2004, the CHE has developed the policies and procedures for the national quality assurance system, which includes the following:

- A rigorous system for accrediting every Higher Education programme offered at Higher Education Institutions.
- A national review process for benchmarking qualifications nationally and internationally.

- A comprehensive framework for auditing the quality of individual institutions' policies and procedures in relation to the three core functions of Higher Education, namely teaching, research and community engagement, as well as governance, administration and management.

In 2008, the then-Minister of Education promulgated a single qualifications structure for Higher Education, the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF). The HEQF was revised in 2013 in line with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act (RSA 2008c), to form the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF).

6.2.1.2 Role of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) in quality assurance

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) is responsible for quality assurance in Higher Education. The CHE is an independent statutory body established in terms of the Higher Education Act, Act 101 of 1997 (RSA 1997), as amended.

The mandate of the CHE includes the following:

- To provide advice to the Minister of Higher Education and Training on all Higher Education matters on request and on its own initiative.
- To promote quality and quality assurance in Higher Education through its permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Qualifications Committee (HEQC), including auditing the quality assurance mechanisms of, and accrediting programmes offered by, Higher Education Institutions.
- To monitor the state of Higher Education and publish information regarding developments in Higher Education on a regular basis, including arranging and coordinating conferences on Higher Education issues.

In terms of the National Qualifications Framework Act (RSA 2008c), the CHE has been established as the Quality Council (QC) for Higher Education. As a Quality Council, the CHE has an expanded mandate, which in addition to its quality assurance responsibilities includes the following:

- To develop and manage the qualifications sub-framework for Higher Education, namely, the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF), including the development of qualifications that are necessary for the Higher Education sector.
- To advise the Minister of Higher Education on matters relating to the HEQSF.
- To conduct and publish research which facilitates the development and implementation of the HEQSF.
- To inform the public of the HEQSF.
- To develop and implement policy and criteria for the development, registration and publication of qualifications, as well as for assessment, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) in the context of the policy and criteria for assessment, RPL and CAT developed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).
- To contribute to the development of NQF Level Descriptors and to ensure their relevance.
- To maintain a database of learner achievements in Higher Education and to submit the data to the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) maintained by SAQA.

6.2.1.3 The role of the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC)

As indicated in Section 6.2.1.2 above, in terms of the Higher Education Act (RSA 1997), the CHE's quality assurance mandate must be discharged through the establishment of a permanent committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The CHE's approach to quality assurance is peer-based, hence the

membership of the HEQC comprises academics from public and private Higher Education Institutions appointed by the CHE after a public call for nominations.

The HEQC was established in 2001 and its quality assurance framework, which consists of four inter-related elements – programme accreditation, national reviews, institutional audits and quality promotion – was implemented from 2004. The particular role that each of these elements plays in quality assurance is outlined below.

It is important to note that, while the CHE is responsible through the HEQC for establishing a national quality assurance system for Higher Education, in the context of the principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, quality is primarily the responsibility of the Higher Education Institutions themselves. In this regard, the role of the HEQC is to ensure, through peer and expert review, that Higher Education Institutions establish quality assurance systems and procedures and that these systems and procedures function effectively. The operationalisation of quality rests with Higher Education Institutions. As the HEQC's Founding Document (CHE 2001: 15) states:

> *…the primary responsibility for the quality of provision and appropriate mechanisms to assure that quality rests with Higher Education providers. The role of the HEQC will be to provide external validation of the judgements of providers about their quality levels, based primarily on self-evaluation reports. It will also provide for a comparative framework for quality judgements across the system…*

6.2.1.4 The HEQC's Quality Assurance Framework

6.2.1.4.1 Programme accreditation

The main objective of programme accreditation is quality control; that is, to ensure compliance with minimum standards for the offering of new and existing academic programmes by Higher Education Institutions. The intention is that programme accreditation will protect students from poor quality and unscrupulous providers, and build public confidence in the Higher Education system.

It is apparent within the CHE that the application of the accreditation criteria for the approval of new programmes has resulted in greater institutional awareness of the importance of paying attention to and meeting minimum standards for programme design, teaching and learning, assessment standards, programme coordination, the quality of educational infrastructure, and staff-related aspects (Essop 2015).

The impact of programme accreditation in contributing to enhancing quality is achieved through its linkage to sanction; that is, the HEQC has the power to approve or reject programmes that do not meet the minimum criteria stipulated in the HEQC's *Criteria for Programme Accreditation* (CHE 2004a). Institutions whose programmes are provisionally accredited with conditions are required to satisfy these conditions within a stipulated time frame. In some cases, the conditions have to be met before the programme can be offered, thus reinforcing the importance of minimum standards of quality in relation to teaching and learning.

In the case of private providers, the time-bound renewal of the registration status of the institution by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is linked to the re-accreditation of their programmes by the HEQC. This approach reinforces the importance of ensuring minimum quality standards and provision on an ongoing basis and has contributed to improved quality in private Higher Education.

The programme accreditation process is well established and functioning effectively. Since 2004 when the programme accreditation framework was implemented, about 5 500 new programmes have been

accredited. Because of the large number of programmes submitted annually, site visits to assess institutional compliance are not feasible in every case, and the accreditation process is thus in many instances narrowly focused on paper-based compliance.

An increase in informal visits to private Higher Education Institutions is proving valuable in identifying quality challenges. For practical purposes, programmes developed prior to 1999 in public Higher Education Institutions were deemed accredited without being subjected to a rigorous accreditation process. This situation is being addressed through a current process of evaluating the alignment of all existing programmes, both public and private, with the requirements of the HEQSF. To date 5 381 programmes have been reevaluated as part of the realignment process[54].

Since the adoption of the HEQC's *Framework for Programme Accreditation* in 2004 (CHE 2004b), the internal accreditation system and processes of the CHE have been developed and improved. While the framework has provided the basis for the operation of the system for a decade, it is being revised to reflect the realities of the current accreditation system and shifts in the sector. In addition, the alignment of existing programmes with the revised HEQSF will result in a significant decrease in the numbers of programmes offered, as institutions remove programmes that are either outdated or defunct.

6.2.1.4.2 National Reviews

National reviews involve the re-accreditation of existing programmes in a particular discipline and qualification level offered across the system by academic peers in the light of national and international good practice, and, where appropriate, the requirements of professional bodies. National reviews attempt to address a shortcoming of the programme accreditation process, namely, the lack of regular re-accreditation of programmes in public institutions. The reviews allow for in-depth evaluations of actual programme delivery. National reviews provide an assessment of the state of particular disciplines at each institution at which the programme is offered, as well as a sector-wide assessment of the state of, and trends in, particular discipline areas.

In addition to the general programme accreditation criteria, national reviews involve the development of discipline-specific criteria by academic peers in the discipline, including taking into account provider and stakeholder concerns.

National reviews bring into sharp focus the issue of academic standards, the extent of improvement of the quality of programmes and their delivery, and the capacity of Higher Education Institutions to undertake self-assessment at programme level. The capacity to self-assess is required by the CHE if self-accreditation status is to be granted to institutions in the future.

There have been three national reviews to date:

- Master's in Business Administration (MBA) in 2004.
- Teacher Education in 2008.
- Bachelor of Social Work in 2014.

It should be noted that while the decision to undertake national reviews in particular disciplines is the prerogative of the HEQC, such a decision takes into account factors such as identified areas of national need, public concerns about standards in particular disciplines, and requests from the Minister of Higher Education and Training and/ or other professional and stakeholder groups.

[54] The CHE does not have information on the numbers or percentages of programmes which have not made it through the accreditation process, or the number or percentage of those who have taken longer than expected to do so (Essop 2015).

The mobilisation of peers in the disciplines in order to develop criteria, conduct site visits and write reports provides an important precursor to the setting of discipline-based standards. It also contributes to the development of a collegial approach to external quality assurance, and the establishment of cooperation between the HEQC and Higher Education Institutions. Overall, Higher Education Institutions have improved the quality of their academic programmes by responding to conditions set by peer evaluators through the process of assessment carried out by national reviews as well as the more routine accreditation processes[55].

The external evaluation of the HEQC (CHE 2008) found national reviews one of the HEQC's most effective mechanisms to promote quality. The evaluation report (CHE 2008: 20) states that national reviews "…have been successful in both their control and improvement features…". This success is attributed to the fact that in the "review of existing programmes, the discussion about quality was focused among academic staff, students and administrators at the programme level, thus supporting the development of a quality culture within the core business of Higher Education Institutions" (CHE 2008: 30).

Although national reviews have a significant impact on enhancing quality, they are time and resource-intensive, with each review taking on average about 18 months to complete. The national review process and methodology is in the process of being reviewed to assess whether a less resource-intensive process can be introduced, which would enable more than one review to be undertaken concurrently, as well as enabling follow-up reviews on those previously undertaken to be carried out.

6.2.1.4.3 Institutional audits

The primary goal of institutional quality audits is to facilitate systematic and continuous quality development and improvement in Higher Education and to enhance institutional capacity to plan, act and report on quality-related objectives and achievements.

An internal audit seeks to assess an institution's capacity to manage the quality of its academic activities in a manner that meets its specified mission, goals and objectives and engages appropriately with the expectations and needs of various internal and external stakeholders. In short, the institutional audit process assesses the effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance arrangements in the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

The gaps identified, and the recommendations for addressing these gaps contained in the institutional audit report, must be considered by the institution concerned. The institution must develop an improvement plan to submit to the HEQC for approval. The HEQC then monitors progress in the implementation of the improvement plan through follow-up visits and the institution's submission of a progress report after three years, which must satisfy the requirements of the HEQC.

Between 2004 and 2011, all public universities and 11 private Higher Education Institutions underwent institutional audits. The detailed audit reports were produced by panels of experts who undertook the audit process through lengthy institutional visits and consultation, with hundreds of role-players related to individual institutions. The reports identified institutions' strengths and weaknesses and made recommendations for improvement. Engagement with the recommendations through the development

[55] Higher Education Institutions have to meet the conditions set: there is a monitoring process to ensure that this work is done (Essop 2015).

and implementation of improvement plans provided a valuable platform for, and contributed to, institutional capacity development[56].

The institutional audits are seen as contributing to strengthening the quality assurance systems and processes of individual institutions and the accountability of the system as a whole. Signs that the management of quality is being taken seriously include the following:

- Quality issues are being incorporated into institutional strategic plans, reflected in the fact that all institutions have taken corrective action based on the recommendations in their institutional audit reports.
- Institutions reported that the combination of self-reflection and external evaluation by academic peers provided them with an opportunity to identify and address gaps in relation to the policies, processes, structures and practices linked to the core functions of Higher Education.
- Institutions reported that undertaking a self–evaluation process which culminated in the submission of a report for use in the audit was a beneficial part of the process. Self-evaluation helped institutions to improve their quality systems, to reflect on their quality assurance practices and how effective they were in improving the quality of their core functions.

The role of audits in contributing to strengthening quality was confirmed in the external evaluation of the HEQC in 2008 (CHE 2008). The evaluation found that, according to the views of Higher Education Institutions, the institutional audits have been the most successful part of the HEQC's quality assurance methodology. In the report (CHE 2008: 19) it is pointed out that:

> *…Institutional representatives unanimously recognised the strong impact audits have had, mostly through the development of self-evaluation processes, which provided them with the opportunity for self-reflection. In addition, most appreciated the external evaluations, which put the self-evaluation in perspective, as well as providing new insights…*

6.2.1.4.4 Quality Promotion

The main purpose of quality promotion is the infusion of an ethos of quality in the core functions of Higher Education, including developing an understanding of quality among Higher Education stakeholders, through advocacy, research activities and dissemination.

This work has taken different forms, including commissioning and publishing research on the core functions of Higher Education; the development of good practice guides and resources to support the core functions (which in the case of teaching and learning focus on issues such as curriculum design, assessment practices and work-integrated learning); colloquia, workshops and Quality Forums. The existence of these elements shows the impact of the NQF and the values it represents. Such elements were not present *nationally* before the establishment of the NQF.

The Quality Forums meet twice a year and provide a vehicle to disseminate information, facilitate debate on quality assurance strategies and highlight themes linked to the core functions of Higher Education.

An important aspect of quality promotion has been a focus on developing student understanding of quality assurance processes, including raising awareness of the roles of accreditation and associated bodies such as SAQA, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the HEQC.

[56] Higher Education Institutions are impelled to implement their improvement plans. The CHE does not have aggregated information about the time periods for the closing off of audit reports (Essop 2015).

Similarly, to highlight the importance and to enhance the status of teaching in Higher Education, the CHE, in partnership with the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA), undertakes an annual National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award process for public universities. The aims of the awards are to:

- support excellence in teaching and learning in Higher Education;
- develop a cadre of academics who are able to provide inspiration and leadership in teaching in their disciplines, institutions and regions; and
- generate debate and public awareness about what constitutes teaching excellence in Higher Education[57].

In addition to quality promotion, the HEQC has also added capacity development as a developmental area in recognition of the need to ensure that the necessary capacity exists within Higher Education Institutions to participate in the national quality assurance system. This work has largely taken the form of providing training on a regular basis to institutional auditors and programme evaluators, and has included a project to support the development of quality assurance systems in merged and historically disadvantaged institutions. Despite this work, institutional capacity remains uneven and there is a need to provide further support to institutions. All this work however shows the impact of the NQF on a system in which, prior to the NQF, 'osmosis' of learning and excellence were assumed.

6.2.1.4.5 Standards Development

National qualification standards potentially provide both compliance benchmarks and developmental guidelines for qualification types as awarded in particular fields of study or disciplines. Although the development of qualification standards may not of itself necessarily result in an improvement in throughput and graduation rates, it does nonetheless have potential to clarify the meaning, purpose and distinctiveness of qualification types; provide broad guidelines for graduate attributes; contribute to the quality assurance of programmes within and across institutions; reflect on international comparability, and strengthen public confidence in the value and credibility of national qualifications in the country[58].

A Framework for Qualification Standards in Higher Education was released in 2012 for public comment and, following amendment on the basis of submissions, approved by the Council in January 2013 (CHE 2014b, 2014c). A suite of pilot projects commenced, comprising standards developed for the Bachelor of Law (LLB), Master of Business Administration (MBA), Bachelor of Social Work, Bachelor of Engineering and Diploma in Engineering qualifications.

The standards are developed by groups of academic experts from Higher Education Institutions under the aegis of the CHE, and are disseminated to relevant professional bodies and interest groups for comment prior to completion. Thereafter, they are made available for broad public comment prior to final approval by the CHE. Thus the standard statements represent the views of both the academic and professional communities concerned. The standards serve an important function as part of the national review process, in that they provide a benchmark for the purposes of the qualification involved and the graduate attributes that manifest it. The standards development processes, and making standards explicit, create transparency – for students, university staff and other stakeholders, including employers.

The standard is important for both national assessment of a qualification and for the re-accreditation of individual programmes leading to the award of the qualification. Likewise, standards inform the accreditation of new programmes by establishing the need for compatibility between the details of

[57]The Quality Promotion initiative has not been evaluated (Essop 2015).
[58] The piloting has not yet been finalised (Essop 2015).

planning and implementation of the programme on the one hand, and a well-grounded projection of its end product (the attributes of the graduate and their appropriateness for the purpose of the qualification) on the other. For these reasons, standards development is integral to the overall quality assurance function of the CHE.

6.2.2 From Quality Assurance to Quality Enhancement

In assessing the different elements of the quality assurance system developed by the HEQC, the external evaluation panel indicated that it was satisfied with the effectiveness and appropriateness of the HEQC's goals in relation to promoting quality assurance (CHE 2008). At the same time, the panel suggested that going forward the emphasis should be on the promotion of quality in the Higher Education system. In relation to institutional audits in particular, the external evaluation panel suggested a less all-encompassing focus and a more workable approach to deal with the improvement of quality.

The focus on quality promotion is based on recognition that at the centre of any quality assurance system is the development and maintenance of standards. The maintenance of standards provides the enabling environment but does not necessarily result in a causal sense in the improvement of quality. Thus, for example, the development of minimum standards for the strengthening of teaching and learning in relation to course design, delivery and assessment is critical to determining access and success in Higher Education. It provides the foundation and is a necessary condition for improving throughput and graduation rates in Higher Education. However, strengthening teaching and learning through the development and maintenance of standards alone will not bring about sufficient improvements in graduation and throughput rates in Higher Education.

In this regard, there are a range of factors that impact on teaching and learning in Higher Education and on graduation and throughput rates that need to be considered. These factors include educational, social, cultural and economic aspects, such as:

- Poor articulation between schooling and Higher Education in general, and the under-preparedness of students from poor, working class and rural schools in particular.
- Lack of fluency in the language of instruction, which for the majority of students is a second or subsequent language.
- Lack of, and/ or inadequate access to student financial support.
- Limited access to student residences and accommodation that is conducive to the facilitation of study activities.
- Poorly resourced and/ or developed student support services, particularly in relation to pastoral support.
- Inadequate funding of academic support programmes.
- Lack of basic educational infrastructure in terms of lecture and seminar rooms, laboratories, data projectors, computers, regular access to the internet and appropriately resourced libraries at some institutions.
- Inadequate funding of Higher Education.
- Institutional cultures that are not sensitive to student diversity, particularly for students who are first-generation students in Higher Education.

In line with these realities, the HEQC decided not to conduct another round of institutional audits immediately pursuant to the last. Instead, it decided to focus on the quality enhancement of teaching and learning to address the key challenge that confronts the Higher Education system, namely, poor throughput and graduation rates. The fact that roughly 50% of an entering cohort leaves Higher Education without a qualification is morally and socially unacceptable and economically unsustainable. Thus, the focus of the

current Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) is on enhancing teaching and learning to improve student success at the undergraduate level.

Central to the QEP is a collaborative approach in which Higher Education Institutions come together jointly to address and identify solutions for improving teaching and learning and through it, throughput and graduation rates. The QEP, which was launched in February 2014, with the release of the Framework and process documents (CHE 2014b, 2014c) will be undertaken in two phases over a five-year period. In the first phase – the 2014-2015 year – the thematic focus will be on enhancing :

- academics as teachers;
- student support and development;
- the learning environment; and
- the management of courses and programme enrolment.

The shift from quality assurance to quality enhancement does not lessen institutional accountability for quality. The shift does not preclude the undertaking of focused and more narrowly based audits of aspects of Higher Education Institutions and/ or the Higher Education system as appropriate. The accountability aspects of the quality assurance system linked to programme accreditation and national reviews remain in place. Furthermore, accountability is built into the Quality Enhancement Project in that the expected outcomes include benchmarks and codes of good practice developed through the process, to which institutions would be expected to adhere.

6.2.2.1 Links between teaching, learning, throughput and graduation

It is important to clarify the relationship between the strengthening of teaching and learning and improved throughput and graduation rates. Teaching and learning, which are at the centre of the educational process, and which include curriculum development and the underlying assumptions on which it is based, and course design, delivery and assessment, are critical to determining access and success in Higher Education. Effective teaching and learning practices provide the foundation and are necessary conditions for improving throughput and graduation rates in Higher Education.

In the context of Higher Education in South Africa, although the strengthening of teaching and learning by developing approaches that are sensitive to student diversity is critical, the improvement of teaching and learning alone will not bring about sufficient improvement in graduation and throughput rates in Higher Education. Quality assurance, planning and funding are all of critical importance.

6.2.3 Concluding comments from the CHE: Quality assurance as a lever for steering the Higher Education system

The HEQC, as the external review (CHE 2008: 14) found, has successfully established a "credible quality assurance system for South African Higher Education, and has worked well with Higher Education Institutions to develop their own quality assurance mechanisms, especially through the audit process."

However, although quality assurance is integrated in the Higher Education system, albeit unevenly in terms of institutional capacity, its potential is not fully realised as one of three levers – the other two being planning and funding – to steer the Higher Education system to meet national policy goals and objectives. This situation is due largely to the fact that, as the external review (CHE 2008:: 9) suggests, the three levers have not been coordinated:

> *…The new national framework for South African Higher Education envisaged three policy instruments to steer the system towards improved quality: planning, funding and quality*

assurance. In their implementation, however, the links between these three levers are complex, with responsibility residing in different locations. The panel recognises the continuing evolution of the Higher Education system in South Africa wherein partners are still developing ways of working together. This is taking place in an environment where all elements of the Higher Education system were, and are still being, reformulated. For example, at the same time that the CHE and the HEQC were being established and were drafting framing and other documents, the Ministry of Education was also drafting a National Plan for Higher Education and establishing new planning and funding systems…

This argument is overstated, given that by 2004 all three instruments had been developed and were in the process of being implemented. It is more likely that capacity constraints both within the then-Department of Education and the CHE were contributory factors. However, whatever the reasons, it is clear that in the absence of a coordinated strategy, the impact of quality assurance as a lever for change is limited. This reality needs to be addressed in collaboration with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), which is responsible for planning and funding.

In addition, as part of strengthening the role of quality assurance, the CHE is developing performance indicators and undertaking student cohort studies, as well identifying and analysing the key trends and issues in relation to teaching and learning in particular. It is expected that this work, in conjunction with the Quality Enhancement Project, will contribute to the development of interventions to strengthen teaching and learning and through it to improving throughput and graduation rates in Higher Education.

6.3. Quality learning for Trades and Occupations

Inputs in this sub-section have been developed by senior Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) staff members. The purpose of the section is to sketch the QCTO's mandate, standard setting and quality assurance work, and achievements and challenges to date. The section also provides brief notes on the historical context for the work of the QCTO, some indicators and some concluding comments from the QCTO. Comments from SAQA and Umalusi have been integrated into the text.

Given that the QCTO is a relatively new Quality Council (see Sections 1.3) established through the Skills Development Act (RSA 2008d) and launched in 2010[59], detail in this section of the report relate mostly to the post-2009 period. Attempts are however still made to sketch related achievements and challenges in the sector prior to 2009.

6.3.1 Quality qualifications for Trades and Occupations

In this section quality assurance of education and training for Trades and Occupations is compared, before and after the onset of democracy in the country in 1994.

6.3.1.1 Quality assurance of qualifications for Trades and Occupations before 1994

This section touches briefly on legislation governing the quality assurance of qualifications for trades and occupations prior to 1994, and some of the related challenges.

[59] The QCTO was launched in February 2010 and became operational on 1 April 2010 in terms of Government Gazette No. 33059 published by the Minister of Higher Education and Training.

6.3.1.1.1 Legislation governing education and training for Trades and Occupations before 1994

Before 1994 the Manpower Training Act (RSA 1981)[60] provided for the promotion and regulation of the training of manpower (artisans) and for the establishment of the National Training Board (NTB).

The National Training Board appointed by the then-Minister of Manpower was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Manpower Training Act (RSA 1981: Clause 4). The functions and powers of the NTB also included advising the Minister and conducting research and investigations to improve the different aspects of manpower training (RSA 1981). A Registrar and Assistant Registrars were appointed and directed by the Minister to carry out functions relating to the Act (RSA 1981: Clause 12).

Any employer, employee, groups of employers or employees, employer or employee organisations, industrial council, trade union or group of these organisations could, with a view to accreditation, establish a training board with respect to a particular industry or area by signing a constitution that was in line with the Act (RSA 1981: Clause 12[a]). These training boards were accredited and certified by the Registrar (RSA 1981: Clause 12(B)[I – IV]).

The training boards were responsible for carrying out duties specified in the Act, which included framing the conditions for apprenticeships towards artisan training; carrying the responsibility for apprenticeship training; addressing any disputes arising in relation to this training; evaluating trade qualifications obtained outside the country; in consultation with the Registrar, establishing and controlling a system for trade testing and the training of trade test officers and other evaluators; upgrading the proficiencies of already-qualified artisans; addressing limiting factors regarding the flow of sufficient artisans, and promoting training when necessary; in collaboration with the Department of Manpower, framing guidelines for the selection of candidates for apprenticeships, encouraging employers to train those doing these selections, and providing prospective apprentices with guidance for vocational careers; in consultation with the NTB, promoting close coordination between formal education on the one hand, and practical training on the other; initiating and monitoring training programmes; providing financial incentives for the training of apprentices; accrediting training centres; and furnishing the Registrar with training-related statistics (RSA 1981: Clause 12[D]).

While these training boards could approve of the training of apprentices by or on behalf of any employer (RSA 1981: Clause 13), the Minister of Manpower was mandated to designate trades, and prescribe qualifications and aspects such as minimum age, remuneration rates, work and study hours, the extent to which components of study could be full-time or part-time, the form and duration of testing and repetitions of tests, types of work employers had to provide, fees payable, conditions of apprenticeship[61], and the appointment of qualified training advisors (RSA 1981: Clause 45)[62].

The Manpower Act (RSA 1981: Clauses 31-34) provided for Regional Training Centres, Private Training Centres and Industry Training Centres.

There were grants-in-aid for any trade unions, employers' organisations or federations that provided training to their office-bearers, employees or members (RSA 1981:: Clause 35). The Act also provided for a fund for the training of unemployed persons (RSA *ibid.*: Clause 36), for employer levies (RSA *ibid.*: Clause

[60] The Manpower Training Act, Act 56 of 1981, was amended in 1982, 1983, 1990 and 1993.

[61] While some of the details relating to these duties were altered in the Manpower Amendment Act, Act 39 of 1990 (RSA 1990), they remained in essence as described here.

[62] Some of the details in Clauses 45 and 46 were also altered in the Manpower Amendment Act, Act 39 of 1990 (RSA 1990), but these clauses too remained in essence as described here. The powers of training advisors included assisting employers in the determination of training needs, advising employers regarding training programmes, the quality of training, the selection and testing of apprentices, and giving guidance to training instructors.

39), and for a Manpower Development Fund which could be utilised for granting loans for the purposes of the Regional, Private and Industry Training Centres and other training schemes covered in the Act (RSA *ibid.*: Clause 38).

Funds were allocated through the fund for training unemployed persons to the Provincial Offices of the Department of Labour and contracts were entered into with the Regional Training Centres and the Private Training Centres. Unemployed people accessed the training offered free of charge.

Trade Testing was centralised at the Central Organisation for Trade Testing (COTT). In addition COTT was responsible for the coordination, quality assurance and recommendation of certification to the Registrar of Manpower Training. COTT has since been replaced by INDLELA.

This system generated a number of serious challenges for South Africa, as elaborated in the following sub-section.

6.3.1.1.2 Challenges regarding education and training for Trades and Occupations before 1994

The biggest challenge regarding the system in which the Manpower Act (RSA 1981) played a central role was the legislated unevenness of opportunities available for people in different population groups. Added to this racial discrimination and equally seriously problematic, was the inherited class-based structure into which the training system was locked. There was virtually no articulation between the training system and its education system counterpart, a reality which apart from being highly unjust, also served to block skills development and modernisation in the country.

The quality of training in the *apartheid* system was also a major challenge as it varied considerably across training centres and was not always up to standard. There was a lack of policy for the accreditation of Regional Training Centres and Private Training Centres. There was no standardisation across curricula, although course outlines were available. There were also issues around the determination of training fees, which were uneven across different contexts.

6.3.1.2 Quality assurance of qualifications for Trades and Occupations after 1994

This section of the report sketches the quality assurance developments after the establishment of democracy in South Africa, under the South African Qualifications Authority Act, Act 58 of 1995 (RSA 1995), and later under the National Qualifications Framework Act, Act 67 of 2008 (RSA 2008c) which replaced it. The aim of this new education and training system of which occupational qualifications were part, was to address the quality-related issues of the pre-1994 system as well as integrating the system, achieving redress, and making the system accessible to everyone in the country (see Section 1.2.2.2 of the report for more details).

6.3.1.2.1 Quality assurance of education and training for Trades and Occupations, 1994-2008

The South African Qualifications Authority Act (RSA 1995) established the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and led to the development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and a range of standard-setting and quality assurance arrangements which enabled South African qualifications to be registered on a single framework.

SAQA initially developed and implemented this integrated system by establishing two directorates. The then-Directorate for Standards Setting and Development (DSSD) was responsible for the development of qualifications and unit standards, including those for the occupational sector. The Directorate for Quality Assurance was responsible for NQF implementation through Education and Training Quality Assurance

Bodies (ETQAs) for the various sectors. SAQA fulfilled its operational responsibilities for the quality assurance of NQF-registered qualifications in the Trades and Occupations sector through National Standards Bodies (NSBs), Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs), and the Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) divisions of the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).

Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were established through the Skills Development Act, Act 97 of 1998 (RSA 1998b). Their ETQAs were accredited by SAQA for periods of three years. Their responsibilities included:

- accrediting providers in their sectors to offer education and training for specific qualifications and unit standards registered on the NQF;
- monitoring the provision of these qualifications and unit standards, including the associated assessment and moderation;
- registering assessors for the assessment in specified qualifications and unit standards, in line with the criteria established for this purpose;
- certification of the successful learners involved;
- recommending new qualifications and unit standards, or modifications to existing ones, to the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) for consideration; and
- maintaining a database, and reporting, in line with SAQA requirements, and carrying out any other functions that were assigned to them by SAQA.

Once the SETA ETQAs had been accredited by SAQA, they in turn accredited providers of education and training to offer quality assured training associated with the unit standards and qualifications located in their sectors. By 2009 NQF-registered occupational qualifications in the country were quality assured by 21 SETA ETQAs and six Professional Bodies. The Trades were spread across only 10 of the SETAs.

National development of qualifications and unit standards took place under the leadership of the DSSD by representative Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs), and were benchmarked against appropriate international qualifications. The SGB members were nominated from interest groups, education and training stakeholders and experts in the particular sub-fields concerned.

National Standards Bodies (NSBs) – also operating under the leadership of the DSSD – were nominated from broader stakeholder groups, and were responsible for:

- registering SGBs;
- interrogating the outputs of SGBs in their sectors; and
- recommending qualifications to the NSB Board, which in turn recommended qualifications to SAQA for registration on the NQF.

This operating model proved to be cumbersome. Each SGB and each NSB comprised around 30 people representing the different stakeholders who had to fly around the country to meet for qualifications development work. The NSBs met every second month, which could lengthen processes if revisions were needed, especially when there were political contestations.

The SGBs were later replaced by Task Teams of Experts. The qualifications developed by these Task Teams were quality assured by Consultative Panels made up of qualification and subject matter experts. The final screening of the qualifications – to ensure that they met the national quality requirements – took place at the executive level of SAQA's then-Qualifications Committee, and the SAQA Board.

The changes effected in the Trades and Occupations sector under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) failed to

integrate the education and training sectors. The transformation of this part of the system however clearly led to a single integrated national system for Trades and Occupations, and as such went some way towards the systemic goals of integration, redress, access and quality for occupational qualifications. Lessons were learned regarding the quality of qualifications, impacting on quality-related developments under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c).

6.3.1.2.2 Post-2008 quality assurance for occupational qualifications: achievements and challenges

From the start, the integration of the system for education and training for Trades and Occupations was an important aspiration. SAQA populated the NQF with qualifications and unit standards that addressed the needs identified by the various industries in the country. The implementation of the NQF empowered education and training stakeholders in the sector. The rules for operation were clear, and were shaped by stakeholder participation, although stakeholder involvement was sometimes uneven.

The ETQAs employed a developmental approach to the accreditation of providers. This approach led to some providers being provisionally accredited, some being accredited to offer a range of qualifications, and some being accredited to offer individual unit standards only. This was a contested area of development.

Although the developmental approach to accreditation is internationally recommended, it gave rise to a number of issues in South Africa that impacted on the efficiency, effectiveness and credibility of learning and certification.

Some industries preferred their employees to register for individual unit standards or skills programmes rather than for full qualifications. The uptake on some full occupational qualifications was very slow. These qualifications were unattractive to learners as the qualifications were not portable or accepted for articulation into Higher Education, as had been the main intention. Inconsistencies in approaches to learning and the assessment of learners were identified. The sector-based qualifications were not easy to implement as the providers and ETQAs had to enter into Memoranda of Agreements (MoA) which were usually not well managed.

It was time to refine the integrated education and training system in an innovative way in order to maintain the positive changes that had taken place in the sector for Trades and Occupations, and address the deficiencies.

In 2008 the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) was repealed and replaced with the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). This change ushered in broad and sweeping new developments in the Trades and Occupations sector (see also Section 1.3 and 6.1).

6.3.1.2.3 Transition to the NQF Act

While the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) remained in place in the transition from the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) to the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), there were major changes in the structures and mandates of NQF organisations. The main change involved a shift from a top-down centralised approach to standard setting and quality assurance, to a differentiated approach which accommodated fundamental differences between the schooling, college, university and Trades and Occupations sectors (see also Section 1.3 and 6.1 of the report). Coming to understand the challenges of the centralised approach with respect to the Trades and Occupations sector impacted on the new approach adopted under the NQF Act.

Key changes are noted in brief here, as they set the outer boundaries and form of standard setting and quality assurance developments in the Trades and Occupations sector.

The promulgation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) ushered in revisions to the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b, 2008d), as it did for the General and Further Education and Training Act (RSA 2001, 2008b) and the Higher Education Act (RSA 1997, 2008b). The Quality Councils for General and Further Education and Training, and Higher Education remained, and a third Quality Council, the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), was created for the Trades and Occupations sector (see Section 6.3.1.2.4 below).

Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) the specialised standard setting and specialised quality assurance needed for the respective education and training sectors are located across the three Quality Councils. Operational responsibility for the development and quality assurance of occupational qualifications moved from SAQA to the QCTO.

The NQF Act (RSA 2008c) made provision for a managed transition between the two organisations, through continued oversight of the quality assurance function for registered qualifications and part-qualifications by SAQA in terms of its regulatory framework, until such time that the QCTO could fully assume its responsibilities. SAQA staff worked very closely with QCTO staff from mid-2009 to September 2012 to smooth the transition. By October 2012 the QCTO had assumed full responsibility for qualifications development and quality assurance in the Trades and Occupations sector.

SAQA remained a Juristic Person in the transition to the NQF Act (*op.cit.*). SAQA's new and key coordinating role through the development and implementation of *inter alia* the NQF Level Descriptors; the 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), shaped the current context in which the QCTO operates.

Another key structural development from the point of view of the Trades and Occupations sector was the publication of Presidential Proclamation 44 of 2009, which enabled the split of the national Department of Education (DoE) into the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The entire skills development function of the Department of Labour (DoL) was incorporated into the DHET, including the SETAs and the QCTO. These significant moves opened the way for major advances towards systemic integration.

The DHET in its oversight role indicated to the QCTO that it must demonstrate that it has sufficient operational capacity to manage the system for quality assurance of occupational qualifications currently registered on the NQF and new occupational qualifications. This imperative was a major challenge for the QCTO given its capacity.

6.3.1.2.4 Mandate of the QCTO

The NQF Act (2008c) and the Skills Development Amendment Act (RSA 2008d) mandate the QCTO, among other things, to:

- oversee the development and maintenance of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF);
- establish and maintain occupational standards and qualifications;
- quality assure occupational standards and qualifications;
- design and develop occupational standards and qualifications; and
- ensure the quality of occupational standards and qualifications.

6.3.1.2.5 Emergence of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)

The emergence of the QCTO is detailed here, as this history is recent and still directly affects the work of

the organisation.

On 23 February 2010 the Minister of Higher Education and Training appointed the members of the Council for the QCTO, and the Council became operational in April 2010. In September 2011 a new Chairperson was appointed, following the resignation of the first Chairperson. At the time there were no permanent staff members of the QCTO and a group of SAQA staff members were seconded to assist with the initial set-up of the organisation. At this time there was a single staff member at executive level, in an acting capacity.

While the mandate of the QCTO had been stated in the Skills Development Amendment Act (RSA 2008d), the legislation that gave birth to the QCTO, the strategic thinking and implementation of activities had a slow start. Compounding this issue was the extent of change in the legislative and regulatory environment of the NQF and DHET.

Developmental areas that needed to be changed in the occupational sector included:

- Replacing sector-specific qualifications with cross-sectoral occupational qualifications and doing away with Memoranda of Understanding between SETAs[63].
- Doing away with the multiple quality assuring structures (ETQAs) and establishing the QCTO to oversee the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF).
- Addressing the existing inconsistency of approaches to learning and assessment across economic sectors and providers.
- Doing away with the proliferation of unit standards and structuring qualifications into three components, namely Knowledge Standards, Practical Standards and Workplace Experience Standards[64].
- Avoiding overemphasis on accreditation as the key to quality assurance.

The QCTO and role-players in the occupational sector faced a number of challenges in addressing these developmental areas. Notwithstanding the assistance of SAQA, the QCTO was faced with the task of setting up and establishing itself as an organisation, while simultaneously assuming its responsibilities. These responsibilities included the quality assurance of registered sector-specific qualifications, and the creation of a new quality assurance system for cross-sectoral occupational qualifications and part-qualifications. The new organisation had to develop integrated processes to ensure that there was a seamless transition from the legacy (inherited) sector-specific qualifications to the new occupational qualifications.

6.3.1.2.6 The current quality assurance model for qualifications in the OQSF

The transition from the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) to the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) has been noted (see Section 1.3). The publication of the Joint Policy Statement by the Ministers of Education and Labour in 2007 led to the formation of a Project Steering Committee. This Committee was established by the Director-General of Labour and consisted of officials from the Department of Labour and individuals and resources from GIZ

[63] Each provider was accredited by a 'parent' SETA, to offer qualifications for which that SETA was the approved ETQA. If a provider wanted to provide a qualification that lay within the ambit of another SETA, a MoA between the parent and additional SETA was needed.
[64] The structure of occupational qualifications is described in Section 6.3.1.5.

(then called GTZ)[65]. Its task was to develop a draft Sub-Framework for occupational qualifications, together with models for the development and quality assurance of these qualifications.

This team presented the draft models to the QCTO Council at its induction workshop. It was the task of the QCTO to develop the models further. The models for the development and quality assurance of occupational qualifications emphasised three aspects, namely:

- qualification design as the basis for quality assurance;
- the importance of monitoring of providers; and
- the centrality of quality assurance of External Integrated Summative Assessment.

One of the issues which had been agreed upon within the Project Steering Committee was that quality assurance of occupational qualifications would follow a 'light touch' approach. This view was challenged by the QCTO Council, and since that time the QCTO has emphasised quality assurance, to the extent that a Chief Directorate for Occupational Quality Assurance has been established within the QCTO.

6.3.1.2.6.1 Delegation of powers

The QCTO adopted its delegation policy as a model for successfully fulfilling its obligations. The QCTO, in an effort to minimise further systemic disruption, delegated the quality assurance part of its mandate for registered qualifications to the SETAs, as from October 2012, in terms of the ETQA Regulations put in place by SAQA (DHET 1998).

The quality assurance system for occupational qualifications now includes the establishment of Development Quality Partners (DQPs) and Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs)[66]. Development Quality Partners are responsible for the development of occupational qualifications; Assessment Quality Partners for assessment relating to these qualifications.

The delegation of these quality assurance functions to the former ETQAs has proved to be successful in terms of current operations, while the QCTO builds its capacity as an organisation.

On the other hand, the delegation model can be contested on the grounds that it is delaying further development of the Trades and Occupations landscape. The SETAs have new roles to play which do not include the quality assurance of qualifications for the Trades and Occupations sector[67].

6.3.1.2.6.2 Development Quality Partners (DQPs)

The QCTO approves Development Quality Partners (DQPs) to coordinate the design, development and revision of specified occupational standards and qualifications. It uses its Policy on Delegation to

[65] The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) – previously 'GTZ' – is a German development agency that supports skills development. It has sponsored skills development in the occupational sector in South Africa, using German resources, since the 1990s.

[66] Typical DQPs and AQPs include SETAs, Professional Bodies, legislated bodies, examination bodies, moderation bodies and occupational associations.

[67] Research has shown that the SETAs have too many objectives and that this overload is linked to difficulties in their strategic planning (MHET 2013: 66). As a result SETAs have not effected the links needed between education and work. SETA reporting is uneven, making the monitoring of SETAs by the DHET difficult (MHET 2013: 66). The new streamlined foci for the SETAs are (1) to focus on obtaining accurate data on workplace skills needs, and (2) to support training providers in their delivery of the learning programmes needed in their sectors. Importantly, this work is to include facilitating cooperation between education and training institutions and workplaces, and development of workers in existing enterprises (DHET 2013: 67-68). The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training also provides direction for the strengthening of planning and reporting in SETAs, and notes impending changes towards strengthening SETA governance and the structuring of the SETA landscape (DHET 2013).

Development Quality Partners (DQPs) and Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs) (QCTO 2011b, 2014c) to manage this approval process. This policy outlines the criteria for approval of DQPs, the functions of DQPs and the QCTO's obligations with respect to DQPs.

The process for selecting DQPs is a stakeholder-driven one. Industry stakeholders must agree on a body that will assume the role of DQP for specific qualifications. Key stakeholders must be represented in the decision-making meeting that leads to the identification and selection of the DQP.

The identified body – the potential DQP – must then meet the criteria stipulated in the Policy on Delegation (QCTO 2011b, 2014c) before the QCTO enters into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) that effects the delegation.

The DQP must appoint a QCTO-registered Qualifications Development Facilitator (QDF) to facilitate the qualification development process[68]. The facilitation process followed by the QDF is a standardised one (QCTO 2014q). The outcome of this development process must be verified with a community of experts. The DQP must ensure that appropriate members from the community of experts are involved throughout the qualification development process.

The aim of all of these requirements is to ensure that an appropriate community of experts is responsible for the development of each qualification, and that quality is built into each step of the process.

6.3.1.2.6.3 Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs)

An Assessment Quality Partner (AQP) is a body delegated by the QCTO to develop assessment instruments and manage the final External Integrated Assessment of specific occupational qualifications. The AQP also recommends the certification of learners to the QCTO.

AQPs work within the requirements of QCTO policy (QCTO 2011a, 211b, 2014a, 2014b) which again are designed to build in quality assurance at each stage of the assessment processes. How this strengthening of the processes is achieved can be seen by considering the functions of AQPs, which include:

- coordinating and managing external assessment processes;
- recommending external assessment specifications documents to the QCTO for approval;
- developing and maintaining a national data-bank of instruments for external assessments;
- developing guidelines for the accreditation of assessment centres or the approval of assessment sites for external assessments, and recommending accreditation or withdrawal of accreditation for these centres as appropriate to the QCTO;
- recommending the withdrawal of the accreditation of Skills Development Providers (SDPs) for the Knowledge and/ or Practical Skills components of qualifications where necessary;
- ensuring that there are reliable and secure electronic databases to record learners' registration in formats required by the QCTO;
- moderating at least 10% of learners' external assessments;
- recommending the certification of learners to the QCTO;
- implementing an appeals policy in line with QCTO Assessment Policy (QCTO 2014a);
- conducting tracer studies such as employer satisfaction surveys to ascertain the occupational

[68] A Qualifications Development Facilitator (QDF) is a person registered by the QCTO as having met the requirements to facilitate the development of new qualifications. The QDF environment is managed by the QCTO utilising its Policy on Qualifications Development for Facilitators (QCTO 2014q). This policy outlines the roles of QDFs and the criteria for their registration, among other aspects.

competence levels of qualifying learners;
- promoting the continuous professional development of AQP-associated practitioners;
- providing a mechanism for RPL; and
- reporting to the QCTO in the form and manner required by the QCTO.

The criteria for successful AQPs are stringent as imperatives for quality. A body seeking to perform the functions of an AQP must:

- be recommended to the QCTO by the relevant DQP, after completion of an occupational profile compiled by a community of expert practitioners that has good standing in the relevant occupation;
- have access to subject matter experts and the other human resources necessary for performing AQP functions, and all the individuals involved need to have good standing in the occupational field concerned;
- have research capacity;
- have the financial resources necessary to establish the AQP functions required, and to implement effective, efficient and transparent financial management and internal control systems, verified by means of a written commitment by its relevant authority;
- have a proposed fee structure and funding model to maintain the delivery of its functions;
- have a reliable management information system in the format required by the QCTO;
- have a system in place to detect and address irregularities;
- be willing to sign the QCTO Code of Conduct if approved; and
- be a juristic entity.

6.3.1.2.6.3 Qualification development and selection of DQPs and AQPs

The process to develop an occupational qualification is initiated through an application to the QCTO. An application can be submitted by any person or group of persons. The QCTO processes the application by checking and consulting with stakeholders on whether a qualification is indeed required and whether it is a priority qualification in terms of the skills needs of the country. A stakeholder meeting – referred to as the scoping meeting – is conducted with industry stakeholders to seek confirmation and to identify the body (DQP) to coordinate the development of the qualification.

DQPs recommend nominated AQPs – the best possible candidates to perform the AQP functions required – to the QCTO, after deliberation among their communities of expert practitioners (CEPs). The nominated AQP then writes a letter of intent to the QCTO, expressing its interest in becoming the AQP for a specific occupational qualification.

The application is evaluated according to set criteria (QCTO 2011a). If the nominated AQP complies with these criteria, the QCTO approves it as an AQP for a relevant qualification, in line with its Policy on Delegation of Qualification Assessment to Assessment Quality Partners (QCTO 2011b, 2014c). A Service Level Agreement is signed by both parties.

Once the qualification is finalised it is submitted to the QCTO for evaluation. The QCTO evaluates the qualification and if this process is successful, publishes the qualification for public comments through a notice in the Government Gazette. The final qualification is recommended to the QCTO Council for approval and thereafter recommended by the QCTO to SAQA for registration on the NQF.

6.3.1.2.6.5 Typical features of AQPs

An Assessment Quality Partner (AQP) must be a body with the necessary credibility in the relevant constituency (industry/ sector/ profession). It must be regarded in its constituency as a strong entity that is able to manage Final External Integrated Assessment well.

Depending on their current functions and areas of expertise, any of the following types of existing bodies might be appointed as Assessment Quality Partners for specific occupations or groups of occupations:

- moderating bodies;
- examining bodies;
- professional bodies;
- legislated bodies; and
- occupational associations.

If none of these exist with a specific interest in the relevant occupation, a SETA or industry body may also fulfil this role. For quality purposes – to eliminate conditions in which bias could occur – providers may not play the role of AQP.

6.3.1.2.6.6 AQPs and enhancing quality

The QCTO focuses its quality assurance of assessment on the Final External Integrated Assessment which is developed and managed by Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs). It is argued that this model responds to labour market skills needs through the involvement of respected industry experts, and by separating provision from assessment. Checks and balances at every stage are designed to maximise quality and the extent to which the skills development system responds to market needs.

The Final External Integrated Assessment determines whether or not learners have developed the required occupational competencies to be awarded the qualifications towards which they were working. The setting of standards for specific Final External Integrated Assessments by AQPs has the potential to ensure that successful candidates are fully qualified to do the work stated on their occupational certificates.

All AQPs are members of the QCTO's AQP Forum, which meets at least three times per year. The purpose of the AQP Forum is to create a platform to guide the implementation of AQP functions and to share successes.

The QCTO also monitors examination and marking sessions towards enhancing quality. AQPs must report annually to the QCTO on the following:

- learner enrolments and achievements;
- the moderation and management of external assessments;
- the utilisation of assessment instruments, and an analysis of their performance;
- the performance of accredited assessment centres and sites;
- the performance of accredited Skills Development Providers;
- recommendations regarding learner certification;
- the management practices of assessment practitioners;
- tracer studies of learner performance in the workplace; and
- employer satisfaction surveys.

6.3.1.3. Progress in the period 2009-2014

Setting up the QCTO was challenging but ultimately successful. The leadership of SAQA in this process was valued, and the collaboration between the two organisations – SAQA and the QCTO – is one example of national efforts towards systemic integration. By working together valuable institutional memory from work undertaken under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) was retained while the new structures, approaches and processes were forged.

6.3.1.3.1 Progress regarding the Delegation of Powers

The QCTO achieved approval for its policies and procedures for the regulation of and delegation to DQPs and AQPs in 2011 (QCTO 2011b, 2014c).

At this time the QCTO experienced a challenge with the small number of registered Qualifications Development Facilitators (QDFs) on its register as well as with the equity representation of those registered. An intervention was instituted to train Learner QDFs with the aim an aim of improving the pool of registered QDFs. The Qualifications Development Facilitators Training Project was approved by the National Skills Fund (NSF) in 2012, and implemented for the first time in the 2013-2014 financial year. The purposes of this initiative are to standardise and enhance the quality of QDF training, increase the numbers of registered QDF, and improve the equity representivity of registered QDFs.

To date 28 Development Quality Partners (DQPs), 28 Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs) and 25 Qualifications Development Facilitators (QDFs) have been appointed for the newly registered qualifications or those submitted for registration under the QCTO. It is expected that the number of QDFs could be doubled within the next year. The number of AQPs will also rise significantly based on the number of qualifications developed and registered.

6.3.1.3.2 Progress regarding stability and sustainability in the QCTO context

By December 2012 the SETA Grant Regulations (DHET 2012d) were promulgated, requiring SETAs to set aside funding for the quality assurance activities of the QCTO. In order to have access to the funds the QCTO was required, on an annual basis, to present to the Department of Higher Education and Training a proposal describing how the funds would be used. This requirement has impacted on the fluidity of the QCTO's work as it impedes long-term planning. Discussions were under way to improve the allocation process.

In the first year in which the funds were available – the 2013-2014 financial year – a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit was established within the QCTO. This unit commenced operations by working with SETAs to improve quality assurance activities carried out in relation to over 2000 unit standards-based qualifications for which they were responsible. The unit subsequently monitored and evaluated the relationships between SETAs and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, as well as monitoring the assessment and examinations administered by accredited Skills Development Providers.

By the 2013-2014 year, the QCTO thus had the clear direction it needed to operate as well as a sustainable source of funds.

6.3.1.3.3 Determination of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks

Two of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks – the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF) and the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) – were determined by the Minister of Higher Education and Training in December 2012 (see Government Gazette

No. 36003, and Section 1.1.2.7). Small amendments were made to these Sub-Frameworks eight months later (Government Gazette No. 36803, December 2013). As noted, the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework Policy was published in July 2014 (Government Gazette No. 37879). These determinations were important milestones for the Trades and Occupations sector, as well as for the whole system. For the first time, in 2014, the whole structure of the differentiated NQF in South Africa was clear to all.

The determination of the NQF Sub-Frameworks was the end-point of a long process involving several rounds of development. Each Quality Council developed the Sub-Framework for which it was responsible. Several rounds of critiques and further developments followed where inputs were provided by the other Quality Councils and SAQA. Finalisation of the determination of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks represented the point from which cross-cutting integrating work – such as the development of articulated learning pathways and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) arrangements – could begin in earnest. In the Sub-Framework determination process, the Minister of Higher Education and Training made clear that the QCTO should direct its efforts towards occupational qualifications at NQF Levels 1 to 6[69], and this has been the focus of the QCTO since.

6.3.1.3.4 The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training, and the work of the QCTO

In January 2013 the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013) was released. This document defined Post-School Education and Training, which helped further to demarcate areas of responsibility for the three Quality Councils.

The White Paper identified DHET priorities for Post-School Education and Training, an important one of which was the strengthening and expansion of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges. This focus has influenced the work of the QCTO significantly.

While the need for part-qualifications had previously been a consideration for the QCTO, the emphasis on these qualifications was reinforced in the White Paper (MHET 2013).

The need for a strong quality assurance system – either influenced or controlled by the state – was also emphasised in the White Paper. The QCTO has prioritised the development of this system.

6.3.1.4 Development of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF)

This section of the report outlines the development of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF), and presents the OQSF determined by the Minister of Higher Education and Training (Government Gazette No. 37879, 30 July 2014).

6.3.1.4.1 Contestations in the development of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF)

The finalisation of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF) took place at a time when the other two NQF Sub-Frameworks – those for General and Further Education and Training, and Higher Education – were determined and subsequently amended by the Minister of Higher Education and Training (see Section 6.3.1.3.3). At this point there were no major contestations, although leading up to this stage of development there had been differences of views between the Sub-Frameworks.

[69] Originally it was assumed that Occupational Qualifications would be developed at NQF Levels 1-10. A subsequent Ministerial determination (DHET 2012, Government Gazette No. 36003 of December 2012) approved that Occupational Qualifications would go up to NQF Level 6. Eight months later it was determined that these qualifications would go up to NQF Level 8 (DHET 2013, Government Gazette No. 36803 of August 2013).

One of these areas of difference had related to the N1-N6 programmes. These programmes are offered by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The programmes straddle the NQF levels which demarcate the responsibilities of the three Quality Councils. Umalusi has for some time been responsible for the quality assurance of the N1-N3 programmes (see Section 6.1.9.3.2). The N4-N6 programmes were previously not quality assured by any of the Quality Councils. The matter was resolved (albeit that it is still being debated) when SAQA categorised the N1-N3 programmes as part-qualifications in the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-Framework (GFETQSF), and the N4-N6 programmes as part-qualifications in the OQSF.

In the original proposal for the OQSF two types of qualifications were included, namely 'National Occupational Qualifications' for a qualifications with 120 credits, and 'National Occupational Awards' for all qualifications with 25-119 credits. Further, it was proposed that these occupational qualifications could be located across all 10 NQF levels. The Ministerial Determination (DHET 2012, Government Gazette 36003) specified that the qualifications on the OQSF will be named 'Occupational Certificates'. The determination further stipulated that these qualifications would be located on NQF Levels 1-6. A subsequent determination (DHET 2013, Government Gazette 36803) specified that qualifications on the OQSF would span NQF Levels 1-8)[70].

The OQSF development and approval process that followed ensured that the necessary consultation processes were achieved. It must be noted that this developmental process had minimal effects on providers and learners in the system, as most providers and learners during this time were part of the SETA ETQA system to which the QCTO had delegated authority.

6.3.1.4.2 The Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF)

As noted in Section 6.3.1.3.3, qualifications for Trades and Occupations are located on NQF Levels 1-8; the present focus of the QCTO is on qualifications at NQF Levels 1-6. The QCTO issues Occupational Certificates for qualifications registered at these levels on the OQSF. Each occupational qualification reflects the exact occupational title provided in the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO)[71]. Figure 95 shows the NQF levels and OFO Major Groups against which the QCTO will issue certificates.

Figure 95: NQF levels and OFO Major Groups against which the QCTO issues certificates

<table>
<tr><th>NSDS[72]</th><th>NQF Level</th><th>Skill Level[73]</th><th colspan="4">OFO Major Groups</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">High</td><td>7-10</td><td>4</td><td colspan="3">2
Professionals</td><td>1
Managers</td></tr>
<tr><td>6</td><td>3</td><td colspan="3">3
Technicians and Associate Professionals</td><td rowspan="3">7
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Intermediate</td><td>5</td><td rowspan="3">2</td><td rowspan="3">4
Clerical Support Workers</td><td rowspan="3">5
Services and Sales Workers</td><td rowspan="3">6
Skilled Agricultural, Forestry, Fisheries, Craft, and Related Trades Workers</td></tr>
<tr><td>4</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Entry</td><td>2</td><td rowspan="2">1</td><td colspan="5" rowspan="2">8
Elementary Occupations</td></tr>
<tr><td>1</td></tr>
</table>

[70] This development was largely a result of representations from stakeholders, and especially from the Banking sector. The OQSF has commenced with qualifications at Levels 1-6, and will progress to developing qualifications at Levels 7 and 8 over time.
[71] The Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO) was published in 2013 (DHET 2013bb). The diagram of the OFO shows four skill levels, each of which can be mapped against the NQF. The OFO levels are distinguished by types of skills (each level contains a fixed range of types of skills) combined with levels in the authority hierarchy in workplaces.
[72] National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) III 2011-2016 categorisation of skills (DHET 2010)
[73] OFO skill level.

The OQSF is designed to:

- facilitate post-school learning for individuals, and their contributions to social, cultural and economic development in South Africa;
- provide occupational qualifications that can be credibly benchmarked against similar international occupational qualifications;
- facilitate, as appropriate, articulation between occupational qualifications within this Sub-Framework and qualifications in the Sub-Frameworks for General and Further Education and Training (the GFETQSF) and Higher Education (the HEQSF); and
- be straightforward, easy to understand and user-friendly in order to enable pathways in learning and work.

6.3.1.5 The structure of occupational and vocational qualifications

A trade is an occupation that is listed in the National List of Artisan Trades (DHET 2012, Government Gazette 35625). This list is gazetted by the Minister of Higher Education and Training. An occupational qualification is a qualification developed to address occupational skills needs for either an occupation or a specialisation within an occupation. All occupations are listed on the Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO).

Occupational qualifications are structured to include three components of learning namely, knowledge, practical skills and work experience. These components are formalised as Knowledge Standards, Practical Skills Standards and Work Experience Standards (QCTO 2011b, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). The new qualification seeks to integrate the knowledge, practical and workplace components in order to ensure that qualifying candidates have the necessary competencies required for the workplace.

After completing learning in the three components learners are required to undertake an External Integrated Summative Assessment. A learner successful in this Assessment receives an Occupational Certificate. An Occupational Certificate signifies competence regarding a qualification for a specific occupation, or specialisation within that occupation covered by the qualification. Occupational qualifications thus lead to Occupational Certificates.

Vocational qualifications are similar to the sector qualifications developed by SAQA prior to 2008.Vocational qualifications – such as the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) – cover several occupations and serve to introduce learners to the world of work. These qualifications do not however qualify successful learners for a specific occupation or trade. An occupational qualification in contrast qualifies the learner for a specific occupation or trade.

The OQSF policy (QCTO 2014c) regulates and specifies the characteristics of qualifications that are part of the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF). As such, the OQSF policy outlines for the public – Skills Development Providers, learners and others – the different qualification options available as part of the Post-School Education and Training system, and criteria for accreditation to offer these qualifications.

Since the OQSF is still fairly new, further advocacy is required to communicate its intended purpose to the public. The uptake of the new qualifications has been slow as role-players in the system grapple with the implications of the new structuring of the qualifications.

A major challenge in relation to this model is the availability of opportunities for the workplace experience requirements. Achieving Workplace Experience Standards remains a key part of learner competence.

6.3.1.6 The QCTO's stable of qualifications

The qualifications for which the QCTO executes its mandate include the following:

- New Occupational Qualifications – The QCTO quality assures the newly registered Occupational Qualifications, which it does through delegation to DQPs and AQPs and its own monitoring, moderation and certification processes (see Section 6.3.1.2.6).

- Trades – the QCTO has approved the National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB) as an AQP for the trades. The quality assurance processes for the trades are in place and functional, including the certification system (see Section 6.3.3).

- Legacy qualifications[74] – these qualifications were inherited by the QCTO from the NQF under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995). Legacy qualifications are currently quality assured by the ETQAs under delegation from the QCTO[75]. The QCTO monitors the processes the ETQAs have in place to execute the delegated functions. The QCTO intended to take over the delegated functions from the 2015-2016 financial year onwards.

- National Technical Education (NATED) N4 to N6 part-qualifications and associated National (N) Diplomas[76], in which the content is mainly theoretical: there are few practical instructional offerings available. Certificates are issued at Levels N4, N5 and N6[77]. Completion of the N6 certificate and the required workplace experience results in the award of the National (N) Diploma. These qualifications were in high demand prior to the development of the new system. It must be noted however that many students did not obtain the N Diploma due to the difficulty of finding suitable workplace experience to fulfil the requirements of the qualification.

  These qualifications are by and large generally considered to be out of date and as having little relevance to industry needs. For this reason the QCTO embarked on a process to review and revise the qualifications. The work in this regard is progressing apace with the upgrades scheduled for completion by 2017 (see also Umalusi research into the N qualifications, in Section 6.1.9.3).

6.3.2 The management of occupational qualifications since 2009

This section of the report describes the management of inherited ('legacy') and new qualifications by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) since 2009.

6.3.2.1 QCTO management of inherited occupational qualifications since 2009

Upon establishment of the QCTO in 2010, 2 336 occupational and vocational qualifications already registered on the NQF were allocated to the OQSF by SAQA. These qualifications are quality assured by the QCTO directly or through its Quality Assurance Partners (QAPs), which include SETAs and Professional Bodies.

[74] See Section 6.3.2 for more details.
[75] These ETQAs include SETAs, Professional Bodies, legislated bodies, examination bodies, moderation bodies and occupational associations.
[76] The N4–N6 programmes were first described in Report 190/191, and were originally offered at the Technical Colleges rationalised to form the TVET Colleges in the mid-2000s (see Sections 4.3.1.4 and 6.1.9.3).
[77] National (N) Diplomas were previously classified as M+3 (Matric plus three years of education and training) qualifications.

These 'legacy' qualifications are mostly unit-standard-based. Importantly, regardless of the status of qualifications, it is a requirement that a teach-out period be allowed so as to avoid disruption of the system of provision.

Preliminary investigation (QCTO 2014f) indicates that there is learner uptake in 854 of the 2 336 qualifications. Ongoing QCTO work with the SETAs and Professional Bodies will confirm these preliminary findings. It will also confirm qualifications to be deregistered where there is little or no uptake, and reregistered if there is uptake. Qualifications will also be reregistered if there is little or no uptake but the qualification is a legislative requirement, or has some stakeholder demand, or awaits registration using the new QCTO model. It was expected that this work would be completed within the 2015-2016 year.

6.3.2.2 New occupational qualifications developed by the QCTO since 2009

The QCTO has received over 140 applications for new and improved qualifications since the establishment of its new quality assurance system (see Section 6.3.1.2.6). Importantly – given the need to simplify the NQF – the 'new' qualifications refer to qualifications which did not exist before and which address priority areas. 'Improved' qualifications were in existence, and have been reviewed, improved and repackaged in terms of the new QCTO model.

To date, the QCTO has registered 37 qualifications on the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF). A further 31 qualifications have been developed and are in the final stages of being registered on the OQSF.

Much of this work is contributing to the development or redesign of qualifications that support the South African government's commitment towards the large-scale infrastructure development needed in the country[78]. The QCTO has been instructed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training to ensure the availability of a total of 32 particular occupational qualifications identified in terms of the government's Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs). To date the QCTO has addressed, or is at advanced stages of addressing, 15 of these qualifications.

New qualifications are currently being or have been developed for six occupations on the SIP list, one of which is already registered with SAQA. For nine further qualifications on the list, sector qualifications already existed and are being or have been re-packaged as occupational qualifications to be registered on the OQSF. Six of these qualifications have been registered on the NQF through SAQA.

The remainder of the occupations will be prioritised for development based on stakeholder demand. All of this work is indicative of the impact of the new system under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c).

6.3.3 Occupational qualifications and certification of successful learning achievements

Accurate and timely certification for successful learning achievements is an important part of quality assurance as it is a means to verify quality assured learner results, and for learner progression in the system for education, training, development and work.

6.3.3.1 Certification for trades

Section 26 (D)(4) of the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b) mandates the QCTO to issue a trade certificate in the prescribed form to any person who has successfully completed a Trade Test. The certificate is issued for a trade listed on the OFO, and states that the person is qualified to perform the trade specified in the

[78] Government's Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs) are part of the National Infrastructure Plan (RSA 2012a).

certificate.

When the QCTO took over the certification function from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) on 1 April 2013, there were three different processes in place through which a person received a trade certificate:

First, artisan learners who had successfully completed apprentice training and trade testing under the auspices of a SETA (in terms of powers transferred to them in line with the Manpower Training Act (RSA 1981) received a SETA certificate with a SETA logo, signed by the CEO of the SETA and endorsed by the Registrar of Manpower and Training, or the Registrar in the DHET. Between 2009 and November 2013, these certificates were issued in terms of either Section 13 or Section 28 of the Manpower Training Act (RSA 1981). The DHET endorsed the SETA-issued certificates based on hard copies of Trade Test reports, contracts where applicable and a recommendation from the SETA. Electronic copies of these transactions are located within the SETAs involved; there are no central electronic records of these certificates.

Second, artisan learners who successfully underwent learnership training and sometimes central trade testing under the auspices of SETA-accredited trade test centres or INDLELA (Government) received certificates with the relevant SETA logos only, signed by the CEO of the SETA concerned and the ETQA manager only. These certificates were issued between 2000 and 2009, not in terms of the Manpower Training Act, but in accordance with the standards set by the SETA involved.

Third, artisan learners who underwent trade testing at INDLELA without any linkages to a SETA, received a certificate in terms of Section 28 and 13 of the Manpower Training Act (RSA 1981) with a red seal embossed with the Government Coat of Arms. These certificates were issued between April 2012 and 19 November 2013, and were signed by the Registrar in the DHET and the Registrar at the QCTO.

A number of challenges have arisen as a result of these different learning routes and types of certification. There has been general public confusion regarding the routes to artisan training and certification, sometimes blocking the employment of individuals.

In some sectors, certificates issued in terms of Section 28 of the Manpower Training Act (RSA 1981) are not recognised. Only those issued under Section 13 of this Act are seen as being acceptable in the industry. There is a general perception that artisans following the Section 28 route (acquiring skills over time, in the course of learning and work) have inferior skills compared to those following the Section 13 route (formalised training through an apprenticeship contract), even although all artisan learners in a sector undergo exactly the same Trade Tests. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiatives have addressed this problem in some but not all cases.

A further challenge is that hard copies of records (Trade Tests conducted by COTT), contracts and other information, if available, are neither organised nor centrally located. INDLELA for instance does not have access to the contracts that are stored at the DHET, and older COTT records have been captured on the EMAGIC system, but without verification of when the records were captured, and in many instances the information is not sufficient to issue a replacement certificate based only on the electronic record. The QCTO requires access to all this information and would engage with the DHET in the 2015-2016 year to establish a way forward regarding indexing hard copies, digitising the records system and transferring copies that exist to the QCTO for certification purposes. The focus on these issues shows the impact of NQF developments (see also Section 3.1).

6.3.3.2 New certification processes for trades: achievements and challenges

The Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b) requires a central national office that manages Trade Tests in a

standardised, easily accessible way. The National Artisan Moderating Body (NAMB) established in terms of this Act is responsible for this centralisation and for recommending all trade certification to the QCTO. The QCTO must maintain a national database of all trade certificates issued and then inform NAMB of the issuing of such certificates. This information also needs to be fed into the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD) at SAQA (see Section 3.1).

The intention is that the QCTO's certification approach will assist in future engagement with candidates both for first issues of certificates, and in instances where trade certificates were issued and are now lost, and where a replacement certificate is required.

From 20 Nov 2013 the QCTO began to issue single trade certificates (first issues) in line with the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b), OFO and OQSF, for artisan learners who had successfully completed their Trade Tests at INDLELA, Olifantsfontein[79] and in SETA-accredited Trade Testing centres[80].

The new certificates have clear indications of the relevant trade, trade specialisation and OFO Code. They are not differentiated on the basis of routes to the Trade Tests. The certificates are issued with two logos, that of the DHET on the left, and that of the QCTO on the right. The red seal, which has been affixed to some trade certificates for many years is present and embossed with the Government Coat of Arms. Trade certificates issued by the QCTO were signed by delegated QCTO officials for the period November 2012 to May 2013; the only official signature since is that of the CEO, in electronic form.

Attempts were made to design this certification system in a way that minimises complexity. System input data are currently informed by hard copies received from the NAMB, and require manual capturing and verification by QCTO staff. This approach has however proved to be too time-consuming, and the QCTO is in the process of developing specifications for redesigning the system to enable electronic uploading of certification requests from the NAMB.

All requests for Section 13 and Section 28 Trade Test Certificates, and other certificates governed by the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b), received since November 2013, have been captured and certificates issued by the QCTO.

Initially the QCTO experienced a challenge regarding the legality of issuing replacement certificates, which delayed the issuing of these certificates in 2014. The matter was resolved, the QCTO amended its certification system to address the issue, and the issuing of replacement certificates with the words 'replacement certificate' commenced in December 2014.

A further challenge emerged regarding the issuing of replacement certificates previously issued by a SETA, that information is not available electronically at a central point, each SETA has its own database and the older records from the Training Boards are available in hard copy only. In future, the QCTO requires hard copies of original documents for certificates previously issued by a SETA, for these documents to be re-issued by the QCTO. In the 2015-2016 year the QCTO would investigate options for the transfer of certification data from the SETAs to the QCTO, and began a survey to this end.

The QCTO is required as part of the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b) to take over the ETQA functions of the SETAs over time. These responsibilities include accrediting through the NAMB, all trade assessment centres previously accredited by the SETAs. The QCTO already takes full control and accountability for the certification of all artisan learners. This legislative requirement will not be delegated.

[79] Olifantsfontein, which is where INDLELA (previously COTT) is located, has long been a Trade Testing centre.
[80] The SETA accreditation of Trade Testing centres is also quality assured by the QCTO.

6.3.3.3 Certification for occupational qualifications

As noted in Section 6.3.1.3.3, the QCTO is required to issue certificates for occupational qualifications registered on its framework. The QCTO, as part of its master systems plan, will prioritise development of a certification system that includes the issuing of occupational certificates, and tracking of accreditation centres, assessments and certification. Certification for the new QCTO qualifications would be in place from the 2015-2016 year, to coincide with the implementation and roll out of these qualifications.

The QCTO would also start to issue certificates for the 'legacy' qualifications in the 2015-2016 year. This work is linked to the approved plan for the takeover of quality assurance functions currently delegated to the SETAs.

Data migration regarding apprentice trade certification records was completed in October 2014. There are approximately seven million records, of which an approximate 492 000 records[81] will be used for replacement of certificates issued through the EMAGIC system, and verification of trade certificates. The QCTO tested the data migration and commenced work with the migrated data in November 2014.

6.3.4 Closing comments from the QCTO

In this sub-section of the report the QCTO:

- sets out its understanding of its successes and challenges;
- presents the kinds of indicators against which it intends to assess its effectiveness in future NQF impact studies;
- details relational work it has accomplished and needs, and
- assesses the extent to which its voice has been integrated into the system.

6.3.4.1 Overarching reflections by the QCTO

Given the relative newness of the QCTO, it can be expected that its impact to date would relate to the setting up of the 'architecture' of the OQSF, and the structures and systems to support the OQSF. In the period from 2010 to the present, the focus in this sector was on the establishment of the QCTO and the development of policies and processes to give effect to its mandate. This work has been reported here.

The QCTO began as a project within the Department of Labour in 2007. When the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) came into existence in 2009, most of the functions relating to skills development were moved to the DHET. These functions became encapsulated in what is now called the Skills Branch of the DHET and the QCTO was established in the process. Although as a project the QCTO started in 2007, it was only officially made a public entity in 2010 (Government Gazette No. 33900, December 2010)[82]. Although declared a public entity, the QCTO did not embrace its role fully until the DHET and the QCTO entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) in July 2011. This MoA allowed the QCTO to use various DHET policies to operate officially as a public entity, within regulations. The MoA however was not a panacea as further developments were needed, including:

- The process model for qualification development which drives one of the core business elements of the QCTO was still being revised, debated and tested.
- The process model for quality assurance was still in its very early stages and even in early 2015 remained under significant development.

[81] This number excludes duplicates and data not relevant for certification.
[82] In the Gazette the QCTO was classified as a public entity retrospectively from 1 April 2010.

- The QCTO Council had not been fully established with all the necessary committees.
- There was no permanent staff complement.

Thus for all practical purposes the organisation was only fully up and running in 2012 by when two significant developments had taken place. First, the QCTO Council became fully functional with two key committees – for Quality Assurance and Qualifications. The second development was the engagement (hiring) of permanent staff at various levels in the organisation.

Over the 2012 to 2014 period, the following foundational steps were completed:

- The QCTO moved out of the DHET buildings into its own location which is situated in a highly desirable area with rental fees set at a very reasonable price. This step was important for the identity of the QCTO.
- Human Resources and Finance systems were established, which has enabled suggestion by the QCTO that its MoA with the DHET could be terminated.
- Standardisation of operational processes and procedures for the core business areas has taken place.
- Governance and corporate structures have been created and are able to meet the exacting requirements of the Treasury and the Auditor-General of South Africa.
- Implementation of a system to manage legacy (unit standards-based) qualifications occurred resulting in minimal disruption to the system while qualifications development and revision took place.
- The permanent QCTO staff complement is now 32 persons.

Although the QCTO has developed a Master System Plan (MSP) for the development of its Information Technology (IT) infrastructure, this area still needs attention. There is also a need to develop the relevant organisational structures to support the work that the QCTO must perform. Finally, the establishment of a comprehensive and credible quality assurance system remains a top priority and is receiving urgent and significant attention.

One of the biggest challenges for the QCTO has been to manage the historically registered (legacy) qualifications for Trades and Occupations. There were too many of these qualifications. The QCTO had to begin establishing the uptake and relevance of these qualifications as well as designing the new qualifications needed. The objective of this work was to ensure a minimum number of qualifications of high quality for the Trades and Occupations sector. Progress in this regard has been reported (see Section 6.3.2); there remains work to be done.

Ensuring continued operation of the development, delivery, quality assurance and certification of quality qualifications for the Trades and Occupations sector – without disruptions – remains a top priority for the QCTO. To this end, the organisation will continue its work with SETAs and SAQA to ensure up-to-date and reliable information pertaining to qualifications. There is need for great care with respect to the historically registered qualifications, which could easily be described as a labyrinth with unit standards of one qualification linked to one or a number of other qualifications that are used for a number of training purposes. The redesign or deregistration of a historical qualification can have an impact that extends well beyond the qualification itself.

One of the most significant challenges for the QCTO is the volume of work to be performed with respect to qualification development. QCTO (2014f) investigations reveal that there are over 2 000 legacy qualifications to manage, redesign or deregister. The organisation is processing 150 applications for qualifications development, and there are 200 further applications that need attention. Establishing a priority system for qualifications development is essential. At present the priorities are:

- occupational qualifications required by the Strategic Infrastructure Projects (SIPs);
- re-configuration of the NATED 191 Part 2 qualifications[83], a major component of the programme mix of public TVET Colleges;
- qualifications for trades;
- qualifications for the five employment drivers listed in the New Growth Path (RSA 2011c); and
- the Scarce Skills List for which comments have been called (DHET 2014, Government Gazette No. 37678 of May 2014).

A final significant challenge relates to the QCTO taking over the quality assurance functions delegated to the SETA ETQAs. The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013) clearly delineates the responsibilities of the SETAs, and makes specific reference to the QCTO taking up its full quality assurance functions. The challenge is for the QCTO to muster sufficient resources and capacity to take up these roles. QCTO staff members have developed a plan in this regard. However, consultation with stakeholders around this plan is still needed, as is the approval of the QCTO Council.

6.3.4.2 Future indicators for assessing the impact of the work of the QCTO

The QCTO intends to assess the impact of its work in future, along the lines of indicators shown in Table 80.

Table 80: Possible indicators for assessing the impact of QCTO work in future

Possible indicator focus	Possible indicators
Systemic integration in the sector for Trades and Occupations, and between this sector and others	Extent to which Occupational Qualifications and related policies facilitate articulation within the OQSF, and between the OQSF, GFETQSF and HEQSF Extent to which the objectives of the NQF Act and the Skills Development Act are achieved
Learner gain in the sector for Trades and Occupations	Extent to which prioritised qualifications for Trades and Occupations are registered on the OQSF, and are effectively managed and utilised Extent to which the quality assurance system for the implementation of OQSF-registered qualifications is effective and efficient Extent to which qualifying learners are certificated

[83] The NATED 191 Part 2 qualifications comprise the NATED Level 4-6 (N4-N6) programmes which could lead to a National (N) Diploma (learners had to successfully complete 18 months in a workplace placement in order to be awarded this Diploma). The Diploma was regarded as an M + 3 qualification. These qualifications will all be reconfigured into Occupational Qualifications over time. Currently the N4-N6 Finance-related programmes are being reconfigured into an Occupational Qualification: Bookkeeper (Financial Administration Officer) at NQF Level 5.

Enhanced quality in the sector for Trades and Occupations	Extent to which the impact of OQSF qualifications in relation to the long and short-term skills needs of the labour market are assessed and monitored by the QCTO, and the extent to which OQSF qualifications are found to be relevant in these processes Extent to which learner enrolment, throughput, achievement and certification patterns are as desired Extent to which DQPs, AQPs, providers, workplaces and assessment centres perform as desired Employer satisfaction surveys regarding the occupational competencies of qualifying learners

6.3.4.3 Relational work done and planned by the QCTO

The QCTO's quality assurance system is founded on partnerships and working relationships. From the onset it was recognised that in order for the QCTO to succeed in its quality assurance, partnerships of all types were essential. The Development Quality Partners (DQPs), Assessment Quality Partners (AQPs) and Quality Assurance Partners (QAPs) have been central in the QCTO's quality assurance model. The QCTO also works closely with SETAs, the NAMB, Professional Bodies and Skills Development Providers.

It is generally known that the development of occupational qualifications requires engagement with role-players in industries. Industries and their representatives are vital partners for the QCTO. The QCTO works with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) as 'owner' of the public Higher Education, post-school, adult education and occupational qualifications provider system. It is of critical importance to the QCTO that it has a clear understanding of the public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges and the Community Education and Training (CET) Colleges, and the systems in which they operate – both types of institutions being regulated by the DHET.

The QCTO has a strong working relationship with the Swiss-South African Cooperation Initiative (SSACI), and has also worked with the GIZ[84]. SSACI and the GIZ have extensive experience in the public TVET College, and occupational qualifications sectors, respectively.

The QCTO's close work with SAQA has been noted (see Sections 6.3.1.2.2 – 6.3.1.2.3). This relationship continues as the QCTO registers qualifications on the NQF and participates in joint NQF activities. These joint activities include joint work with the other two Quality Councils – Umalusi and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) – especially given that the QCTO's qualifications development process requires that the articulation possibilities of each qualification within the OQSF, and between the OQSF and the other NQF Sub-Frameworks, be explored as the qualification is being developed.

6.3.4.4 Integrating the QCTO voice

The QCTO sets its initial operational date at April 2012 when the first permanent staff members joined the organisation. From this point in time it was important to the QCTO not to stretch itself too thinly: the staff component was small, and its work focus needed to be clearly defined – a principle often in operation in the business arena. Taking such a stance, it was believed, would significantly improve the organisation's

[84] As previously noted, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is a German development agency that has sponsored skills development in the occupational sector in South Africa since the 1990s.

chances for success. The QCTO has deliberately chosen 'clarity of purpose' – the approach also followed by the Task Team created to assess the viability of establishing a South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training (SAIVCET) – refusing to be 'all things to all people'.

The QCTO focuses on the following areas:

- creating an efficient qualifications development process that ensures full industry involvement;
- creating a sustainable and effective quality assurance framework; and
- creating a central certification system for the entire occupational qualifications system.

The decision to focus on these three aspects has been enacted to achieve a single aim, that of the existence of an occupational qualifications system that is viewed as credible by all and sundry – from the demand side (industry and its representatives) to the supply side (learners, parents, training providers, professional bodies and others). The QCTO is of the view that its voice has been heard in these and other sectors. In future impact studies, once initiatives have been implemented over time, this view could be put to the test.

While the QCTO is also of the view that good progress is being made in the three focus areas listed here, there remains the challenge of securing sufficient work placements to accommodate the workplace learning needs of the vast numbers of learners expected and needed to pursue occupational studies.

The QCTO sees the establishment of work-integrated learning as requiring a collective community of practice, and the support of a wide range of entities. There needs to be a concerted effort to establish sufficient work placements and to integrate this type of learning into the implemented curricula for occupational qualifications. How these joint efforts progress will be an indication of the extent to which the QCTO voice is heard, as well as of the extent to which this work has the resources to support it.

7. Meta-Analysis

Chapter 7 draws on Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström 1987, 2001) and the concepts of 'recontextualisation' (Bernstein 1996) and 'relational agency' (Edwards 2014) outlined in Chapter 1, to conduct a meta-analysis of the first-level analyses presented in Chapters 2-6 of this report.

The purposes of this meta-analysis are to:

- make sense in a systematic way, of the overall picture developed as a result of the first-level analyses;
- assess overall progress of the NQF, in terms of its development as a 'grid of qualifications', a 'mechanism for communication, coordination, and collaboration' and an 'activity system';
- show the impact of the NQF, on understandings and developments in the education and training system, over time;
- synthesise the messages spoken by different NQF voices, including the DHET, DBE, SAQA and the Quality Councils;
- analyse expansive learning, and change, over time;
- link the findings of the first-level analyses back to methodological aspects, the Human Resources Development Strategy (RSA 2009a), and the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013); and
- synthesise and relate the findings from the first-level analyses to the two indicators, namely 'systemic integration' and 'beneficiary gain'.

The chapter addresses Question 7 and Question 8 of the NQF Impact Study, namely: What have been the gains in the last 20 years in fulfilling NQF objectives?; Where are the current challenges and areas for improvement? It frames gaps found, as developmental areas for the next period and possible reporting in the next South African NQF impact study.

Chapter 7 has four sections, each with sub-sections. The first section considers the impact of the NQF on understandings and developments in the education and training system, regarding systemic integration, transparency, quality, redress, and learner access, success and progression, over time. It also presents an analysis of the impact of the NQF on communities of practice (CoP) in the system, considering the actors and their roles in the different communities of practice. It goes on to analyse the impact of the NQF on the 'tools' and 'rules' in the system. Links are made to the analytical categories in CHAT (Engeström 1987), showing how these categories informed the analyses throughout. The second section of the chapter highlights systemic contradictions at different moments in time, in relation to NQF objectives; NQF-related communities of practice and NQF-related tools, and how expansive learning took place at those moments and led to systemic change. The third section links the analyses and findings back to the methodology adopted for the study, and the consequent benefits and limitations. Chapter 7 closes with a section that considers the extent to which progress has been made towards targets in the HRD-SA (RSA 2009a) and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013).

7.1 Impact of the NQF on understandings and developments in education and training: 1994-1995, SAQA Act and NQF Act

In this section the following categories in the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) triangle (Engeström 1987, see Section 1.2) are 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)[85].

- **Subjects**: agents who act or, agentive entities: individuals, institutions, or other collectives that act.
- **Objectives**: individual goals or collective outcomes.
- **Mediating tools**: anything used by subjects taking action in a transformation process that mediates the process. Tools can be plans, policies, ideas and other things.
- **Rules**: norms and conventions.
- **Communities of practice**: groups of 'actors' or collectives that share the same purposes and values, and are bound by spoken/ unspoken rules.
- **Divisions of labour**: the allocation of responsibilities within collectives.

Understandings and developments in these categories are compared and contrasted across the three moments in time.

7.1.1 Shifts in understandings of systemic integration, transparency, quality, redress, and learner access, success and progression: Impact of the NQF 1994-1995, SAQA Act and NQF Act

While the NQF objectives of (i) redress, (ii) learner access, success and progression, (iii) systemic integration, (iv) quality, and (v) transparency have remained constant from the inception of the NQF to the present (RSA 1995, 2008c), understandings of these aspects have shifted over time. In this section links are made between these deepened understandings, their impact on communities, tools, rules, roles and developments in the education and training system, and the impact of the NQF.

7.1.1.1 Understandings and developments regarding systemic integration and articulation over time: Impact of the NQF

1994-1995

At the onset of democracy in South Africa the education and training system was deeply divided along demographic lines; knowledge and opportunities for learning and development were distributed differently across the different population groups; there were clear lines of privilege and disadvantage; and different forms of knowledge unfairly carried different official status across the different parts of society. In 1994, as the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) was being developed, the intention was that the Act would achieve the demographic and epistemological integration desired. There was recognition that the idea of integrating education and training was "complex and challenging" (French 2009: 44). There was opposition to the idea of integration, manifest in the failure to integrate the then-Departments of Labour and Education, and "irreconcilable differences" between leaders of academic learning and training, respectively (French 2009: 44).

There were also forces "strengthening the emphasis on integration": those who saw the separation of academic education and vocational training under *apartheid* as having detracted from each and fueled social class structuring, and political forces resisting the dominance of the academy (French 2009: 72; Lugg 2009: 48). The understanding of integration by proponents of the NQF in its early years was "to bring all

[85] The categories are listed for convenience. They are described in more detail in Sections 1.2.3.1-1.2.3.4 of the report.

learning under a single framework of outcomes-based standards and qualifications" (DoE-DoL 2002), with critical voices pointing to the dangers of this approach, that it split knowledge from its disciplinary bases and traditions (Allais 2005). One of the main ways in which the early impact of the NQF showed was in these very visible debates around systemic integration, what this integration meant, and how it was to be achieved.

Under the SAQA Act

Under the SAQA Act these differences persisted. French (2009: 74) identifies the forces of the production sector – business and labour – which supported the responsiveness of learning to the economy, and an education sector only "marginally interested" in these links. This view is echoed in the *Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the NQF* (DoE-DoL 2002), where both the Departments of Education and Labour (DoE and DoL) viewed the power and influence of the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) as being excessive.

Different understandings of what the NQF constituted prevailed (DoE-DoL 2002): some understood it as being the Level Descriptors and approved registered qualifications and unit standards (a grid of qualifications, see Section 1.2.1); others understood it as being all the activities of SAQA, or of SAQA and the range of partners involved in delivering education and training, or as achievement of NQF objectives (DoE-DoL). The *Study Team Report* (DoE-DoL: iii) recommended that:

> *integration of education and training should be affirmed and elaborated. The idea that a Qualifications framework is integrated means that it is a single framework that includes all qualifications, and that academic and vocational qualifications represent a continuum of education and training, not a division between them*

At the same time, there was radical restructuring and *structural* integration in each of the NQF sub-sectors. The 18 education departments, each with differing curricula, were integrated into a single National Department of Education with provincial counterparts, with national curriculum statements for each school subject (see Section 6.1). Public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) was integrated (Sections 6.1 and 6.3), as was public Higher Education and Training (HET) (Section 6.2), through rationalisation of the range of institutions in each sector. In the Trade and Occupational sectors there was a proliferation of bodies responsible for standard setting and quality assurance (DoE-DoL 2002 and Section 6.3 of the report). While there were known barriers in learning pathways that crossed the academic and vocational divide (Cosser 2009; Carrim 2010), the *structurally* integrated systems for all learners within each sector continued to develop across the years under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995 and Sections 6.1-6.3 of the report). There were isolated examples of integration across education and training (SAQA 2010 and Section 4.3.2.2 of the report). Work on *how* this integration could be achieved was not yet widespread.

In short, the NQF impacted on the education and training system under the SAQA Act, in the form of radical structural integration within the spread of sectors making up the system. It also impacted on public thinking and on public understandings of systemic integration, where overlapping views of what the NQF comprised came to exist as: (a) the Level Descriptors and 'grid of qualifications', (b) the activities of integrating body 'SAQA and its partners', and (c) the focus in education and training on systemic integration, transparency, redress, and learner access, success and progression (DoE-DoL 2002). The first ten years of NQF implementation impacted on the views of the Departments of Education and Labour, narrowing the differences between them and widening the gap between the influence of business on the one hand and training on the other, and paving the way for the creation of the *Joint Policy Statement* (DoE-DoL). Lastly, the NQF impacted on academic discourse, where the ideas of, and work relating to, learning pathways and blockages in these pathways emerged (Carrim 2010; Cosser 2009).

Under the NQF Act

Barriers to the integration of education and training under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) were sources of conflict, and as such, of expanded learning and change (Engeström 1987) under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). The development of the *Joint Policy Statement* (DoE-DoL 2007) and subsequent establishment and implementation of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) are examples of this expanded learning and change. Further structural changes, including the establishment of the Departments of Basic Education (DBE), and Higher Education and Training (DHET), the transfer of training and all Post-School Education and Training to the latter, and the determination of the three coordinated NQF Sub-Frameworks (see Section 1.1.2) accompanied changes in understanding.

First, post-2009 there has been acknowledgement of the differentiated forms and contexts of learning, as officially each was given equal weight in the form of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks.

The ideas of 'learning pathways', 'articulation' and 'articulated pathways' were in circulation in 2009 and 2010 (Cosser 2009; SAQA 2010). Post-2009 research and development deepened understanding of the concepts (Section 4.2-4.3). Comparing the shifts of focus in NQF-related research and development showcased at NQF conferences in 2010 and 2013 (SAQA 2010b, 2013b) clearly reflects deepening understanding of articulation and integration. Learning pathways that cross the divide are now understood as officially 'linked up' paths designed at qualification level, in terms of curriculum alignment and credit transfer possibilities, and alternatively, as individual routes taken on the basis of opportunities available and contextual support provided (Lotz-Sisitka and Ramsarup 2014). There is recognition that contextual support can come in the form of career advice and resources as well as the existence of learning opportunities – as shown in research (SAQA 2013b) and national career advice initiatives (Section 5.5). There is recognition that successful articulation or movement along learning pathways is linked to the quality of teaching and learning, and of learning achievements (SAQA 2013b, and Sections 6.1-6.3 of the report). The quality of teaching and learning includes the appropriateness of its *form* for the students concerned in each instance (Abrahams 2014; Jones and Walters 2015; Walters and Daniels 2015; Walters *et al.* 2015). Lastly, there is recognition that contextual support also comes in the form of the availability of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) opportunities (SAQA 2014b, 2015a, 2015b).

In addition to the deepening understanding of systemic integration as involving work on articulation and learning pathways, there is also implicit and explicit acknowledgement that collaboration between NQF role-players is essential. The NQF Act (RSA 2008c: Clauses 5 and 13[a]-[f]) requires SAQA and the Quality Councils to work together to implement the NQF. This understanding is clear in the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c), the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011) and the suite of NQF policies developed by SAQA in collaboration and after consultation with the Quality Councils and stakeholders in the three NQF Sub-Framework contexts (SAQA 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b – see Section 1.1). Umalusi notes how it took the other two Sub-Frameworks into account in the development of the GFETQSF (see Section 6.1). A SAQA-hosted workshop on 'Relational Agency' (Edwards 2014) was well-supported by NQF partners at high levels in authority hierarchies in the system.

Walters' (2015) argument in a recent book review, that locates NQF debates around knowledge within larger 'knowledge wars' (Fenwick 2010) internationally, is useful here. Walters (2015) draws on Muller (2009) and Young (2009), noting that the 'historical trajectories of the knowledge wars' stretch over 'several hundred years'. In South Africa, Allais (2014) and others argue for a knowledge-based approach to curriculum and 'disciplinary specialisation of consciousness' (Walters 2015). Others such as Cooper and Harris (2011) and Cooper *et al.* (2015) point to 'knowledge differentiation' (Walters 2015) and explore how different forms of knowledge can be mediated. Cooper and Harris (2011) found that the extent of disciplinary boundaries (the strengths or weaknesses of boundaries) differ across different disciplines

within the Higher Education context (Walters 2015), with implications for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). While on one side of the debate, the value of everyday knowledge (life experience) is not explicitly valued, in the other approach it is validated and taken into account in learning. As Walters (2015) notes, the latter approach is important for adult learners in particular, and for social justice in a country where many have been 'economically, politically or culturally excluded from access to study and work'. In addition, Walters (2015) and others (Bolton 2005; Morais *et al.* 1992) have emphasized the importance of the teaching-learning process and supporting context for learning. The key point made here is that the NQF and debates around integration are located in wider and centuries-old debates.

The impact of deepening understandings regarding systemic integration on NQF communities of practice, role-players, tools and rules is elaborated in Sections 7.1.2 and 7.1.3.

7.1.1.2 Understandings and developments over time regarding redress: Impact of the NQF

The NQF not only focused public attention on redress in education and training for the first time, it impacted on the way in which redress was understood and implemented. Shifts over time, in understandings of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and related developments, are sketched here.

1994-1995

From the start, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was central in policies and practices to achieve redress of past injustice. As noted in an early publication (COSATU 2000), the purpose of RPL was to ensure that workers gained recognition for knowledge and skills acquired through years of experience in workplaces. This experience was not usually recognised by employers or education institutions. When the NQF was established, attempts began to understand *what, how, when* and *where* RPL processes were to take place.

Under the SAQA Act

Under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), *National RPL Policy* (SAQA 2002) and *RPL Criteria and Guidelines* (SAQA 2004a) were developed under SAQA guidance and with contributions from national and international RPL experts. At the time, the RPL process was understood as being generic: the idea was that this process could be used across the General, Further and Higher Education and Training contexts, as well as in workplaces. The national RPL policy, criteria and guidelines, and sectoral RPL guidelines at the time which recontextualised these national documents for use in their sectors (see for example COSATU 2000, and SETA guidelines for RPL at the time) elaborated this generic process. It was widely thought possible to recognise the informal and non-formal learning of RPL candidates in formal contexts, in a 'seamless' way.

The implementation of RPL commenced around the country in *ad hoc* fashion, but with deep enthusiasm and commitment wherever it found champions: there is evidence that considerable RPL initiatives were accomplished in the first 10 years of the NQF (SAQA 2011a). By 2008, an international study (ILO 2008) confirmed that South Africa was one of eight countries in the world that had 'islands of excellent practice' with respect to RPL. Only five countries were ahead of South Africa in 2008, in that they had elements of national RPL systems. There were no countries at the time with fully-fledged national RPL systems (see Section 3.8.4).

Under the NQF Act

The barriers working against the development of a national RPL system in South Africa again served as sources of expanded learning and change (Engeström 1987), of 'doing differently' post-2009. In 2010 SAQA hosted a national workshop in an attempt to identify and understand these barriers. The context of the NQF Act (2008c) in a sense 'forced' NQF stakeholders to consider the barriers within the contexts of the

three NQF Sub-Frameworks. The barriers – lack of knowledge of effective RPL delivery models, resourcing RPL and quality assurance of RPL – were addressed in the follow-up *National RPL Conference: Building and expanding existing islands of excellent practice* in 2011. The ensuing *RPL Resolution and Working Document* (SAQA 2011b), Ministerial RPL Task Team, revision of national RPL policy, and commencement of large-scale national RPL initiatives (see Section 3.8.4) took cognisance of differences in the RPL processes in different sectors.

SAQA Partnership Research at the time *Towards a maximally inclusive RPL model* (Cooper *et al.* 2015) had already developed a model that embraced the sectoral differentiation of RPL processes. The investigation included case studies across the contexts of the NQF – of undergraduate and postgraduate RPL, RPL in workplaces and RPL in Worker Education – to ensure that the model was applicable across all of these contexts (see Section 3.8.4). The need to *counsel and prepare* RPL candidates for the RPL processes, help candidates to *mediate* the process of using knowledge obtained in one context in a different context (the recontextualisation of knowledge across contexts), and *candidate feedback*, as well as the RPL assessments and moderation previously understood, formed part of the *inclusive* model.

The new *National Policy for the Implementation of Recognition of Prior Learning* (SAQA 2013a) is based on this expanded understanding of RPL, and the specialised pedagogy (Ralphs 2012) and expertise that RPL requires. As a result of this deepened understanding, SAQA published *RPL Success Cases, Volumes 1 and 2* (SAQA 2015a, 2015b), which replace the general toolkits used under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) with detailed and nuanced RPL processes that have led to successful initiatives in particular sectors and sub-sectors. SAQA currently assists any individual or organisation requesting support for the development of organisational RPL policy and implementation – or in the case of individuals, to locate or establish RPL processes – in what are deemed by SAQA to be strategic national RPL initiatives.

Implementing the NQF Act (2008c) impacted not only on drawing the attention of education and training providers across the board to the centrality of RPL and a national RPL system, and ways to resource, implement and quality assure RPL. It also focused national attention on the relationship between learner access, success and throughput patterns on the one hand, and redress on the other.

7.1.1.3 Understandings and developments regarding learner access, success, and progression over time: Impact of the NQF

From the start, the NQF impacted on the general direction taken by the education and skills development system in the democratic South Africa. Physical access to an integrated mainstream education and training system and systemic quality for all learners were priorities from 1994. Over time, as implementation of the new system progressed, understandings of access deepened to focus on the types of knowledge and skills acquired by learners after having accessed institutions of learning, the time taken to obtain these achievements, and redress.

Under the SAQA Act

Regarding access to the mainstream education and training system in general, the focus under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) was initially on enabling all learners in country, regardless of population and gender group categorisation, to gain entry to institutions of learning and other learning opportunities. The numbers of learners accessing the system over time are shown in detail in Chapter 3. Numbers have increased over time, and the proportions of learners from particular population groups within institutions of learning and other learning initiatives, and in the public in general, have generally moved towards being more aligned over time.

After around 10 years of NQF implementation, understandings of access shifted to include learner throughput and success rates and questions such as: how long were learners taking to complete qualifications? Were learners, in fact, completing qualifications? Looking at learner achievements and success levels, what were the redress patterns?

Under the NQF Act

Understandings of access as meaning *physical access,* or *material access* in the case of distance learning, as well as involving learner throughput and success rates, continued under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). Learners' ability to progress through the sub-system in which they are studying and to achieve success, are understood as showing 'deep access', or access to the forms of knowledge and skills they seek to develop. Analyses of student throughput rates in the Council on Higher Education (CHE) publications *Vital Statistics: Public Higher Education* (CHE 2012, 2013, 2014a) are based on this understanding. Patterns of deep access to knowledge and skills in particular sub-sets of the system are worth noting here.

a) Access, 2008-2014, and success patterns in school Grades 1-9, 2012-2014

Complete or almost complete learner enrolment at school Grades 1-3 was noted in Chapter 3, as were the percentages of learners dropping out of school from Grade 4 upwards. Achievements in the Annual National Assessments (ANA) started from a very low base in 2012, but improved across the 2012-2014 period. Development of the Verification Stream, as well as the closing of the gap between the results of learners in the Verification Stream, and the results of learners in the main group of schools, enhanced the credibility of the test results. The low achievement levels of Grade 9 learners, and the gender and social class patterns in all the ANA results, were cause for concern. In short, at this level, there was physical access but weak access to knowledge and skill at the deeper levels, with trends improving slowly over time.

b) Access and success patterns at school Grade 12 level, 2008-2013

The first-level analyses in Chapter 3 show that most of the trends regarding physical access and deeper access and progression, apart from pass rates for particular National Senior Certificate (NSC) subjects, were not in the directions desired:

- **the numbers** of full-time learners registering to write the NSC exams **decreased steadily** across 2008-2013; the numbers of part-time learners increased;
- low percentages **(about half) of learners registered** to write the NSC exams relative to numbers in the corresponding age cohort in the general population;
- reported NSC pass rates for 2008-2013 ranged from 64-78%. However there is on average a 10% drop per year analysed, between those enrolling to write the NSC exams, and those actually writing, and a further 20-30% drop between those writing and passing. Taking these patterns into account, **the 'actual' pass rates for the 2008-2013 years are 58-62%.** Comparing these figures to the original numbers of learners enrolled for Grade 1, around **one-eighth** of the numbers enrolled for Grade 1, passed the NSC exams in the years analysed;
- **proportions of learners writing the NSC Mathematics exams decreased** steadily across the years 2008-2013; proportions of learners writing the NSC Mathematical Literacy exams increased accordingly.
- **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; and
- 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.

c) Access and success patterns at TVET Colleges, 2008-2012

The steep drop in numbers of learners enrolling for the National Certificate: Vocational (NCV) and N programmes, and the increases in pass rates with rising NQF levels, were noted in Chapter 3. These patterns point to increasing physical access but **deep access for relatively small numbers** of learners. However if learners **stay in the system**, their success rates are higher. Importantly, **variation in the pass rates across colleges** was noted, which opens the possibility of spreading good practice.

The **growth in the proportions** of students enrolled at *public* TVET Colleges across 2011 and 2012, and the *overall growth* in the numbers of learners enrolling at TVET Colleges was noted, as was the **lack of readily available published data for this sector**.

d) Access, success, redress and progression in Higher Education, 2005-2012

From Chapter 3, regarding access and redress in HEIs, it is noted that **student numbers increased steadily** between 2005 and 2012. There were more female than male students in this period, and the gaps between **proportions of students from different population groups and the proportions of those population groups in the general population narrowed**. An increase in the numbers of male students is needed to close the **gender gap**. A relatively small increase in the proportion of African students in HEIs, and relatively small decreases in the numbers of Indian and White students, would close the gaps between proportions in the population groups between the student and general populations. Thus it is clear that there has been progress in the desired directions.

For understanding of deep access to knowledge bases, student progression and redress, this picture must be considered together with patterns in student graduation rates.

Student throughputs were lower than desired in the period 2005-2012, but **steadily 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**. While percentages of students graduating for undergraduate qualifications ranged from 20% to 38% (in regulation time)[86] for the 2007 cohort, these percentages increased from 47% to 63% by 2012 ('regulation + 3'). Similarly, while percentages of students graduating in regulation time for postgraduate qualifications ranged from 42% for Honours Degrees to 35% for research Master's Degrees and 16% for coursework Master's Degrees, these rates rose to 73.5%, 51% and 45% respectively by 2012 ('regulation + 3' or 'regulation + 4'). The population group differences were marked at regulation time in each case, but gaps narrowed considerably for some types of qualifications, and were scrambled for others, by 2012.

While access patterns in terms of students entering HEIs have made considerable shifts in the directions desired, **deep access** in terms of accessing knowledge bases, represented by student graduation rates, has made **slower progress but the trends nevertheless move in the directions desired**. Overall graduation rates in regulation time were too low, but improved given limited additional time, and population group patterns too started to scramble given two to three additional years.

It is worth noting that while 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. Further, the percentages of African students graduating via contact modes increased between 2005 and 2012, while percentages of students in other population groups achieving

[86] The amount of time designed for completion of the qualification, for example, three years for 360-credit Diplomas, three years for three-year degrees, four years for four-year degrees, and so on.

success via contact modes decreased slightly across these years.

It is also worth noting that 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.

e) Access, success, redress and progression in the sector for Trades and Occupational qualifications, 2002-2012

The **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, noted in Chapter 3, point to **increased access, redress** and success.

The gaps between percentages of records held by learners in particular population groups in relation to the percentages of those population groups in the general population, were narrower in 2007 than in 2012. Comparing snapshots of 2007 and 2012 shows that population- group-related gaps widened for African, Indian and White learners between these two years: a relatively smaller proportion of African learners achieved occupational qualifications in 2012 than in 2007; relatively bigger proportions of Indian and White learners achieved occupational qualifications in 2012 than in 2007. It is as though **2007 data captured a 'moment of redress'; what lies beneath the post-2007 or patterns is not clear**.

The importance of **including artisan data** 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 OQSF context.

f) Access, success, redress and progression via learnerships and internships, 2004-2012

There was a **general increase in the total numbers of learnerships** completed and recorded on the NLRD between 2004 and 2012, and many individual learners completed **several learnerships** (see Section 3.7.6). Between 2011 and 2012, there was an **increase in the numbers of workers and unemployed** people registering and certificated for learnerships (DHET 2014b). **More unemployed** than working people registered for and were certificated for learnerships in both 2011 and 2012 (see Section 3.8.2 and DHET 2014b).

Although **fewer unemployed than working people registered for and were certificated for Skills Programmes across both years, significant numbers of unemployed people were involved** in these programmes. Between 2011 and 2012 there were **increases in the numbers of unemployed people registering for and being certificated for internships, and certificated for Skills Programmes**.

These patterns suggest that learnerships, internship, and Skills Programmes are important access routes to learning.

g) Access, success, redress and progression in Adult Education and Training (AET), 2011-2012

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 the potential to enhance access to AET (see Section 3.8.1).

A small amount of data is reported in national publications (DHET 2013d, 2014b). In 2011-2012, most adult learners enrolled at public centres, but there is 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 (DHET 2013d, 2014b). The **data were not sufficient** to analyse access and success trends over time.

h) Access, success, redress and progression via the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign, 2008-2013

Numbers of learners enrolling for the Kha Ri Gude programme, which is located at NQF Level 1, **increased** between 2008 and 2013 (see Section 3.8.3). The progamme offers access to education and training. The demographic profile of its learners is 71% female and 99% African.

i) Progression via Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)

For the first time in the country, national Policy for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT) within the NQF (SAQA 2014b) was developed. Prior to the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), CAT practices were *ad hoc* within and between institutions, and based on agreements delineated by the institutions themselves in the absence of national policy[87]. The recently published policy has the potential to enhance learner progression through the system (see Section (3.8.5).

j) Flexible provision and lifelong learning

Understandings around *how* to enable deep access to knowledge and skills to enable physical access, as well as continued learning when learners 'stop in and out' of education and training institutions due to the realities of adult life, have been developed in recent SAQA Partnership Research into *Flexible provision and lifelong learning* (Jones and Walters 2015; SAQA-UWC 2015a, 2015b; Walters and Daniels 2015; Walters *et al.* 2015; Abrahams 2014; and Section 4.3.1.3 in this report).

7.1.1.4 Understandings and developments regarding quality and transparency over time: Impact of the NQF

While there were attempts to ensure the quality of education and training under *apartheid*, there was no single quality assurance system, and quality varied considerably across education and training institutions. The NQF impacted on this state of affairs by integrating not only the system itself, but also the *quality assurance* of the system. But greater still was the impact of the NQF regarding the *transparency* of the system – the extent to which information about the system was made available to the public - especially since this focus had never before existed in the country. This section touches on the shifting understandings of systemic quality and transparency under the SAQA and NQF Acts (RSA 1995, 2008c).

1994-1995

Quality assurance under *apartheid* was more about 'quality control' than quality assurance, and focused on "measuring outputs, *post facto*, based on inspection and sampling" (French 2009: 51). Umalusi's predecessor, the South African Certification Council (SAFCERT), focused mainly on large-scale national exit examinations for the Senior Certificate, National Technical Certificate and other qualifications it quality assured (see Section 6.1.4.1). SAFCERT's processes included the quality assurance of examination 'products' (exam and test papers, marking memoranda), quality assurance of marking and monitoring the administration of the national exams.

Prior to 1994 there was no national quality assurance system for Higher Education. Quality assurance was limited to institutional arrangements and involved the use of external examiners and the accreditation of individual programmes by the Advisory Council for Universities and Technikons (AUT) (see Section 6.2.1.1).

[87] The 'Residency Clause' (DoE 1997) has been and continues to be used widely.

In the Trades and Occupational sector, the Manpower Training Act (RSA 1981) provided for the regulation of 'manpower training' before 1994. Any employer, employee or organised business or labour group could establish a Training Board in a particular sector or sub-sector by creating a constitution in line with this Act (see Section 6.3.1.1.1). Training Boards were responsible for artisan training; Trade Testing was centralised at the Central Organisation for Trade Testing (COTT). The biggest challenge with this system was the legislated unevenness of opportunities available to people from different population groups. Other challenges included the absence of standardisation of curricula and of training fees (see Section 6.3.1.1.2). The SAQA Act impacted on these realities, radically changing them.

Under the SAQA Act

NQFs are associated with standards-based design and quality assurance (French 2009: 50). They have been linked to 'management thinking' where quality outputs are assured through quality inputs and processes, and to competency-based instructional design (Allais 2005, 2014; French 2009: 50-51). The ideas of learning outcomes and assessment standards were adopted for the South African NQF, the idea being to specify the outcomes and assess learners against these. 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 that safeguard "against [this] fragmentation" (French 2009: 51) were put into place in the system in South Africa from the start. These measures included:

- using 'learning outcomes' rather than 'competencies';
- taking the whole qualification and its purpose as the starting point in each instance;
- specifying 'critical' (or core) outcomes, including outcomes that focused on knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, the inclusion of indigenous knowledge, and links to the environment and sustainable development; and
- requiring reference to underlying bodies of knowledge.

The downside to the 'quality assurance and standards' approach was that it involved "added layers of detailed bureaucratic procedures" (French 2009: 52) typical of such systems, and was wordy, involving at times excessive terminology. The benefits were also typical of such systems (French 2009: 52), including providing quality criteria which worthwhile qualifications should have, and which could scaffold development, protecting the public from fraudulent practices and providing transparency.

When Umalusi took over from SAFCERT it continued to quality assure national external assessments for qualifications for which it was responsible, but for the first time, these assessments were *linked to national curricula* for all learners. Umalusi sought to strengthen the newly national curricula through research and benchmarking, establishing a new quality assurance model (see Section 6.1). In addition, Umalusi quality assured the *provision* ('system inputs') of education by accrediting providers under its jurisdiction. Umalusi benchmarked all the curricula of qualifications it oversaw and also quality assured the certification of learners successful in its exams. The scope and nature of this work distinguished Umalusi from SAFCERT. The extensive research conducted by Umalusi, and used as a foundation for its policies and processes and disseminated to the public via workshops that engaged stakeholders in discussion, distinguished Umalusi from its predecessor. Umalusi was an Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) registered by SAQA. Its understanding of quality assurance was holistic, in line with NQF objectives.

The SAQA Act (RSA 1995) and *Education White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of Higher Education* (DoE 1997) laid the foundation for the first national quality assurance in Higher Education (see

Section 6.2.1.1). In line with these developments, and taking account of traditions within the sector, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) established a devolved and decentralised quality assurance model that included:

- a system for accrediting programmes at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs);
- a national review process intended to benchmark South African qualifications internationally; and
- a framework for auditing HEI policies and procedures relating to teaching, research and community engagement, as well as governance and administration.

The integrated system initially developed by SAQA included a Directorate for Standards Setting and Development (DSSD) responsible for developing qualifications and unit standards, including those for the Trades and Occupational sector. The Directorate for Quality Assurance and Assessment accredited the Education and Training Quality Assurers (ETQAs) associated with SETAs (see Section 6.3.1.2.1).

The standard setting and quality assurance arrangements under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) included elements of integration within the GENFET, HE and TO sectors respectively. The arrangements and criteria were made available for public use via documents, advocacy and NQF events, achieving a degree of transparency. The establishment of the NQF Level Descriptors, National Learners' Records Database (NLRD), registration of qualifications on the NQF, and accreditation of providers of education and training added to the transparency of the system (see Sections 1.1.2, 3.1, and Chapter 5).

These sectoral transformations changed the ways in which education and training were managed in what are now the three NQF Sub-Framework contexts, impacting on the institutional landscape of the time as well as on structures and processes within institutions. The changes met with the resistance typically associated with change. Submissions made to the NQF Review Team raised concerns about the impact of the new system (DoE-DoL 2002).

The centralised standard setting process was seen as being too cumbersome and inflexible, and incapable of accommodating the needs of the various NQF sub-sectors (DoE-DoL 2002). The concerns included the overly-large numbers of bodies involved in standard setting and quality assurance, and their capacity and relationships with each other, protracted approval processes, the focus on 'NQF fields' as categories for the classification of learning content, and the lack of guidelines for Higher Education (DoE-DoL 2002).

Under the NQF Act

The inadequacy of the centralised system opened the way for expanded learning and transformation. The move to the devolved and decentred quality assurance model under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) placed standard setting and quality assurance 'under the same roof' for each Quality Council, and recognised the different approaches of each. Each Quality Council is responsible to align its qualifications with the relevant qualifications in the other two Sub-Frameworks, and has begun to do so (see Section 6.1). These processes, together with SAQA registration of the Quality Councils' qualifications on the NQF, have ensured the benchmarking of the qualifications for quality and the inclusion of RPL, CAT and articulation possibilities – which aligns quality with values expressed in the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) and thereby with the Constitution of the country – regarding the goals of redress, and learner access, success and progression in education, training, development and work.

The transparency features of the NQF, its Level Descriptors and National Learners' Records Database, have been strengthened by greater collaboration between SAQA and the Quality Councils than was the case under the SAQA Act, as evidenced by reporting against the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011) and *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c; see Sections 1.1 and 3.1). The development by SAQA, after

consultation with the Quality Councils, of policies for registering qualifications, Professional Bodies and professional designations, and for assessment, RPL and CAT; the establishment of Verification Services and 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, have all served to enhance transparency in the system.

Despite the impact of the NQF on the system in these ways however, there are still 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 the remaining contradictions that have become potential sources for the expanded learning and changes needed to further enhance systemic quality, and thereby learner access, success and progression.

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

Looking at the shifts over time in the understandings of NQF objectives – redress, learner access, success and progression, and systemic integration, quality and transparency – shows deepening awareness of these elements, and changes to match 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.

The existence of the SAQA and NQF Acts and related tools clearly impacted on the education and training system by focusing attention, resources and reporting on the objectives. Where there are tools for recording the demographic categorisations of learners, and learners' access and success rates, shifts in actual redress patterns can be seen and, regarding population group patterns, are in the directions desired. As a demographic, female learners are in the ascendancy throughout the system. In terms of quality, international benchmarking showed some successes. Locally, instances of growth and challenges were found to exist side by side.

Pockets of research and development focusing on different ways in which learning pathways can be understood and implemented, curricula can be aligned and provision of education and training can be flexible reveal awareness of the fact that integration and articulation are complex differentiated and possible. Related tools such as Ministerial Guidelines have shaped the kinds of research and development that SAQA and the Quality Councils required. Among other tools, research partnership approaches were used to spread research and findings that focus on understanding and implementing NQF objectives.

NQF research conferences, that have attracted steadily increasing numbers of delegates over the years, and the awarding of credit towards professional development for attending these events, have proven to be tools for sharing and deepening understanding of NQF objectives. Where areas of difficulty have been identified, research and development have proliferated. Comparing the programmes, presentations and outputs of the NQF conferences of 2010 and 2013 for example, or the RPL conferences of 2010, 2011 and 2014 (see Section 4.3.2), shows the development over time of understanding around the NQF, and learning from attempting its implementation. In the case of the NQF conferences, academics in public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country were unsure as to what counted as NQF research in 2010, and did not respond to the conference calls. 'Advocacy over the phone' commenced as the organisers explained what was needed. By 2013, after sending three invitations in routine ways, the numbers attending this event had more than doubled and exceeded typical education research conference attendances in the country. The researchers shared findings without which articulation could not take place.

SAQA's recently-commissioned study into the 'awareness, understanding and valuing of the NQF' (Quest 2014, see Section 5.6) showed that, of the 40 NQF policy makers, 370 NQF policy implementers, and 463 learners interviewed, all policy-makers and implementers were aware of the NQF, as were 90% of the learners. While 10% of the learners interviewed were not familiar with the NQF, respectively 67% and 61% of the policy makers and implementers had a deep understanding of it. The presenting academics at the NQF conferences may be ahead of the public in the way their work focuses on *how* understandings of NQF policy can be deepened and implemented, but public awareness has grown with every public event and institutional foregrounding of elements of the NQF. These are some of the impacts of the NQF Act on the understanding of NQF objectives and related developments in education and training.

The impact of the NQF on communities of practice, actors, and tools used in the education and training system, over time, is elaborated in Sections 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 below.

7.1.2 Understandings and developments regarding education and training communities of practice and roles over time: Impact of the NQF

Up to 1994-1995

The unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa in 1990[88] opened the way for stakeholder negotiation, including negotiation around education and training (Lugg 2009: 45). Stakeholder organisations developed in the liberation movement became key role-players in the formulation of education and training policy (Lugg 2009: 45). The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), South Africa's largest trade union federation, "initiated a process of policy development for the education and training of workers" (French 2009: 15). Acknowledging that the high-skills approach needed for the country to rejoin the global economy would exclude the majority of workers who had been denied education under *apartheid*, there were two formative pressures for COSATU (French 2009: 15). First, the private sector had to engage in skills development, and secondly, COSATU could not engage in skills development without also taking *general* education into account (French 2009: 15). The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) – a COSATU affiliate – advocated an '*integrated system'* of education and training with equivalence between learning pathways (Lugg 2009: 45). Business leadership had a stake in skills development. COSATU was suspicious of business but a relationship with minor discords was forged through negotiations, and COSATU 'considered business inputs on merit' (French 2009: 16).

Another discourse was created by the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI) in the Human Resource Development Sector, that of a '*single system'* (Lugg 2009). The 'single system' excluded the 'integrated system' elements of "negotiated institutional reform, a corporatist state and the integration of education and training through a framework of qualifications", proposing instead an "interventionist post-*apartheid* state that would focus on the *delivery* of education and training and prioritise resources to the most marginalised" (Lugg 2009: 46).

By 1992, as negotiations progressed, the idea of an 'integrated system' was linked to the idea of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Policy proposals for a 'single system' were strengthened within the ANC's Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD). Here the system was established by NEPI, an "education alliance maintained by research groups on discrete sectors of education and training"; a working group on the NQF was added (Lugg 2009: 47). While the 'integrated system' sought to lessen differences between education and training in the NQF, the 'single system' sought to position the NQF as a discrete third site, in addition to education and training (Lugg 2009: 47).

After the first democratic elections in 1994, an Inter-Ministerial Working Group was set up to develop a

[88] The ANC led the liberation struggle for democracy in South Africa.

way forward for the NQF. 'Sufficient consensus' and a commitment to reconstruction and development emerged (Lugg 2009: 48) and the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) was promulgated. The communities of practice and role-players shaping education and training debates between 1990 and 1995 however influenced NQF development as it unfolded over the next 20 years.

Under the SAQA Act

Under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), conflicts between the education and training sectors resurfaced. The Department of Labour (DoL), responsible for skills development to meet the needs of the economy, established the 25 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) for the economic sectors. SAQA accredited the SETAs to quality assure training (DoL 1997; Lugg 2009). SAQA instituted the eight-level NQF and two types of structures – National Standards Bodies (NSBs) for each of the 12 learning fields identified, and Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies (ETQAs) for (a) learning in the social sector, (b) learning in the economic sector, and (c) education and training (the latter becoming known as 'band ETQAs') (Lugg 2009: 50; see also Chapter 6). The Department of Education oversaw the 'supply-side' provision (Lugg 2009: 50). The Higher Education Act (RSA 1997) provided for the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) as a permanent sub-committee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE). The GENFETQA Act (RSA 2001a) provided for quality assurance in General and Further Education and Training under Umalusi. There were three dominant entities in a 'single system': the DoL, SAQA and the DoE. It is commonly understood that 'turf wars' raged around standards and quality assurance between these role-players.

It has been argued that the 'hegemony' of the NQF was strongest where there was integration between 'standards' and provider institutions (Lugg 2009: 51), such as within most of the ETQAs. But in "sectors where programmes remained closely tied to public providers – [such as in] the TVET and HE sectors – standards and qualifications were less easily articulated by SAQA" (Lugg 2009: 51). It is unfortunate that these beginnings of systemic integration were perceived as being hegemonic, but the disciplinary approach in Higher Education, strong traditions of curriculum-based qualifications in General and Further Education, and communities of practice in these sectors had to be respected before integration could be considered. At the time the CHE tried to "coordinate all ETQAs operating in the Higher Education sector though Memoranda of Understanding (MoU)" but SETA-ETQAs "contested the meanings and practices of 'quality assurance'" and "disrupted the 'single system' linking the sector to the interventionist state" (Lugg 2009: 52). Under the GENFETQA Act (RSA 2001a), Umalusi was regarded as being accredited by SAQA. So SAQA could not de-accredit Umalusi, and "Umalusi refused to sign MoU with SETAs to accredit the provision of unit standards offered by private providers" (Lugg 2009: 52) on the grounds that only they (Umalusi) quality assured qualifications with curricula.

The conflict was no doubt exacerbated by the location of skills development under the DoL, which was in the economics cluster aligned with the neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution macro-economic policy (GEAR) (RSA 1996d), while education was linked to the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (RSA 1994b) ideals[89].

The NQF review (DoE-DoL 2002) revealed understandings regarding NQF implementing organisations at the time. The DoE held SAQA responsible for problems relating to NQF implementation: "[The DoE] experienced SAQA as subverting public education through [the] proliferation of standards in specific job-related competencies, and lack of progress on qualifications for general formative education" (DoE-DoL

[89] The RDP focused on social development.

2002, in Lugg 2009: 53). In fact, the necessary relational work was lacking between SAQA and Umalusi on the one hand, and SAQA and the CHE on the other, especially in the face of the strong historical bases of both of these ETQAs. The DoL held the CHE responsible for NQF implementation problems; the CHE was seen as "subverting the NQF through its refusal to accept the SETAs as part of the institutional landscape within the Higher Education sector…. [and in doing so, was seen to be] the enemy of skills development" (Lugg 2009: 53). The DoE recommended that SAQA be directly under its control. The DoL recommended that SAQA should report to both ministers and integrate education and training (DoE-DoL 2002). The stalemate lasted until the Joint Policy Statement (DoE-DoL 2007) was released four years later.

The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) (RSA 2005a), Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) (RSA 2005b), National Development Plan (NDP) (RSA 2011b) and New Growth Path (NGP) (RSA 2011c) all prioritised the enhancement of an integrated education and training system for poverty alleviation, social development and economic growth. This positioning, as well as the system conflicts outlined, provided the impetus for expanded systemic learning and transformation.

Under the NQF Act

The NQF Act (RSA 2008c) provides for three coordinated NQF Sub-Frameworks, each overseen by a Quality Council, and SAQA as the coordinating body. Each of these organisations shares involvement in the NQF, plays a distinct role, and is legally bound to work with the others. The Minister must "encourage collaboration among the Quality Councils and between the Quality Councils and SAQA" (RSA 2008c: Clause 8[3(c)]).

Upon promulgation, the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) had an immediate impact on the roles of the education and training system entities it covers. SAQA took up its coordination role, playing leadership roles in the processes that resulted in the *NQF Implementation Framework* (2011) and the *System of Collaboration* (2011c). SAQA also commenced work to "coordinate the Sub-Frameworks" (RSA 2008c: Clause 11[c]) that later led to their determination. The NQF entities Umalusi and the CHE remained with revised Acts (RSA 2008a, 2008b). The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations was established in 2010. Internally, these organisations developed units for integrating standard setting and quality assurance for the first time. In related developments in 2010, the national Department of Education split into the Departments of Basic Education (DBE) and Higher Education and Training (DHET), in order to integrate education and training. All Post-School Education and Training – including skills development, Higher Education, Adult Education and Worker Education – were moved from the DoL to the DHET. This transformation was the material result of moves to the 'integrated system' visualised in the run-up to 1994 by COSATU, but with a key difference: the presence of the interventionist state desired by the Human Resource Development sector represented by the National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI).

The main NQF organisations are working together, as evidenced by reporting against the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) developed jointly by the NQF partners to guide mutual relations between SAQA and the three Quality Councils, and the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011) (see Sections 1.1.2.5 – 1.1.2.6).

The six integrating structures required in the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) achieved four of the implementation priorities identified for the 2011-2015 period in the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011: Clauses 6-28). The NQF Forum and Inter-Departmental NQF Steering Committee met as needed, to accomplish the transition from the SAQA Act to the NQF Act, and determine the NQF Sub-Frameworks. After extensive Quality Council and collaborative work (see Chapter 6), the Minister of Higher Education and Training (MHET) determined the three NQF Sub-Frameworks. The Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of SAQA and the Quality Councils have participated in each other's Board and Council meetings

since 2010. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Committee comprising the CEOs of SAQA and the Quality Councils met several times annually after 2010, to build common understanding around their approaches to qualifications development and registration on the NQF, standard setting and quality assurance, the NQF Level Descriptors, policies for Professional Bodies, assessment, RPL and CAT, Worker Education, the NQF Impact Study, and other NQF-related matters.

Of the two remaining priorities in the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011: Clauses 23 and 28), one was more complex than at first understood, but both commenced and are under way. One of these priorities is the 'articulation apparatus' of the NQF, and its information and communication tools. The requirements for articulation were less specified in the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011) than were the other NQF priorities. *How* the requirements were to be achieved 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 2011: Clause 23), was difficult to perceive. Clarity regarding what these items meant, and their implementation, needed to be developed.

It has been noted that initial understandings of articulation have deepened since the promulgation of the NQF Act. It is now understood that the establishment of learning pathways takes different forms, all of which can be supported by an interventionist state (see Section 7.1.1.1). 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 that requires 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 (see Section 4.3.1.3).

NQF elements without which articulation would not be possible, or at least more difficult than it is at present, were developed between 2010 and 2014. In addition to the determination of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks, national career advice services were established, and the suite of NQF policies required by the NQF Act were developed.

Developments under way relating to the second priority – the further development of the Quality Council databases in ways compatible with the NLRD – had made considerable progress (see Section 3.1) by the time data collection for the present study was completed. Some data gaps remained but initiatives were in place to address each of these gaps.

In all, the impact of the NQF Act (RSA 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. Wherever 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 developments. The impact of the NQF itself is such that the education and training system is currently populated with the institutions that can accomplish systemic integration, transparency quality, and learner access, success and progression, and have come a long way in doing so. These institutions are well-positioned to address the systemic challenges that remain.

7.1.3 Shifts in education and training tools and rules over time: Impact of the NQF

The NQF impacts on the 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.

In this section shifts in the form of these tools over time, and in the 'rules' carried through the tools, are considered for the periods under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) and NQF Act (RSA 2008c).

Under the SAQA Act

The **national legislation** at the time of the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) included the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (RSA 2001a), the Higher Education Act (RSA 1997), and the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b), which laid out the quality assurance responsibilities for the General and Further Education and Training, Higher Education, and Trades and Occupations sectors respectively. Standard setting at the time was located under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), in the form of 'SAQA formulation and publication of policies 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 deepening of the divisions between the education and training sectors. The skills development sector worked readily with SAQA, transforming many of its qualifications into 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. Actions taken by the CHE and Umalusi at that time have already been elaborated (see section 7.1.2).

The Education and Training Quality Assurance Regulations (RSA 1998a) and Regulations for National Standards Bodies (NSBs) (RSA 1998aa), developed in line with the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) as well as related SAQA policies for assessment (SAQA 2000) and RPL (SAQA 2002, 2004a) were generic documents providing one-size-fits-all approaches and tools for use within all the NQF sub-sectors. The latter policies were developed within SAQA, incorporating specialist advice where applicable. They were implemented in some sub-sectors (see also Section 7.1.1.2), but did not work in others where they were not adopted. These difficulties led to expanded learning and transformation under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c).

The **national NQF structures** and sub-structures – the DoE, DoL, SAQA, ETQAs of different types, including SETA-ETQAs and the band ETQAs of the CHE and Umalusi – and the **curricula** adopted in teaching and learning processes (or whatever played the role of curriculum) also comprise tools for implementing the NQF. The entities and their roles are discussed in Section 7.1.2.

The **curriculum** is an element of the education and training system, on which implementation of the South African NQF has had a radical impact. An example of this impact is 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. Further revisions were noted to improve the national curriculum statements by increasing content specification and curriculum sequencing and pacing over time (see Section 6.1). Under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), curricula became both more transparent than their pre-1994 equivalents, in the sense that they contained greater specification of content and of teaching and processes, and assessment, and more fair, as the intended national curriculum statements formed the basis of teaching and learning *across the country*. In practice, differences in curriculum delivery across schools meant that different groups of learners still experienced different curricula.

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 (see Section 3.6), and the need for learner support was realised. Although the Higher Education Institution (HEI) mergers in the early 2000s (see Sections 6.2 and 7.1.1.1) drastically changed the Higher Education landscape, differences between programmes offered across different HEIs remained.

Regarding learning content in the Trades and Occupational sector, the proliferation of unit standards-based qualifications has been noted (see Section 6.3), as have difficulties relating to the 'wordiness' of learning outcomes and assessment standards (French 2009: 67), and the separation of 'chunks of learning' from the knowledge traditions from which unit standards originate (Allais 2005, 2014). Also noted on the other hand, were the increasing numbers of learners accessing these qualifications over time, including unemployed people, and employers for their staff (see Sections 3.7 and 3.8.2). 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 in Sections 3.5-3.7 and summarised in Section 7.1.1.3. 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 created for 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

The **national legislation** to effect the NQF through SAQA and the three Quality Councils was passed in 2008 and promulgated in 2009 (RSA 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d). In accordance with the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), SAQA developed NQF Level Descriptors (SAQA 2012a), and policies for registering qualifications, Professional Bodies and professional designations, and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), assessment and Credit Accumulations and Transfer (CAT) (SAQA 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a and 2014b respectively) – as well as the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) and the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011). Importantly, the developmental processes for these policies and their content differed significantly from those of their counterparts under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995).

The development of these policies under the NQF Act was preceded by extensive research, and the

experience of the respective areas of development gained while implementing the SAQA Act (RSA 1995). Representative Reference Groups were set up through democratic processes for each of the policy processes under the NQF Act. The groups comprised around 25 individuals in total, from each of the Sub-Framework contexts, selected for their expertise and experience. Care was taken to include representatives of each of the *sub-sectors* of the Sub-Frameworks, including public and private providers of education and training across the NQF levels, and the Professional Body, SETA, employer and organised labour contexts. Where applicable, the Quality Councils were consulted regarding their preferences for individuals representing their sectors.

SAQA opened each of the policy development processes by gathering the representatives together and listening to what each person expected from the policy. These inputs were fed into first drafts, and sought again, and used, in subsequent drafts. Typically, the whole Reference Group met physically as a group at least four times between which written versions of the policies were circulated to the groups and critiqued and improved by them. Inevitably, divergent views – and sometime diametrically opposed views – were expressed at the first meeting, and were mediated through (sometimes heated) discussion. Each contestation presented an opportunity for expanded learning and new ways of thinking and doing, and was expressed and treated as such. Importantly, these views were aired around the same table and engaged collectively. Wider public comments were sought as the policy processes developed. Additional consultation within sectors not sufficiently represented in the Reference Groups was also incorporated. The policy writers, assisted by the Reference Groups, learned to express clauses at levels of generality that had the effect of including and 'speaking to' all the sub-sectors represented, and enabling differentiated implementation across the three Sub-Framework contexts, while still providing clear guidance for policy implementers. The Councils of the Quality Councils approved each of the SAQA-led national policies before they were approved by the SAQA Board.

Once each of the national policies had been published, the Quality Councils developed their Sub-Framework counterparts. In this 'recontextualising' of the national policies all three Quality Councils, in at least some instances, consulted with SAQA *on their own initiative.* Among recent examples of these dialogues were the CHE request for all SAQA's RPL-related research, Umalusi and QCTO requests for SAQA to provide inputs for their Sub-Framework RPL policies, and joint SAQA-QCTO work on the QCTO CAT and Assessment policies. The space for this joint work was created by the NQF Act (RSA 2008c); it is a direct effect of NQF values and requirements.

The **NQF structures** and sub-structures under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) – the DoE, DoL, SAQA, 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 Quality Councils – are tools that make possible joint differentiated and integrated work. While each of the structures is enabled through its separateness to 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 policy development forums are examples of tools for joint work (see Section 7.1.2).

The **curriculum** change experienced under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) continued to a lesser extent under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). In some sectors the pace of transformation slowed as the curricula reached the forms desired. For example, it was argued that the extent of change in successive waves of curriculum reform in Basic Education has decreased over time (see Section 6.1.9.2.6). The National Curriculum Statements (NCS) with their learning outcomes, fairly comprehensively specified content and learner-

centred approaches, were replaced with the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) in 2010. While the CAPS curricula involved, for many school subjects, a 're-packaging of content', they also introduced a new theoretical approach in the form of a teacher-centred, syllabus-type curriculum (Grussendorff, Booyse and Burroughs 2014). Differences in curriculum delivery across schools persist. Enhancing the quality of curriculum delivery is a powerful lever for further enhancing redress and deep access to knowledge and skills, for learners.

Higher Education curricula under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) continued to need 'scaffolding' in the form of additional learner support. While the considerable differences between programmes offered across Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) remained, it is expected that the 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.

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) were *curriculum-based.* These qualifications are made up of knowledge standards, practical standards and workplace experience standards, each of which has a curriculum (see Section 6.3.1.5). This approach addresses the 'dislocation of learning' experienced regarding some of the SAQA Act unit standards, and importantly, enhances articulation possibilities 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 evidenced under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) continued under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). A number of post-2009 curriculum-related initiatives represent steps towards understanding and implementing credit transfer and other articulation possibilities. Strengthening the curricula of qualifications in each of the Sub-Framework contexts was one such area of work. Another was research undertaken 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). A third curriculum-related initiative saw 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, in SAQA 2013b) was a fourth. Mapping learning pathways for selected scarce skills (Lotz-Sisitka and Ramsarup 2014) was a fifth. Mapping qualifications matrices for the purposes of strategic national RPL initiatives was a sixth (SAQA-CIPSET 2015; SAQA-SUWI 2015).

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[90]. As the country moves into an enhanced implementation phase, collaborative relationships need to be developed.

To kick-start this deepening collaboration, SAQA hosted workshops on *relational agency* and *relational expertise* for staff from key NQF organisations in 2014. The aims of the workshops were (a) to bring to the

[90] 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).

fore 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.

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. SAQA has included a plenary panel of Quality Council speakers at its national events when appropriate. Quality Councils have invited SAQA staff to present keynote addresses or other items at their stakeholder events, and to critique documents from time to time. The **Kha Ri Gude** Mass Literacy Campaign (see Section 3.8.3) has enhanced inclusivity over time. Increasing numbers of people have used the national **Verification Services** and **Foreign Qualifications Evaluation and Advisory Services** (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2) over time, to enable their progression between education, training and work. The **National Learners' Records Database (NLRD)** has expanded steadily: data gaps and initiatives to address these gaps (see Section 3.1) show a clear shift towards completion of the NQF where updates consist of new information.

Each of the tools noted here, and others, carry the 'rules' for operating in the education and training system. Importantly, the NQF has impacted on this system by requiring, and opening the spaces for, development 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 and unknown learning pathways or gaps in learning pathways – research, development and expanded learning have taken place. These processes need to continue in relation to the contradictions that remain.

7.2 Systemic contradictions, expansive learning and transformation: Impact of the NQF

In Section 7.1 the CHAT *categories* (Engeström 1987, see Section 1) 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.

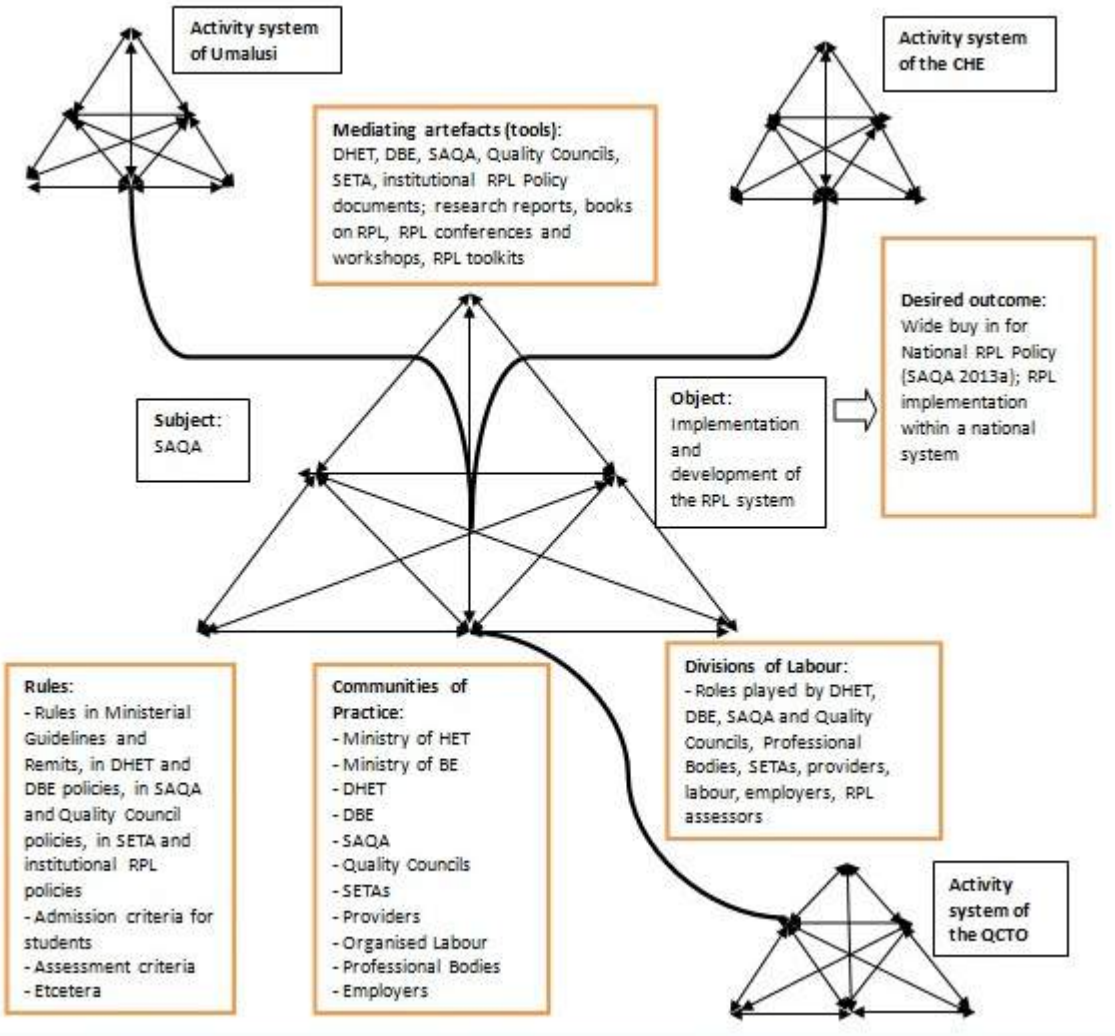
In Section 7.2, some of Engeström's (2001: 136-137) CHAT *principles* (see Section 1) are used for a more detailed analysis of one instance of transformation, to deepen understanding of the changes achieved. His (*ibid.*) ideas of **interacting activity systems**, **collectives**, **multi-voicing**, **historicity**, **contradictions**, and **expansive learning and transformation** are used in this detailed analysis. The example of the development of the *revised* Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy (SAQA 2013b) is used, given its centrality in the

system, and its successful link to the national implementation of RPL (this initiative itself is described in detail in Sections 3 and 7).

7.2.1 Achieving change with interacting activity systems

The inter-linked activity systems involved in the revision of national RPL policy in 2013 are analysed here. Populating the diagrams (first introduced in Section 1) with information from the revised RPL policy development process that was actually followed in 2013 shows how each part of the system relates to the other parts, and plays key roles in the outcome. Importantly, the national RPL policy was revised because it presented a **contradiction** in the education and training system: its purpose was to enable system-wide understanding and implementation of RPL; it prevented this outcome because it provided for a single RPL model which did not suit all the parts of the system in the context of implementation.

Figure 96: Networking of different activity systems in the development of a national RPL system in South Africa



(based on Engeström 2001, as adapted by Olvitt 2010 – see Section 1)

The large triangle in Figure 96 represents SAQA as an organisation and activity system. The three smaller triangles interacting with the large triangle represent respectively, the activity systems of (1) the Quality

Councils, (2) the workplace and (3) RPL providers. The activity represented here is the revision of the national RPL policy by SAQA's RPL Reference Group led by SAQA. The desired **outcome** of the activity, from a SAQA point of view, was a new national RPL policy that had widespread credibility in the system, and would lead to nation-wide implementation of RPL. The desired **outcomes** from the points of view of the other three interacting activity systems were that the national RPL policy would make possible, enable and provide clear guidance for their sectoral RPL policies and implementation. The joint view of the outcome was expanded through the participation of **several interacting activity systems.**

The '**subjects**' in Figure 96 respectively signify SAQA representatives (in the large triangle), and representatives of the Quality Councils, employers and RPL providers in the smaller triangles. Engeström's (2001) idea of **'collectives'** is important here, as each representative was expected to contribute the ideas of the collectives (organisations, **communities of practice**) to which they belonged. This work was achieved by representatives voicing the ideas of their collectives in discussion, taking discussion back to their collectives and integrating ideas from the collectives in written versions of the policy. This inclusion of multiple voices or **multi-voicing** refers to the inclusion of the different viewpoints, understandings, traditions (**historicity**), approaches and experiences represented by the different activity systems (through their 'subjects' or actors) in the policy development process.

The **mediating artefacts or tools** in this process comprised the following:

- national RPL policy developed under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), which being a one-size-fits-all policy, led to the development of RPL in some sectors and not others;
- the national RPL workshop in 2010 and national RPL conference in 2011, at which barriers to the development of a national RPL system were respectively identified and addressed;
- the Working Document on RPL (SAQA 2011), a map for the way forward endorsed at the national RPL conference in 2011;
- RPL-related research and publications;
- known sector-specific RPL success cases; and
- RPL Reference Group work.

These tools were drawn upon and contributed to development of the revised policy. The pool of tools available was expanded through the interaction of different activity systems.

There were **divisions of labour** in the policy development process. SAQA, through the NQF Act (RSA 2008c: Clause 13(h)[iii]) was mandated to develop, after consultation with the Quality Councils, policy for assessment, RPL and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT). SAQA's role was to lead the policy development process, to enable and facilitate the participation of the range of NQF collectives, and to integrate the differently-voiced inputs into the new policy. In order to ***lead with an appropriate voice*** to accomplish this work, the SAQA representatives had to have comprehensive prior knowledge of the available RPL research and practice, barriers to RPL and models suggested by the spread of NQF communities, and understanding of the range of participating NQF communities, with their different histories and approaches. The roles of the representatives of the three other interacting activity systems were to draw on their traditions, approaches, challenges, success cases, understandings and motives, and to (a) contribute these in discussion, (b) report back to their communities for additional inputs, and (c) contribute to written versions of the policy.

Rules to be taken into account in the development of the revised RPL policy were found in the *RPL Working Document* (SAQA 2011b), in the priorities identified at the national RPL conference in 2011, in successful RPL practices, in RPL-related research, and in the entrance requirements for study relating to qualifications identified by sectoral representatives in the RPL Reference Group.

The **outcome of the activity** – the development of the new RPL policy in 2013 – was broadened and enriched through the activity. At the start of the activity (the policy revision process), the outdated policy, as revised, was seen as the outcome. Through the activity however, which included SAQA leadership and inputs, and the authentic inputs from the representatives, the new policy was developed with different sub-sections, different areas of elaboration, different high-level guidelines to enable differentiated RPL processes and purposes, and different specifications to ensure that key elements of RPL were included in implementation. One of the areas elaborated in the new policy dealt with the roles and responsibilities of the different RPL role-players. Another was the expanded definitions of different purposes for, and types of, RPL. The 'how to' section was however framed more generally, to accommodate the many successful practices taking place in reality.

The success of the new policy depended on:

- clear conception of the outcome required, and transparent sharing of this outcome with the group of interacting activity systems;
- subjects/ actors deeply embedded in their communities of practice (CoP), and with the correct dispositions so that they deeply understood what was at stake in their CoP, and were able and willing to contribute meaningfully in the policy development process from these points of view;
- the existence of, and deep engagement with, the full range of mediating tools needed;
- understanding of the rules embedded within mediating tools and communities of practice;
- the involvement of the range of relevant communities of practice in the NQF in the policy development process;
- clear divisions of labour, with subjects/ actors knowing, understanding and fully fulfilling their roles; and
- allowing the deepening and broadening of the outcome, based on the functioning of all the different parts of the activity.

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 was successful**. It was also **useful for planning future activities**, and for ensuring that the elements necessary for success, were present.

An example analysis has been done, focusing 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 in Section 7.1 for which development was accomplished under the SAQA and NQF Acts.

7.2.2 Embracing contradictions towards transformation

It is worth analysing the *expansive learning* (see Section 1 for explanation) and transformation experienced in the development of the new RPL policy in 2013, as it can assist the change processes required for NQF development. Following Engeström (2001: 133), four questions need to be addressed when seeking to understand expansive learning for transformation, 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?

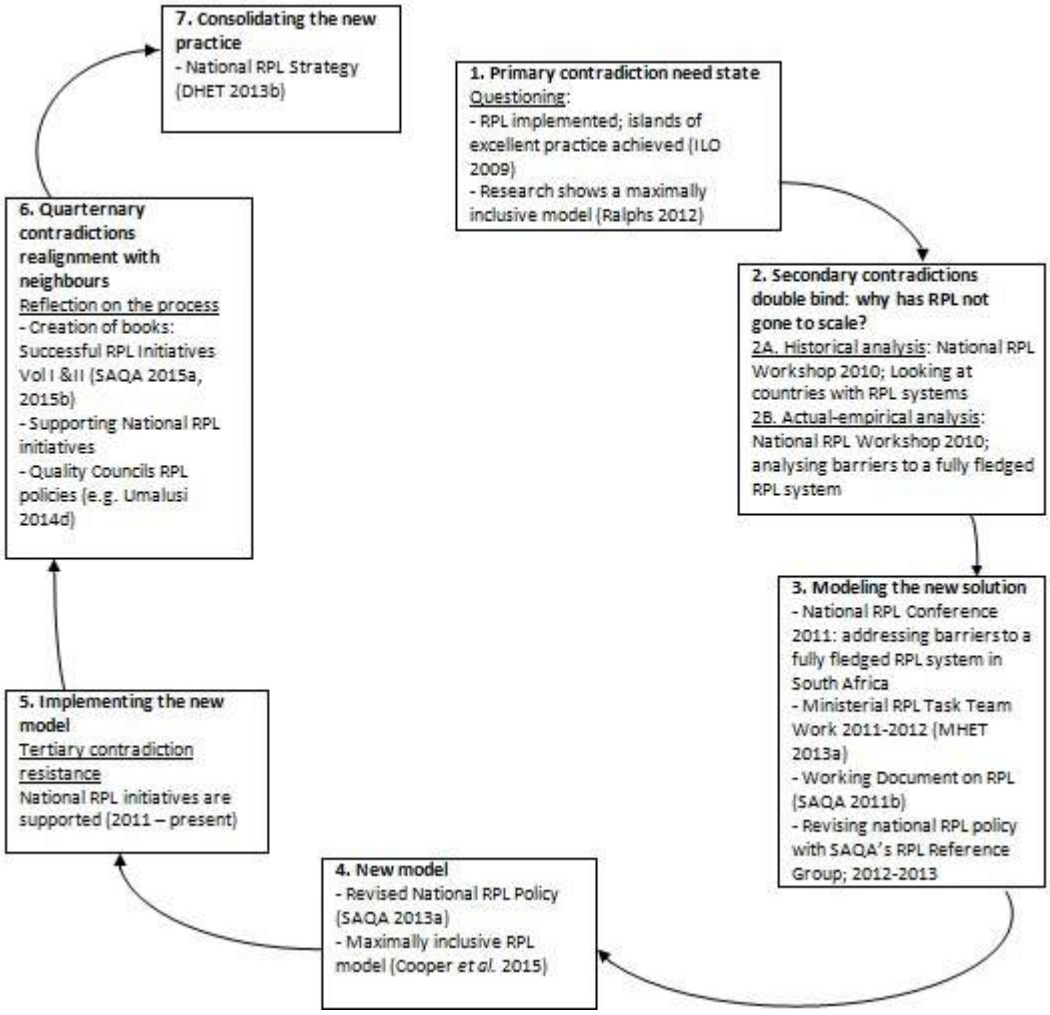
These four questions, when tabulated against the CHAT principles, can be used to create a matrix useful for analysing learning in times of change (Engeström 2001, see Sections 1). The learning achieved in the development of the revised RPL policy in 2013 is summarised in Table 80 below.

Table 80: Matrix for the analysis of one instance of *expansive learning* (Engeström 2001) and change: Example of Revised National RPL Policy (SAQA 2013)

Learning/ Change	Activity system category	Multi-voicedness	Historicity	Contradiction	Expanded learning/ Change
Who is learning?	**SAQA** as an organisation	MHET/DHET voices present through the NQF Act, Ministerial Guidelines, participation in the workshops, conferences and Reference Group. SAQA voice present through leadership of the policy process and policy writer. Quality Council voices present through participation in the workshops, conferences, Reference Group and formal approval processes. Stakeholder voices present through participation in the workshops, conferences, Reference Group and Public Comment processes.	The following historical realities were taken into account: Previous SAQA policy development and implementation experiences. Quality Council experiences of, for example, RPL, and national RPL policy development and implementation. Stakeholder experiences of, for example, RPL and national RPL policy. Research and development relating to, for example, RPL, including RPL conferences, workshops and publications.	Generic one-size-fits-all policy appears to be fair and clear, and based on world standards gleaned through research. But the model on which the policy was based, was not appropriate for use in all contexts (e.g. RPL).	1. NQF policy development under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) worked partially, leading to islands of success; **LESSON/ CHANGE: NQF policies need to be phrased sufficiently generally to enable (a) implementation in differentiated contexts and (b) still provide clear guidelines for implementation** 2. Consultation/ collaboration/coordination led to enhanced understanding; **LESSON/ CHANGE: NQF policy development must (a) be based on *research and experience*, (b) commence with wide *knowledge-sharing* e.g. via workshops/conferences, (c) make use of *representative* Reference Groups that include *specialist experts* from the DHET, DBE, Quality Councils and the full range of NQF stakeholders, and (d*) incorporate the range* of representative expert views.**
Why the learning?	SAQA must oversee and coordinate the implementation and further development of the NQF in an effective way.				
What was learned?	How to develop integrated differentiated NQF policies for effective implementation in the context of the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) (e.g. RPL policy).				
How was learning achieved?	1. NQF policy development under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) worked partially, leading to islands of success rather than success across the board (e.g. RPL). 2. Implementing NQF Act (RSA 2008c) requirements of consultation, collaboration and coordination led to enhanced understanding (barriers identified in a national workshop [2010], addressed in a national conference [2011], representative Reference Group consulted [2011-2012]). 3. Diverse inputs (voices) incorporated.				

Figure 97 shows the stages of expansive learning followed in order to achieve the transformation of the outdated national RPL policy, and to align it with the NQF Act (RSA 2008c).

Figure 97: The stages in expansive learning linked to development of a national RPL system in South Africa



(based on Engeström's [2001] expansive learning spiral – see Section 1.2.3.4)

In the expansive learning cycle, Engeström (2001) uses seven 'epistemic actions' in a spiral that expands outwards (see Section 1). These high-level actions are bulleted (in bold text), together with actual actions from the example of the 2013 RPL policy development process used.

First, some aspects of the accepted practice and existing wisdom are questioned or criticised. In the example used, the RPL policy became outdated when the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) was replaced with the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). An ILO study (SAQA 2008) pointed to 'islands of existing excellent RPL practice' in South Africa. The Minister of Higher Education and Training (MHET) in 2010 placed emphasis on the need for expansion of these islands into a national RPL system in the country.

Second, the situation is analysed by the questioners/ critics as they seek to understand the contradictions or lacks in existing practice. The *National RPL Workshop: Towards expanding existing islands of excellent practice* hosted by SAQA in 2010 was organised to identify barriers to a national RPL system. RPL experts were invited to present and lead discussion in three parallel streams, on the barriers to wide RPL implementation in the GFETQSF, HEQSF and OQSF contexts. SAQA analysed the 140 barriers identified, grouping them into three questions to be addressed: (1) How can RPL be implemented

effectively? What are the effective implementation models for RPL?
(2) How can RPL be effectively quality assured?
(3) How can RPL be resourced?

Third, attempts may be made to model new relationships in some publicly observable form. In the example, this step was done in the form of the *National RPL Conference: Towards expanding existing islands of excellent practice* hosted by SAQA in 2011. At this event, stakeholders presented research and successful initiatives to address the questions: (1) What are the effective implementation models for RPL? (2) How can RPL be effectively quality assured? (3) How can RPL be resourced? Outputs included the delegate-endorsed *RPL Working Document* (SAQA 2011b), publications and an agreement to set up an RPL Reference Group for the revision of the national RPL policy.

Fourth, the new model may be critiqued towards understanding its dynamics, potential and limitations. In the example, the RPL Reference Group critiqued the outdated national RPL policy, and under SAQA's leadership, developed a new national RPL policy.

Fifth, the new model may be implemented in various ways with conceptual extensions. Implementation of the new national RPL policy commenced in 2013 (see Section 3.8.4). Over 20 national RPL initiatives were based on the new RPL policy.

Sixth, there is reflection on implementation of the new model and evaluation of its success. Informal discussion within SAQA has confirmed that the new RPL policy is enabling, as shown by its use in the national RPL initiatives. Additional advice is needed to implement RPL (the policy alone is not sufficient), and to date SAQA has provided the human resources to this end. In addition, two publications of *Successful RPL Cases* (SAQA 2015a, 2015b) were developed to assist further implementation.

Seventh, the new way of doing is consolidated into a new, stable (accepted) form of practice. The implementation of national RPL initiatives provides some evidence of a new stable form of practice.

The development of the new RPL policy was used as an example of expansive learning for transformation. Expansive learning also occurred in relation to the other NQF developments described in Section 7.1, across 1994-1995, the period under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) and the period under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c).

7.2.3 Overarching comment regarding expansive learning for change: usefulness and limitations of the analytical tools

Engeström's (1987, 2001) ideas of an activity system, activity triangle, interacting activity systems and categories afforded by these concepts were used in Section 7.1 in the analysis of the impact of the NQF on the education and training system in South Africa. The NQF was found to have impacted on policies and other tools used in the system, the objectives towards which the system was oriented, and the actors, and their communities of practice and roles. Engeström's (2001) ideas of 'systemic contradictions' and 'expansive learning' were used respectively to identify areas where development may have occurred, and then to analyse the steps of the transformation. The development of a new national RPL policy under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) to replace the outdated RPL policy was used as an example to reflect on change that had been effected.

These CHAT categories and the expansive learning spiral were 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), also 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* are useful here.

A central idea underlying Bernstein's *pedagogic device* is that communications relating to the teaching-learning process are often viewed as being neutral, or as being mere "carriers" or "relays" for "ideological messages" and "external power relations" (Bernstein 1996: 39). Bernstein (1996: 39) opposes these views by distinguishing between the carriers of communications, and the communications themselves. Bernstein's (*ibid.*: 48) *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. These ideas were used to describe the development of Quality Council policies, in line with SAQA's overarching NQF policies, under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c).

7.3 Impact of methodological choices made

Given the many parts making up the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the decision was taken to use the following methodology:

- **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
- **meta-analysis of shifts in developments in the education and training field showing the impact of the NQF**, using Cultural Historical Activity Theory categories and principles (Engeström 1987, 2001), and 'expansive learning for transformation' (Engeström 2001) as the theory of change.

The **policy baskets** used for analysis included the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), the NQF Act (RSA 2008c), and the related Sub-Framework (or sub-sector) Acts, and related policies developed by SAQA and the Quality Councils.

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); and publications issued by the Minister and Department of Higher Education and Training (MHET, DHET), the

Department of Basic Education (DBE), SAQA and the Quality Councils. Inputs were also obtained from 10 senior staff members from SAQA and the Quality Councils, and feedback was sought from SAQA, Quality Council and DHET staff, the SAQA Research Committee, SAQA Board members and an external reviewer.

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.

This section of the report considers what the methodology enabled, and its limitations.

7.3.1 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 are noted (SAQA 2003). 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 capture progress and impact in the different NQF Sub-Framework contexts in a systematic way. 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 present 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 the sense 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 use of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), with its expansive learning theory of change (Engeström 1987, 2001), made possible inclusion of contextual features in the analysis, including the features of NQF communities of practice with their actors and roles, and NQF tools with their rules, and interacting activity systems, over time (see Section 7.1). SAQA and Quality Council researchers agreed regarding the indicators and theory to be used.

The CHAT categories and expansive learning spiral were 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.

Existing datasets were used for the analyses. In the early South African NQF impact studies (SAQA 2003, 2005), the comments were made 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, and it was 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 decreasing over time.

7.3.2 Limitations of the methodology

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

Firstly, the triangulation of data is imperative for the credibility 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 and used sets of interview data to triangulate other interview data. The Irish study (NQAI 2009) triangulated data by combining documentary analysis, reports from key NFQ implementers and NFQ implementer engagement with sectoral stakeholders, in-depth case studies, public submissions and consultative forums. Both studies involved large research teams and five-year study periods, neither of which were feasible for the study.

7.4 Progress in relation to the HRD-SA and White Paper for Post-School Education and Training

This section considers the extent to which progress has been made towards targets in the HRD-SA (RSA 2009a) and White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (MHET 2013). The National Development Plan (RSA 2011b) includes improving the quality of education, skills development and innovation. 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. It sets targets for jobs. Improvements in education and skill levels are fundamental prerequisites for achieving many of its goals. While these national strategies are a big part of the implementation context of the NQF (See Section 2.2), and successful implementation of the NQF is central for the success of these initiatives, the Human Resources Development Strategy (RSA 2010) and White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (WP: PSET) (MHET 2013) provide targets that the NQF needs to address.

7.4.1 NQF implementation and the Human Resource Development Strategy in South Africa (HRD-SA)

The 2010-2030 Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (HRD-SA) (RSA 2009) 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[91]. It is based explicitly on current and emerging education and training-related strategic plans, and identifies strategic priorities for the next 20 years. In the discussion below, each priority is in bold (numbered) text, followed by what the impact study findings show in relation to each priority.

[91] 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 National Industrial Policy Framework (NIPF), the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP), the Emerging Anti-Poverty Strategy (EAPS) and the Technology and Innovation Strategy (TIS), among others.

1. **Ensuring universal access to quality early childhood development.**

Section 3.5 shows that while the numbers of learners enrolling for Grade R have increased steadily since 2006, and that enrollment is likely to be universal by 2030, universal enrollment had not been achieved by 2014. Early Childhood Development (ECD) data were not readily available and were thus not included in the present study, but should be included in future NQF impact studies.

2. **Eradicating adult illiteracy.**

The latest Census data (Stats SA 2011) show that 8.6% of adults in the country have no education (see Section 2.2): these figures can be taken as a proxy for illiteracy. Section 3.8.3 shows patterns in learner achievements in the Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Programme: numbers are high, and the demographic profiles and contextual locations of the learners suggest that the programme is playing a role in redress.

3. **Ensuring that learners remain in education and training until the age of 18 years.**

Section 3.5.1 shows that reported National Senior Certificate (NSC) pass rates for 2008-2013 ranged from 64%-78%. However there is on average a 10% drop per year analysed, between those enrolling to write the NSC exams, and those actually writing, and a further 20-30% drop between those writing and passing. Taking these patterns into account, the 'actual' pass rates for the 2008-2013 years are 58-62%. Comparing these figures to the numbers of learners originally enrolled for Grade 1, around one-eighth of the numbers originally enrolled for Grade 1, passed the NSC exams in the years analysed. In addition, the numbers of full-time learners registering to write the NSC exams decreased steadily across 2008-2013, although the numbers of part-time registrations 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. These patterns go against HRD-SA targets, and need to be understood as a matter of urgency.

4. **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.**

The latest Census data (Stats SA 2011) show the percentages of adults with particular levels of qualifications: at the time of the last census, just over 40% of adults in the country had NQF Level 4 qualifications and higher (see Section 2.2). Sections 3.5.3, 3.6, 3.7 and 3.8 of the report show the numbers of learners achieving PSET qualifications. The numbers of learners increased, and redress and learner access, success and progression patterns were in the directions desired across the years studied. In order to measure the extent to which this HRD target has been reached more data, and coordination of data, are needed than were included in the present study.

5. **Ensuring progressive improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of all education and training sectors.**

In order to measure the extent to which this HRD target has been reached more data, and coordination of data, are needed than were included in the study.

6. **Ensuring that new entrants into the labour market have access to employment-focused education and training opportunities.**

In order to measure the extent to which this HRD target has been reached more data, and coordination of data, are needed than were included in the study.

7. **Ensuring that investment in education and training is above the global average.**

In order to measure the extent to which this HRD target has been reached more data, and coordination of data, are needed than were included in the study.

8. **Ensuring that education and training outcomes are equitable in terms of race, gender, disability and geographic location.**

In Sections 3.5-3.8 of the present report analyses are presented to show trends regarding redress, and learner access, success and progression in the GFETQSF, HEQSF and OQSF, and in initiatives towards including more people in the education and training system. In all of the sub-sectors of the NQF, movement is towards equity in terms of population group. In the Occupational sector, by 2007 equity had been achieved. In all sectors however, when looking at overall patterns, female learners are enrolling and achieving at higher levels than their male counterparts. In some learning areas/ subjects, males are achieving at higher levels. Data on disability and geographic location is not readily available in all data subsets.

9. **Ensuring that inequality in education and training outcomes is significantly less than the prevailing income inequality at that time.**

In order to measure the extent to which this HRD target has been reached more data, and coordination of data, are needed than were included in the study.

10. **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.**

In order to measure the extent to which this HRD target has been reached more data, and coordination of data, are needed than were included in the study.

11. **Ensuring that South Africa is ranked in the top 10% of comparable countries in terms of its economic competitiveness, Human Development Index, and Technology and Innovation Index.**

In order to measure the extent to which this HRD target has been reached more data, and coordination of data, are needed than were included in the study.

7.4.2 NQF implementation and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (WP: PSET)

The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (WP: PSET) developed by the Department of Higher Education and Training (MHET 2013) sets out a vision for the type of post-school education and training system to be achieved in South Africa by 2030. Some of the main developmental aspects are summarised immediately below, together with data from the study that speak to these developmental areas.

7.4.2.1 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, remain. Importantly, the NQF objectives of systemic integration, transparency, quality, redress, and learner access, success and progression also remain. SAQA must play a leadership role in guiding the further development of systemic articulation. There must be a national RPL strategy. 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). PSET entities must comply with SAQA and Quality Council requirements (MHET 2013).

Relevant data from the study

The extent to which NQF objectives have been achieved, and developmental work needed, is analysed in Section 7.1. Developments regarding RPL are elaborated in Section 3.8.4. Overarching comments regarding the findings are made in Section 8.1. Quality Council initiatives and their effects are detailed in Sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 by Umalusi, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Quality Council for Trades and occupations (QCTO), respectively.

7.4.2.2 PSET institutions

There are stipulations for both public and private PSET institutions.

The White Paper (MHET 2013) sets out strategies to improve capacity in the state-owned post-school institutions, all of which fall under the DHET, and which include but are not limited to the 25 public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), 50 public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, public adult learning centres, private colleges, the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), the National Skills Fund (NSF), the three Quality Councils responsible for the development and quality assurance of qualifications, and the NQF Sub-Framework coordinating body, the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Education institutions under the authority of other national government departments, mainly (but not exclusively) to train public service workers, and institutions operated by provincial governments and municipalities for the training of their own personnel, are also included in this work as the DHET, through the Quality Councils, is also responsible for assuring the quality of education and training provision in these entities.

The strengthening of TVET Colleges and the establishment of Community Colleges – a new type of institution – are priorities. 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. Community Colleges are encouraged to focus on strengthening Popular Education, Community Education and Worker Education, drawing on community responsiveness.

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.

Relevant data from the study

To a certain extent, the Quality Council initiatives and their effects detailed in Sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 by Umalusi, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) respectively, speak to strengthening the PSET institutions. For a fuller picture, more details would need to be included regarding the initiatives of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) than features in the study.

Data on learner achievements for private versus public institutions of learning are presented in Sections 3.5-3.8. There is evidence to show that increasing numbers and proportions of learners are attending

private institutions of learning at school TVET level (see Section 3.5.1.5), and that the numbers of learning achievements at private TVET Colleges and HEIs are increasing over time (see Section 3.5.3 and 3.6.2). The gender patterns are more equitable in private than in public institutions of learning, at all NQF levels. Initiatives are under way within the NLRD to strengthen datasets on private HEIs (see Section 3.1).

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

Relevant data from the study

Research and developments relating to strengthening the NCV, N-programmes, GETC and Senior Certificate, and establishing the NASCA, are outlined in Section 6.1, which has been compiled by Umalusi. Related research is also reported in Section 4.3.1.4, which deals with SAQA partnership research. Relevant developments relating to the Trades and Occupational sector are presented by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) in Section 6.3.

7.4.2.4 Higher Education

The importance of articulation between qualifications offered at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and those offered in 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.

Relevant data from the study

Articulation-related research and developments are reported as follows.

- Sections 3.8.4 and 3.8.5 details RPL-related research and developments, and CAT-related developments, respectively, between 2010 and the present.
- Sections 4.1 and 4.2 describe the progressive development of systemic integration, and articulation-related developments, respectively.
- Section 4.3 elaborates on recent research into systemic integration and articulation, showing deepening understanding of these ideas, and ways to enhance the implementation of both aspects.
- Sections 5.3-5.5 present developments relating to Qualification Verification and Evaluation Services, and career advice, and link these initiatives to systemic articulation.
- The meta-analysis in Section 7.1.1 points to shifts in understandings of systemic integration at three points in time: in 1994-1995, under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), and under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c).
- Section 3.6 shows evidence of redress and student access, success and progression, in Higher Education, between 2005 and 2012, based on readily available datasets and first-level analyses.

7.4.2.5 Targets

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. The targets include:

- For TVET Colleges, one million learners by 2015, and 2.5 million by 2030, as well as qualitative

improvements.

- For Community Colleges, one million learners by 2030, up from 265 000 in 2011.
- In Higher Education Institutions, 1.6 million learners by 2030, up from 930 000 in 2011.
- For artisans, 30 000 learners by 2030.
- For private education and training providers, 500 000 learners by 2030.

The White Paper (MHET 2013) states the intentions of the Minister (MHET) to:

- 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.
- Encourage the expansion of distance learning. Higher Education Institutions are especially encouraged to expand distance Higher Education for vocationally oriented diploma programmes. The DHET will investigate the possibility of providing distance education programmes at TVET and Community College levels. The theoretical components of apprenticeships could for example, be offered through distance education.
- Remain committed to free PSET for those who cannot afford to pay, and acknowledges the central role of the National Skills Fund (NSF) in this regard.

Relevant data from the study

In order to measure the extent to which there is progress towards these targets more data, and coordination of data, are needed than were included in the study. Research into flexible provision of Higher Education and Training, to support learners and enhance lifelong learning, is reported in Section 4.3.1.3.

8. Concluding comments

Chapter 8 reflects on the overall findings of the study. It makes specific recommendations for expanding understandings of the NQF objectives and further development of the NQF, and closes with an overarching recommendation for the next NQF impact study.

This chapter draws on the following to address the overarching questions: What is the impact of the South African NQF? Where are the challenges and areas for development?

- Features of the NQF context of implementation (Chapter 2).
- Trends regarding redress and learner access, success and progression (Chapter 3).
- Progress in relation to systemic integration (Chapter 4) and transparency (Chapter 5).
- Initiatives towards enhancing quality, and the effects of these initiatives (Chapter 6).
- The meta-analysis of shifts over time regarding understandings of, and developments linked to, the NQF objectives: 1994-1995, under the SAQA Act and under the NQF Act (Chapter 7).

8.1 Reflection on the overall findings of the study

In Chapter 1, what the NQF in South Africa comprises was defined. The background to the study, the methodology followed and the research questions addressed were presented. Theoretical tools for analysis were described. Data and first-level analyses of progress were presented in Chapter 3 (redress, access, success, progression), Chapter 4 (systemic integration), Chapter 5 (systemic transparency) and Chapter 6 (Quality Council initiatives and their impact), to enable meta-analysis using the conceptual tools in Chapter 7. The meta-analysis also points to contextual features sketched in Chapter 2 as it considers the achievements and limitations of the study.

Reflections follow, on 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.

8.1.1 Impact of the NQF on shifts in understandings 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 summarised as together they show the impact of the NQF.

8.1.1.1 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 status. 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 in the form of 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 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 and widening the gap between the influence of business on the one hand, and training on the other. It also impacted on academic discourse, where the ideas of learning pathways and blockages in these pathways, emerged (Carrim 2010; Cosser 2009).

- Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) the NQF impacted on the **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). It impacted on understandings, acknowledging **differentiated forms and contexts of learning,** and giving each equal weight in the form of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks. It focused attention on **'learning pathways', 'articulation' and 'articulated pathways'**, understanding of which deepened: learning pathways are currently understood in at least three different ways, each of which can be supported to assist learners (see Sections 7.1.1 and 4.3.1.1). **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) have commenced.

- Attention was drawn to the fact that NQF and **debates around integration** are located in wider and **centuries-old debates around knowledge**, and the **politics of knowledge**. 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.

8.1.1.2 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 to redress.

- Under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), National RPL Policy (SAQA 2002) and RPL Criteria and Guidelines (SAQA 2004a) were developed by SAQA 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 (RSA 2008c) barriers to development of a national RPL system were identified and work commenced 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.

8.1.1.3 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: under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) the focus was on enabling access for all learners in the country regardless of population and gender group categorisation. Over time understandings of access shifted to include learner throughput and success rates.

- Under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c) understandings of access developed to include learners' ability to progress through the sub-systems in which they were studying and achieve success, or 'deep access' 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 show a more varied picture, 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 1-9 levels occurred; **learner 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**; and low numbers **(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 where, taking into account those enrolled to write the NSC exams, and those actually writing, and a further 20-30% drop between those writing and passing, means **'actual' pass rates of 58-62%.** Comparing these figures to the numbers of learners originally enrolled for Grade 1, around **one-eighth** of the numbers originally enrolled for Grade 1 passed the NSC exams in the years analysed.

  - 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 numbers increased steadily** between 2005 and 2012. There were more female than male students in this period, and the gaps between **proportions of students from different population groups and the proportions of those population groups in the general population 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, while 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 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** than working people registered for and were certificated for learnerships in both 2011 and 2012. Although fewer unemployed than working people registered for and were certificated for **Skills Programmes** across both years, **significant numbers of unemployed people** were involved in these programmes. Between 2011 and 2012 there were **increases in the numbers of unemployed 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.

- 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 the 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. The **data were not sufficient** 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 showed that numbers of learners generally increased over time. The demographic profile of learners in the programme is 71% female and 99% African.

8.1.1.4 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** (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 of training fees.

- The NQF impacted on this system under 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 against 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 benefits included providing **national quality criteria** which worthwhile qualifications should have, and which could

scaffold development, protecting the public from fraudulent practices and providing **transparency.** Umalusi and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) 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 decentred national quality assurance model**. Standard setting and quality assurance are '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 to align its qualifications with the relevant qualifications in the other two Sub-Frameworks, and has begun to do so. These processes, together with SAQA registration of the Quality Councils' qualifications on the NQF, have ensured the benchmarking of the qualifications for quality, and the inclusion of RPL, CAT and articulation possibilities. This shows the impact of the NQF, which aligns quality with values expressed in the Constitution of the country regarding the goals of redress, and learner access, success and progression in education, training, development and work.

- The **transparency features** of the NQF, its Level Descriptors and National Learners' Records Database have been strengthened by greater collaboration between SAQA and the Quality Councils than was the case under the SAQA Act, as evidenced by reporting against the NQF Implementation Framework (SAQA 2011) and the System of Collaboration (SAQA 2011c).The development by SAQA, after consultation with the Quality Councils, of policies for registering qualifications, Professional Bodies and professional designations, and for assessment, RPL and CAT; the establishment of Verification Services and 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, have all served to enhance transparency in the system. Despite the impact of the NQF on the system in these ways however, there are still 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).

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

Looking at the shifts in the understandings of NQF objectives – redress, learner access, success and progression, and systemic integration, quality and transparency, over time, shows deepening awareness of these elements, and changes to match 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.

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

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.

Under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was established, 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 around standards and quality assurance between these role-players.

The NQF Act (RSA 2008c) provides for **three coordinated NQF Sub-Frameworks**, each **overseen by a Quality Council**, and **SAQA as the coordinating body**. Each of these organisations **shares involvement** in the NQF, plays a **distinct role** and is legally bound to work with the others. The Minister must "encourage **collaboration** among 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 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 that requires 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 more difficult than it is at present – were developed between 2010 and 2014. In addition to the determination of the three NQF Sub-Frameworks, national career advice services were established and the suite of NQF policies required by the NQF Act 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. Wherever 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 developments. The impact of the NQF itself is such that the education and training system is currently populated with the institutions that can accomplish systemic integration, transparency quality and learner access, success and progression, and have come a long way in doing so. These institutions are well-positioned to address the systemic challenges that remain.

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

8.1.3 Impact of the NQF on education and training tools and rules

The NQF impacts on the 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.

8.1.3.1 Impact of the NQF on national legislation

The **national legislation** at the time of the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) included the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act (RSA 2001a), the Higher Education Act (RSA 1997), and the Skills Development Act (RSA 1998b) – which laid out the quality assurance responsibilities for the respective sectors. Standard setting located under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995), where SAQA had 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 deepening of the divisions between the education and training sectors. The skills development sector worked readily with SAQA, transforming many of its qualifications into 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 have distinct responsibilities as well as collaborative work. The suite of NQF policies were collaboratively developed – Level Descriptors, and policies for registering qualifications, Professional Bodies and professional designations, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), assessment, Credit Accumulations and Transfer (CAT), the *System of Collaboration* (SAQA 2011c) and the *NQF Implementation Framework* (SAQA 2011).

8.1.3.2 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 also 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 were the increasing numbers of learners accessing these qualifications over time, including unemployed 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 created for 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), in some sectors the pace of transformation slowed as the curricula reached the forms desired. For example, it was argued that 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) (DBE 2010) 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 new 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 evidenced under the SAQA Act (RSA 1995) continued under the NQF Act (RSA 2008c). A number of post-2009 curriculum-related initiatives represent steps towards understanding and implementing credit transfer and other articulation possibilities. These include the following:

- 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, in SAQA 2013b).
- Mapping learning pathways for selected scarce skills (Lotz-Sisitka and Ramsarup 2014).
- Mapping qualifications matrices for the purposes of strategic national RPL initiatives (SAQA-CIPSET 2015, SAQA-SUWI 2015).

8.1.3.3 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 Quality Councils – are tools that make possible joint differentiated and integrated work. While each of the structures is enabled through its separateness, to 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 policy development forums are examples of tools for joint work.

8.1.3.4 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[92]. As the country moves into an enhanced implementation phase, collaborative relationships need to be developed.

To kick-start this deepening collaboration, SAQA hosted workshops on *relational agency* and *relational expertise* for staff from key NQF organisations in 2014. The aims of the workshops were (a) to bring to the fore relational work that needs 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.

8.1.3.5 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 and 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, carry the 'rules' for operating in the education and training system. Importantly, the NQF has impacted on this system by requiring, and opening the spaces for, development 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, and unknown learning pathways or gaps in learning pathways – research, development and expanded learning have taken place. These processes need to continue in relation to the contradictions that remain.

[92] 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).

8.1.4 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. Engeström's (2001) 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 an activity was successful**. It is also **useful for planning future activities**, and for ensuring that the elements necessary for success, are present.

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), also allowing for individual interpretation in this regard. While a community of practice incorporates power relations, and all of the CHAT categories potentially 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.

8.1.5 Impact of methodological choices made

The methodology 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
- meta-analysis of shifts in developments in the education and training field showing the impact of the NQF, using Cultural Historical Activity Theory categories and principles (Engeström 1987, 2001), and 'expansive learning for transformation' (Engeström 2001) as the theory of change.

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.

8.1.5.1 What the methodology enabled

Analysing the NQF policy basket and related developments, and using CHAT categories (Engeström 1987) to show shifts in understanding and developments relating to the NQF objectives enabled making *direct links* between the NQF and its imprint on the education and training system. Analysing data on redress and learner access, success and progression showed trends *associated with* and *occurring alongside* NQF development, at the same time. The theory of change, 'expanded learning for transformation' (Engeström 2001) proved useful for identifying the steps followed in NQF development, and related developments towards a national RPL system. These steps could be *sought out actively* to drive further transformation.

8.1.5.2 Limitations of the methodology

The methodology utilised in the *2014 NQF Impact Study* included some triangulation of information. Data were obtained from specialists within SAQA, the DHET and the DBE. The Quality Council inputs were provided by specialist leaders within each of the Quality Councils. The researchers were located within SAQA, and all of the organisations involved had opportunities to engage with the texts of the others. The limitation of this approach was that time and resources did not permit the inclusion of wider stakeholder inputs.

In addition, future NQF impact studies should ideally include in-depth focus group interviews with all the stakeholders using the processes and tools developed by SAQA, the Quality Councils and the two education departments. There are elements of stakeholder voices throughout the booklet and larger report on which it is based, but in-depth focus group interviews would have strengthened the triangulation of information.

8.1.6 Impact and readiness for impact

The extent to which data and analyses in the 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 address fully 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 (MHET 2013), data and analyses in the study were found to address two fully, and to provide some insights for the remaining three.

While the timing of the present 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. The necessary NQF structures are now however 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 and the collaboration of the communities involved are needed.

8.2 Recommendations for expanding understandings and implementation of the NQF: pointers for the next study

Recommendations are made in relation to the following aspects of the system.

First, 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

deregistration of qualifications and part-qualifications not used, needs to be prioritised. Programmes that have meaning in workplaces need to be recognised. Implementation and monitoring of the articulation framework, quality assurance systems and the suite of NQF policies, while already showing progress, 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: (1) planning, (2) quality and (3) funding.

Seventh, a **working group** made up of representatives from each of the main NQF partners needs to 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.**

In addition, if future NQF impact studies are to report fully against targets in related or broader national initiatives, the **communities of practice concerned need to be involved** in the advance planning of the studies from the start.

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